

THE ART OF UPSELLING HELMETS

By Alisa Clickenger

Motorcycle helmets are the bread and butter of motorcycle apparel sales. Helmets are an easy sell; every dealership stocks them, and customers that mosey in the door asking for them generally walk out carrying one. Sizing is pretty standard, and most customers know what colors they like. Wouldn't it be great, then, if you could make a significant improvement to the dealership's bottom line just with a little upsell?

Upsells don't have to be annoying. The best upsells aren't really even intentionally talking your customer into a more expensive product. Rather, they are conversations with your customers in which you impart as much information as you can for them to make a highly educated decision about which product to purchase. "Helping the customer to understand what they're paying for, what they're getting for the purchase price, whether they're getting a quality product, that's where the education of the consumer and helping them learn what they're paying for is the upsell," says Mike Talarico, marketing and PR manager at Schubert North America and Held USA.

Settling for the path of least resistance while selling helmets has become epidemic. With decreased staff and increased responsibilities for every employee, it's easy to understand why. Often the parts manager is wearing many hats, and there is not a dedicated apparel person to spend significant time on those face-to-face interactions. Sales end up consisting of the easiest item to access, but it's not always the way to best serve your customers.

Education is Key

The question, however, is does your dealership really want to be walking away from a higher end sale when it may only be a little education away? Chances are your shop won't get the chance to sell that customer another helmet for several years, so why not make the sale really count. Education is your ticket to a better sale, and teaching your customer what it is that they're paying for is a key element. Brandon McDowell, national sales manager for Sullivans, Inc., agrees that education is important. "Education is a key ingredient for the dealership to upsell a helmet," says McDowell. "If you do not have an employee present to guide your customer through the many differences between a \$69 helmet and a \$159 helmet or a \$299 helmet and a \$599 helmet, how many upsells do you think you will convert?" Starting a conversation about the ratings systems or the difference in materials is a good start towards helping your customers define what's important to them.

"I think the helmet category may be a place where we can make a difference. It's a simple difference, and it starts with that customer interaction and face-to-face education," says McDowell. "The customer is in your store to purchase a helmet not solely because he wants to look cool; he's purchasing a safety device. Yes, looking cool is on the



spectrum, but it's a little lower on the scale. They are putting a helmet on their head for safety, and there is a wealth of information you can use to help guide the customer to what best fits their needs."

Start High, Not Low

Randy George of Bell Helmets suggests starting your helmet conversations on the high end. Present your customer with your high end products and talk to them about why the products cost that much money, even if they've never considered high end before. Very often what dealers do is make the mistake of reaching for the \$99 helmet and present that option first. The customer then might just walk away with the less expensive helmet not knowing that there might be a better helmet for them for just a little more money.

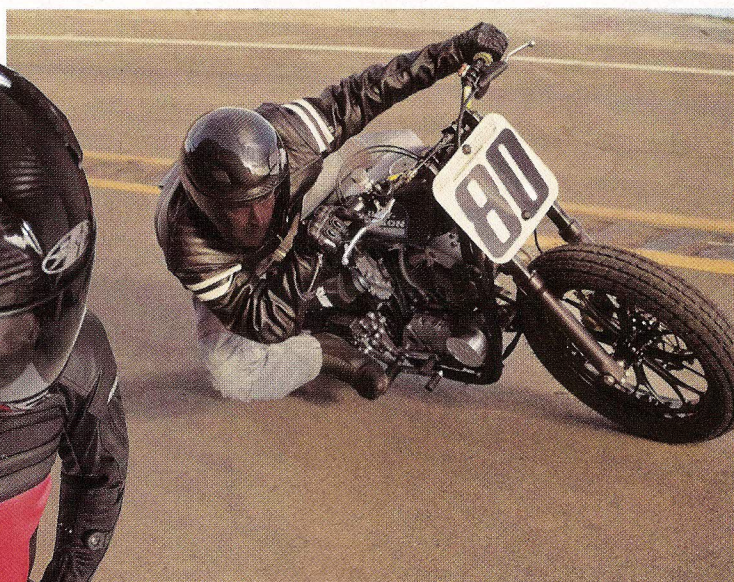
"Use the good-better-best scenario, but start at the best, then come down to the next level and the next," says George. "Let the customer decide what features and benefits are most important to them. Often times the customer will stop the dealer when they get to a point where they're comfortable."

Focus on Features

"The upsell should be more or less a feature-based upsell. Then we start talking about the liners and the materials, and how all of those components wind up creating a better experience for the rider," says Talarico. Talk to your customers about the entry level products and how those differ from the higher end products. Compare the features and help your customer look at the products that have the features they need.

Speaking to the differences between a budget helmet and a quality helmet, a lot of the differences are going to be in the manufacturing technique and materials used. Fully removable liners cost more, as do advanced acoustics and integrated sun visors. The optical clarity of the face shield is an important and widely variable factor in helmets as well.

Talarico suggests reaching out to the specialists at each company whose products your dealership sells. Ask if they have training available or documents and study guides. Schuberth has a dealer portal that features assets specifically designed to help dealerships be more successful selling product. "Developing that relationship with your distributors is key. We all have someone on staff able to provide next level training for sales people. We have all that technical insight so we'd be happy to share that and train them and give them those tools to empower them," says Talarico. Let the helmet manufacturers help you build better sales. If your dealership's salespeople take the time to ask a few questions, not only might you make a customer extremely happy, but you also might make more money on the sale. ⚡



Customers are putting a helmet on their head for safety, and there is a wealth of information you can use to help guide the customer to what best fits their needs. Looking cool is only part of the equation. The real focus should be placed on the features higher-end helmets offer your customers. Education is the key to an upsell.