

## Spate of New Hires Recognizes Need to Invest in Sales Teams

Industry hiring news came to a standstill in the first few months of the year. Indeed, the usual swinging door of people coming and going throughout the industry seemed as though it had slammed shut.

But a recent spate of hires suggests that companies are filling empty positions as they look ahead toward the coming season.

Across the industry, bike manufacturers and component makers alike are

announcing new hires.

Felt recently hired a communications veteran and Cane Creek expanded its marketing team and restructured sales territories. Focus Bicycles is gearing up for its U.S. launch with a new sales manager. Meanwhile, Lake has bolstered its outside rep team and FSA, Reynolds Cycling and KHS Bicycle Parts have added to their inside sales teams.

The type of hires—mostly in sales

and marketing roles—indicate recognition among industry companies that they need to invest in people to represent their brands.

Companies realize that they need a proactive marketing and PR strategy to boost brand awareness. As consumers pull back on purchasing, companies need to keep their brand front of mind among consumers.

And companies can't simply wait for sales to come to them; they have to get

out there and proactively push their wares. As dealers become more selective, companies also need to provide more attentive service to continue to receive dealer loyalty.

Resisting the inclination to retreat in this economy, companies are positioning themselves well to increase sales in a tough environment by investing in marketing expertise, reinforcing sales teams and shoring up customer service departments.

## Guest Editorial

## An Economic Recession Is a Terrible Thing for Dealers to Waste

BY TOM SHAY

Years ago there was a series of radio and television ads that stated, "a mind is a terrible thing to waste." The same could be said for the recession. While many see the recession as a terrible thing, I believe it is a wonderful opportunity for those who know how to take advantage of it.

The recession provides great opportunities because of the moves many businesses take in response to the downturn in the economy. How can you make money from the recession? Start by listing all of the competitors within your community. Think of the major and secondary product lines they carry. Look at the hours they are open and the advertising they do. Then shop their busi-

nesses looking to see how much sales help they have available to customers as well as looking at their inventory from both the width of the product offerings as well as the depth of inventory.

While this is an exercise you should be performing year round in any economic circumstances, watch carefully to see how they are reacting. You are likely to see changes in many areas; shorter hours, less help in the shop and on the floor, incomplete selection and even product lines that are being dropped.

Look at this as an opportunity to take care of the customers your competitor is now ignoring. You may find competitors that no longer offer Sunday hours, evening or Saturday afternoon hours. For many dealers these hours are actu-

ally the best with regard to sales dollars per hour. These dealers have made the cuts not from logic, but from the point that these hours are the fringes of the sales period and they are cutting back on all kinds of fringes.

This represents times when they are telling customers to "go somewhere else." However, it is not that customers are changing their shopping habits during a recession, but it is indicative of a business that has not studied their customers' shopping habits. Now these customers can become yours.

The same can happen with inventory. A retailer gets the idea they need to get rid of 20 percent of their inventory so they begin to slow down in reordering, looking at new items and not attending

Interbike. What's wrong with this? They can't make money by letting money sit in a checking account. When they decrease inventory by any amount, they don't do so by eliminating the slowest selling items; they let everything diminish—even the best sellers. Again this represents another opportunity to have in stock what the customer wants when they want it.

You can look at the recession in two ways. It can be a storm that you are trying to learn how to weather, or it can be a rainstorm and you are learning to dance in the rain.

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