

Business Lessons From The Road

BY PAMELA COLLINS

The freedom of the open road and the confines of an executive office might seem contrary concepts. However, one motorcyclist and business consultant believes biking and business make logical riding partners. He details his theory in *The Biker's Guide to Business*, a soon-to-be-published business-management book aiming to demonstrate to business executives — both riders and nonriders — important management lessons offered up by the two-wheeled lifestyle.

According to its author, Dwain DeVille, executives can learn a great deal from the “school” of the road. In fact, the Orlando, Florida, area resident argues, business management and motorcycling have many parallels. “Running a business is a lot like taking a long trip on a motorcycle,” says Dwain, who adds working with a group of people is similar to riding with a group. For example, he says the group must first buy into the idea of the ride. Then, the group travels the trip in stages, incorporating various stopping points that, when strung together, lead to the ultimate destination.

that, in turn, led to his desire to combine what he calls his two passions, motorcycling and business.

“I thought ‘Why can’t I take my consulting and turn it into a workshop on wheels?’” says the energetic and enthusiastic man, who refers to himself as a business navigator as opposed to a business consultant. He says he envisioned executives enjoying a great ride while simultaneously building a business plan. He thinks riding helps executives gain clarity, a sort of “defragment” that clears their heads while opening their minds to new ideas.

Dwain says he’s done extensive research with small and large companies, even interviewing and riding with motorcycle-minded CEOs, to gauge response to his idea and has received positive feedback. He envisions eventually creating a flesh-and-blood-based social network for two-wheeled executives riding a real highway, as opposed to an electronic network traveling a cyberspace road.

According to Dwain, his research (using available 2002 figures) uncovered that 300,000 motorcycles are sold each year to people aged 40-plus who also earn six-figure incomes. He says those figures indicate a viable market segment at which to aim his efforts, even in spite of the current shaky economy.

Tentative workshop plans include visiting various



“Motorcycles and business are both vehicles to take you where you want to go. One does it physically, while the other does it economically.”

Dwain says business uses many of the same principles. “Riding a motorcycle requires a lot of dexterity, doing many things at once like braking, clutching, [and] operating various controls. Business also requires the ability to do many things at one time.” Additionally, riding requires the rider to be aware of his own actions, as well as focus on events occurring in the world around him, yet another DeVille biking/business analogy.

Dwain, 53, drew his conclusions from years spent in both business and motorcycling environments. An orange 1972 Honda CB100 at age 16 (his dad’s bribe to not buy a car) began his love affair with two-wheeled transportation. His love for business fell into place years later, while working for a company specializing in bank turnarounds. He then entered the world of entrepreneurship with his own business-management consulting firm, which he still operates.

Dwain says a bout with cancer during his late 40s spurred a reevaluation of goals, likes, and dislikes

scenic riding locations throughout the country. Morning and afternoon work sessions will bookend midday riding time. The workshops will last four days to one week, probably using one hotel as a base with rides leaving every day from there to various locations. “By the end of the week, they’ll have their tactical plan put together,” says Dwain.

Dwain’s traveling workshop idea subsequently spawned the book idea, which sees fruition August 24 when its first edition hits store shelves. He hopes the book gives his riding workshops extra credibility while assisting the nonriding business population seeking advice.

While writing his book, Dwain thought about the often-bland business-inspiration posters that paper many corporate office walls, deciding those could use a motorcycle makeover as well. This launched yet another venture: a series of biking-themed posters to inspire corporate creative thinking. For example, a lineup of bikes outside the famed



