

MOTORCYCLE RIDERS FOUNDATION

Meeting of the Minds

Sept 22-24, 2011

Detroit, Michigan

Report by Donn Heflin

General sessions provided information on the broader issues facing the motorcycle community from a nationwide and worldwide standpoint.

Breakout sessions attended:

ACCESSING PUBLIC TV: The presenters have established a half-hour live, weekly show that airs several months a year where they discuss issues of local importance for the ABATE of Chicago as well as publicizing local events. Viewers can call in to the show. The show has greatly enhanced the organizations visibility in the community and allowed a forum for discussion of local issues involving motorcycling.

Participants were encouraged to look into this free means of getting word out. Radio works as well if cable TV is not available. The presenters emphasized two fundamental premises: keep it fun and stay flexible. These were clearly evident in the clip shared with the participants.

GETTING MORE “BANG” FOR YOUR BUCK: MARKETING YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE:

More and more people are using Social Media (SM) to get information and to interact. This session discussed the pros and cons of the current major SM products related to organizations.

- FaceBook (FB) is currently the biggest social network being used. Most of the discussion was about FB.
- Google+: This product is new and they believe it will compete well with FaceBook.
- Twitter: Not a big force in the Motorcycle world
- YouTube: This is already huge and growing. More and more marketers are using this
- My Space: This product is a “no go”

Participants shared their experiences with SM (mostly FB) in addition to the material presented by the speakers. Key points made were:

- Organizations using SM must run it like a business and keep a professional presence in order to be successful.
- SM marketing takes time to build a successful network.
- SM must be monitored to remove inappropriate posts ASAP since you cannot control what other people post on the site. Participants said that this does involve a considerable time commitment.
- Standards on what would be removed should be established.

Use of a FB fan site vs. creating a corporate site on FB was discussed. A corporate page reaches more potential members using ads that will hit other sites. It will compile statistics on the page use on criteria such as age group, day of week, who comments, etc. You have more control over what goes on with the account. However, a corporate page costs. A fan page is free.

YouTube is seeing a huge increase in use by marketers. This is a new enough venue for marketers that it is still mostly unregulated, so you must be very aware of what is going on with your submissions.

A number of additional tips were provided for effective SM.

SPORTBIKE RIDERS; BRIDGING THE GAP: Three 20 something sport bikers from Colorado talked candidly about what they want/like and what will turn them away. These individuals are also ABATE members who were wary of the organization when they initially encountered it. The ABATE coordinator for the State of Colorado shared her insights into how she was able to bridge the gap which led to these riders joining and advocating for ABATE. She emphasized not rushing in to sell the organization, but to become a presence in functions attended by sport bikers and open dialogs about things they care about. Persistence and respect is key.

Some of sport biker particular likes and dislikes as shared by the participants are below, in no particular order. Juneau being different than Colorado, not all of these things are directly applicable, but are food for thought.

- Love to talk about their bikes
- Love to talk about rides
- Love to work on their bikes
- Like racing and stunts
- Want to ride, long rides, not ride and stop
- End rides at race track or stunt lot...not picnic
- Don't do poker runs....scavenger rides are great
- Love riding gear..raffle off a helmet
- Have on-line applications available on site...they won't go to a website
- Information provided should be written and succinct (true/false sheet)
- Helmet issues are not big, look for common safety issues
- Helmet cams big, put videos on line of rides
- Include a picture of sports bike on literature
- NO Patches.....stickers OK

MAGIC MEMBERS AND TOXIC MEMBERS: Every club or organization, which has been in existence very long, encounters members who seem to be working on an agenda that is disruptive and destructive. This session discussed three levels of "toxicity" and how to identify what level you are dealing with. It provided insight into which people can be turned into productive members and how to go about doing that. Keys for identifying those that will continue to work against you and how best to "see them to the door" were shared. Dealing with these individuals takes valuable time and energy and at the higher toxic levels, the efforts will be turned against you creating divisions in the organization and possibly usurping those currently in authority.

There was a brief discussion on magic members. They are the ones who get the work done and further the purpose of the organization. Recruit and steal these people whenever you can.

Remember, all of us are both magic and toxic members in some part.

