ROYAL ENFIELD

Breeann Poland On The Pandemic Paradox

By Alisa Clickenger

While a good portion of the motorcycle industry is thriving in the time of COVID, Royal Enfield's rising star has actually transcended the events of the past six months. Right now, their North American division is the highest retailing entity of Royal Enfield globally. Courtesy of COVID-19 and the resulting factory shut down, dealers are nearly sold out of their inventory. Demand for Royal Enfield in America is increasing, due both to the marketing campaigns and extensive brand awareness programs that were implemented in the pre-pandemic era.

"Obviously we've grown with the pandemic and we are actively bringing on dealers," notes Breeann Poland, Marketing lead – Americas and Global Brand Manager - Continental GT platform. "We recently brought on four dealers, and have two more in the works." Product, price or pandemic? "Dealers are definitely interested in the brand," she says.

"I think some of the things that we were able to develop and implement are what's providing some traction and brought us to the point where we are getting approached by dealers." A far cry from just five years ago. "Compared to the first couple of years when we were essentially just knocking on doors and having to explain the differences and what the brand is."

HISTORY

Royal Enfield has been around since 1901. Committed to their growth and retail opportunities in the North American market, they have a solid product strategy for the next five years that Poland believes will help Enfield expand into the Americas even further.

January 1st of 2015 Royal Enfield established a North American headquarters in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and now they're up to around 125 dealers. Demand for the bikes — and for dealership franchises — has been growing exponentially. Whereas in the beginning the marque was knocking on dealer's doors, now the opposite is true. Dealers are now coming to them and asking them for the right to open a franchise. A direct testament to what Poland has done.

WHAT GLASS CEILING?

Poland started at the company as a Digital PR Marketing Manager, and nine months later she was promoted to Head of Marketing for North America, which covered Canada and the USA. Last April she was promoted to the position of Head of Marketing and Communications for all the Americas, which includes North America, Central America and South America. Poland now manages small teams in each of those regions who report to her.

In addition to her marketing position, this month Poland was promoted to Global Brand Manager for the Continental GT Platform, which Royal Enfield released a year ago. "I love it. I am the only female Global Brand Manager within Royal Enfield. I'm also the only non-Indian employee that is part of this new brand of managers, so it's really nice for them to include someone from a market outside of India, as well as a woman in the program," said Poland. At present she occupies both positions simultaneously.

As if that's not impressive on its own, in our interview I learned that Poland also just started back at Marquette University, focusing on a degree in Strategic Communication. She attends online school every night. At present she is taking two summer courses, and then in the fall she'll have six courses, which will mark her as a full-time student as well as a dual-role corporate executive.
There is no doubt that Poland is a very inspiring woman. Her rapid ascent at Royal Enfield plus the fact that she's grown so quickly into a visionary marketer at Royal Enfield, makes her one of the truly shining examples of leadership in our industry. "It's about aligning yourself with the right people and being motivated. You have to constantly create opportunities for yourself. Things aren't always going to get handed to you, and it's not always going to be easy."

CATWALK TO BOARDROOM
Poland's footing in the powersports industry came in a non-traditional way. She started as a moto sports model, but all through college and working with a team she modeled for, she identified opportunities for herself. They weren't just handed to her. "I had to let them know that I was interested in the opportunity, and that I was willing to do the groundwork. I started from the bottom in order to obtain more roles and responsibilities, and through that I was able to gain trust," she remembers.

When Royal Enfield contacted Poland about her first position at the company just over 5 years ago, she left behind everything she knew, which was roadracing and running her own events. Being an entrepreneur she'd never had a supervisor before, but luckily got teamed up with the perfect mentor who has experience both inside and outside the industry. Former Royal Enfield President Rod Copes helped her to understand how leaders operate and inspire.

Poland made herself accessible on every level in order to learn the ins and outs of everything she needed to know at the company. "I'm still learning, but I realized early on that it takes an army to do things and everything is collaborative. I go to other people, I place a call to somebody like Robin Hartfiel, and we'll talk on the phone for two hours."

One of Poland's keys to success within the powersports industry is believing in the importance of staying open-minded. As long as you give yourself opportunities to learn, she believes it does pay off in the end. "None of us have the answers all the time. It's a matter of being collaborative but also exploring opportunities and not segmenting yourself into the one thing," said Poland.

There are numerous opportunities for women and girls in the moto sports industry, according to Poland. But you need to be strategic about how you arrive at the end goal. "You have to be persistent, educate yourself and align yourself with the right people," she explains. "You just have to stay open to having conversations — you don't know if there's going to be an opportunity down the road, but there's a good chance there might be."

THE BOTTOM LINE
Poland is convinced that it's important to let people know you're interested in a position or opportunity. Then make sure you're equipping yourself with the appropriate education and staying motivated. Not getting discouraged and not getting disheartened is a big part of making your own opportunities. One company may say no, but the next company might say yes. Poland herself has experienced plenty of both.

"I know it sounds easy, but if you believe in your job and your passion, it will be reciprocated. I love the opportunity that Royal Enfield has given me as well as the passion that they've reignited in me towards motorcycling and helping me grow in the industry," said Poland.

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