

A Business Publication Should Cover Important Decisions

Retailers and suppliers should keep an eye on the late June meeting of Bikes Belong's board of directors. Their decision could affect how this industry does business.

With that said, let us explain where we stand on the matter. *Bicycle Retailer and Industry News* strives to be non-partisan in its news coverage. There are those who would debate that point. Nonetheless, we try to be fair and transparent about those whom we cover.

But as Interbike and Bikes Belong work through their relationship, we

want to clarify our relationship with Interbike, Bikes Belong and the NBDA.

Nielsen, the same company that owns Interbike, owns *Bicycle Retailer and Industry News*. However, five years ago, while the magazine was under the corporate control of VNU, the National Bicycle Dealers Association had an opportunity to license it.

The license agreement requires the NBDA to manage the magazine and to remit a percentage of revenue to its owner—Nielsen—as a licensing fee. Whatever profits are left after taxes are

used by the NBDA to support programs like its regional dealer seminars.

The agreement also allows the magazine to maintain its editorial independence from any group. We have never met the newest Nielsen executives, but we do have a close relationship with Interbike's staff. They have done a superb job producing a great show under sometimes trying circumstances.

We also know and work with Tim Blumenthal, Bikes Belong's executive director. We know many of its current board members and have nothing but

praise for the coalition's work.

But neither Bikes Belong nor Interbike were eager for us to report on their round of talks. Nonetheless, when Bikes Belong—or any other group—seriously considers launching a trade show, that's news of utmost importance to the industry. It affects thousands of retailers and many hundreds of suppliers.

Reporting on this is what a business magazine should do. We will continue to follow this story without taking sides and we will strive for accuracy, context and background.

Guest Editorial

No Reason to Twitter? There Is, If You Want to Reach Teens

BY DONNA M. TOCCI

Blog. Podcast. Social Networks. Texting. Twitter. Sounds like a foreign language to many people, except to 12-24 year olds and savvy marketing folks. New media and social media have evolved the way we communicate. Businesses need to be aware of these changes, accept them and start using eMedia to thrive in the future.

Why does a shop, distributor or bike company need to think about new media? Because the teenagers of today are your customers and employees of tomorrow. They are the talent pool that your company will want to pull from. How they communicate now and in the future will influence where they choose to work; they will not want to work for a seemingly non-progressive company. It may also dictate whom they choose as business partners in those jobs. It will certainly affect their purchases and where they choose to shop.

Internal communication has, traditionally, been delivered via in-person meetings, phone calls, memos and audio conference calls. External communication was delivered through letters, press releases, faxes and advertising via television, radio, magazines and newspapers.

Communicating internally means very different things now. No longer do we all need to be in the same place to work quickly and efficiently. Email, internal blogs, instant messaging, videoconferences and wikis (collaborative Web sites) make it easy to work with anyone globally.

Reaching external customers can be done in a number of ways such as texting, blogging, podcasting, social networking, forums, YouTube, wikis, Twitter (micro-blogging) and instant messages. Email has become a traditional mode of communication with estimates at 46 percent of 18-27 year

olds using instant messaging more than email. Their expectation is for instant information. This same demographic is multi-tasking. They are surfing the Web, instant messaging, listening to Internet radio and texting—all simultaneously.

This group also expects messaging to be completely different. The more personalized for them or customized for their social group, the better. They want to socialize with you, get to know you. They want communication that is interactive, honest, transparent and has the potential to be collaborative.

All of this poses some challenges to businesses. But, if done honestly and with passion for the culture of the cycling groups the business touches, the rewards can be infinite. The companies that embrace new media will have their pick of talented employees and will have the best chance at reaching future generations of cyclists as customers.

What does all this mean? Should you start a blog, a podcast and join Twitter all at once? Abandon all forms of traditional communications? Certainly not. There is still a need for phone calls, emails, invoicing and good old-fashioned customer service.

A blend of traditional and new communications will be the best way to reach your internal and external audiences. Research some of these new mediums and evaluate the best ones to incorporate into your communications plans. Most are easy to use and relatively cost effective, in some cases even free.

It's a new world out there, join the fun and, in the process, create customer relationships for life.

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SHOP TALK



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