

APPAREL PRO: TEXTILE STREET APPAREL

The evolution of the motorcycle jacket over the last 100+ years has been fascinating. From leather jackets that originated from other industries like aviation to the advent of man-made super fabrics, armor and waterproofing. While the numbers of new bikes sold per year are of grave concern to everyone in the motorcycle industry, those numbers don't seem to affect the apparel developers who keep making better, more innovative and more protective moto clothing each and every year.

Most of the motorcycle product developers I know work behind the scenes making these innovations and are rarely public figures. The majority are motorcycle riders themselves (they have to be!) and come up with their ideas based upon real-world experience. Not all ideas are good ideas, and that's why most apparel companies make several revisions to their product samples before anyone outside their cubicle sees a pre-production sample.

Smart apparel developers solicit information from their dealer base when restyling an apparel item or when developing new styles and new features. You dealer employees are essential to this process because you're the front line with consumers. They tell you what they're looking for when they want to make a purchase – and they give you heaps of information when an existing product has failed them. This information is incredibly valuable to your suppliers.

Cameron Coltrin, Fly Street and Highway 21 sales and apparel specialist, travels the country visiting dealers educating dealers about Fly's products and asking for feedback. A result of gathering intel, this year Fly launched the Strata jacket, a three-layer textile jacket that is designed to span four seasons.

"With the Strata jacket we really wanted to do a three-layer piece," said Coltrin. "Inside of that textile shell we have a full mesh jacket. It comes with removable CE armor and you can remove it from the shell jacket and put it into the mesh jacket. Both jackets can be worn together or separately. The 120g thermal vest can be zippered into both the outer jacket and the mesh jacket."

Here is where learning from a rep or a product specialist pays off for people in the apparel department. Most other pieces on the market have a mesh jacket on the outside with a rain liner on the inside. The Fly Strata has the rain layer on the outside. But on a hangar the jacket looks like any other textile jacket.

"The dealers who really do the best with this jacket are the ones who take the time to know it and embrace it," continued Coltrin. "If a customer comes in who is looking to buy just a textile jacket, or a mesh jacket, here the dealer has a great tool to sell to the customer in the Strata. Instead of coming back in two months and having to buy another jacket when the weather cools off, the Strata can be presented as the solution to both for only \$259.95."

It took many meetings and several designers to come up with the innovative idea at Fly, but it was worth it in the end. That's how it works at most apparel companies – rider-

developers brainstorming, riding and taking feedback from dealers. Really listen to your customers when they tell you their product wishes, complaints and all, and pass on the feedback. Your conversation might just be the seed for the next brazen innovation in motorcycle apparel. ↙

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IT** SMART
RIDERS
GEAR
UP

HELMET+BOOTS+GLOVES+JACKET+PANTS

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(Above) MIC's Gear Up University is offering free online training for powersports retailers. Students who complete the courses can also be rewarded with incentives and/or spiffs from members of the MIC Rider Safety Subcommittee. (Below) Like most motorcycle product developers, Fly Street's Cameron Coltrin works behind the scenes testing products and visiting dealers to get feedback. A result of his intel gathering is the Strata jacket, a three-layer jacket that is designed to span the four seasons.

