

# Surviving Winter Blues in Motorcycle Sales

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Winter is one of my favorite times of year, although my motorcycle enthusiastic friends tend to disagree. More than anything, they want to get out and ride, but with all the snow, ice and salt, not to mention it's freezing out, they don't want to take their bikes out. You are probably thinking that there is no possible way for you to increase sales, it's nearly impossible to get people into the parking lot, let alone the store!

This brings me to my first point, your store must have an immaculate parking lot! Think about it: you have to run to the store to pick something up, as you pull in your car slides on the ice, you almost lose control. How much time do you want to spend in the store now? As little as possible! Your heart is racing and you want to get to the safety of your home as soon as possible. If you hire a service to clean the snow off of your lot, make sure they are doing a good job. You may still have to send employees out to shovel the snow on occasion. Salt. While salt may be necessary to help get rid of ice patches, customers don't like walking on it. If you have to use salt, once the ice patches are gone, clean up the salt! You can even use your clean parking lot as something to advertise "Most ice/salt-free parking lot in the area". People are willing to go the extra mile for a little added comfort.

Offer customers a way to warm up when they come into your store; coffee, cider, and hot chocolate to drink while



they browse. They will have a tendency to drink the entire beverage while walking around your store before they actually decide on any purchases; this gives you more time to sell them things they would not have purchased otherwise. You might even consider having small food items available for a donation, have the money donated go to a local charity, everybody loves a good charity.

Focus on the motorcycle winter 'to-do' list. What maintenance can bike owners have done during the winter time so that it's ready for spring? What can your business do to help bike owners get this done? Bikes need to be cleaned for winter storage, perhaps you can hold a bike-wash in late fall. Offer owners the use of your water, again for a donation and they can provide their own supplies. You can also have some employees available to clean bikes for a flat fee, or even offer a class for a slightly higher fee and teach owners how to clean their bikes, have them purchase the appropriate equipment. You might even consider offering a service where a team can go to the customer and clean the bike, or pick up the bike and bring it to the shop for its cleaning and maintenance.

What about the dedicated rider? We all know someone whose goal is to ride at least once a month for as long as they can (a friend recently made it to 19 months, in Wisconsin!). There's gear and accessories that can make winter riding more favorable! Heated handles, jackets with built in heating systems, both great items that people would be willing to purchase if they feel it will extend their riding season.



Where should you advertise? Well, where's the one place that you still go to in the winter time (aside from the bar)? The grocery store! That's right; the local grocery store is one of the most frequently visited stores during the winter time. You might consider advertising on the back of the grocery receipt or even in the flyer of the grocery cart. How about the mall? Everybody's nightmare in December, the mall is another great place to advertise. Thousands of people out shopping and shuffling from store to store, some satisfied with their purchases, others lost in a world of uncertainty of what to get for their spouse. A girl can only wear so many diamonds at one time, and a guy can only wear one tie at a time, so why not buy them some new motorcycle gear for

the upcoming season?

What about actual motorcycle sales? Remember that immaculate parking lot you have, you might have a few days throughout the winter that you roll bikes out to display them. There is nothing like the winter sun reflecting off the white snow and onto the beautiful chrome on a motorcycle. I know I'd want to check them out. Don't have them out every day, use them as more of a 'teaser', people will drive by and see the shiny bikes out on display and think that they'll stop by next time. Rotate the outdoor inventory, when they see different motorcycles out a few days later, they will have the urge to stop because they are hoping you didn't sell the one they saw displayed the other day.

For used motorcycles you might consider doing a fact sheet with the 'bike name' and what the bike's wish list is. For



example, the used bike has been lowered by the original owner and has flames on the sides - its wish list might include the need for a spicy personality with "high expectations" from a vertically challenged motorcycle, it might also list the need for a fire extinguisher due because "it's on fire" persona and hopes for a spacious parking spot in the garage, oh and has a sweet tooth... These random wish lists may get you sales from people who came in with no intent on purchasing a bike but fall in love with the wish list and how it fits their personality - which means you had better know who your customers are!

One final bit of advice, save up for the winter. It's my least favorite part about winter (aside from the weather). If all of my advice fails miserably and your sales don't increase, make sure that you have enough money set aside to pay the bills and your employees. Everyone wants to succeed and your employees want to see you and your store succeed (hopefully!) but they can't help you or your business if they aren't getting paid. Keeping a positive attitude going throughout your employees, will keep it going throughout the store, which means it will spread to your customers. Happy customers are returning customers!

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