

Biker offers guide to CEOs

Consultant building riders' workshops for business leaders

Jennifer Larino | Orlando Sentinel
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Dwain DeVille is a firm believer in what he calls "The Business Biker's Creed."

"I'd rather be riding my motorcycle thinking about business," it goes, "than sitting in my office thinking about riding my motorcycle."

That saying is also the foundation for his latest business venture, Biker's Guide to Business LLC.

DeVille is targeting executive-level motorcycle riders he calls "business bikers." His goal: Develop a "workshop on wheels," with him leading chief executives with motorcycle licenses through five days of business coaching in places such as the Colorado mountains.

DeVille, who has run a Maitland-based consulting service since 1994, hopes to draw a connection between riding a motorcycle and running a business.

"If you're going to put yourself on the back of a motorcycle and expose your relatively unprotected body to the elements, to those crazy "cagers" out there, you understand reasonable and controllable risk," DeVille said. "Cagers" by the way, is bike lingo for people who drive cars and trucks.

The market may be out there: U.S. dealers have sold more than 1 million motorcycles yearly since 2003, according to the Motorcycle Industry Council. And 40 percent of the American Motorcyclist Association's members have six-figure incomes, the groups says.

Dave Simons, president of an Orlando printing company, designer's press inc., started riding at age 16 and just got back on a bike a year ago so he could accompany DeVille on rides.

He's enthusiastic about the idea of a combination bike trip and business retreat.

"It's just the freedom that you have," he said of riding. "It helps you open up and think about things you don't have time for at your desk."

DeVille, 53, got his first motorcycle, a red Honda 100, in high school. He rode in the rain to his job at the local Burger Chef and has been riding ever since.

He was a banker in the 1980s and early '90s, turning around poor-performing branches for the

former C&S Bank and Sun Bank. In 1994, he founded Watermark International Inc., which he still runs, building a clientele of CEOs in charge of older businesses looking to expand or change management.

His love of business consulting and motorcycling came together last year as he joked with a friend one night about "business workshops on the road." When he got home, he bought the Internet domain name for his planned Web site, BikersGuidetoBusiness.com.

Now DeVille is finishing his book, *The Biker's Guide to Business*, which is to come out in August, and is planning a CEO retreat/ride in Osceola County for later this year.

He's also designing motivational posters.

"I looked at all the inspirational posters out today — birds, boats and all this stuff and I said, 'Nobody's doing motorcycles,'" he said.

DeVille began persuading friends, including Simons, to pose with their bikes on Saturday mornings or during lunch breaks. One poster features a friend walking away from her bike near a "CEO Parking Only" sign. Along the bottom of the poster is the statement, "What Glass Ceiling!"

"It's breaking out of the walls and getting out of the office," said Rick Morgan, who designed the posters and owns an Orlando-based advertising agency, Coastline Studios.

That to-the-point biking attitude appeals to nonbikers as well.

DeVille coached Julie Swatek, president of the online scrapbook-supply company ScrapYourTrip.com, during her company's recent growth. His "no funny business" biker attitude helped her see her way through employee or strategy problems, she said.

"He will tell you what you don't want to hear," said Swatek, who doesn't ride a motorcycle but would get a license and hop on one for a corporate retreat.

Others aren't so sure they would saddle up.

Don Wiginton, CEO of Sanford-based Wiginton Fire Systems, has known DeVille for about 15 years and hired him as a company adviser from 2001 to 2003. But motorcycles just aren't his thing, he said.

"If it were a Sailor's Guide to Business, I might be doing that," he quipped.

DeVille is convinced that business bikers of all kinds will want to join him for a ride.

Walk into any biker bar and you'll find lawyers sitting next to accountants sitting next to mechanics, he said.

"It's all because they're coming together over biking," he said. "It breaks down all barriers."

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