

Orange County Dealer Tour



Photos by Jake Orness



Retailers Confident in Consumer Spending

Bike shops operating inside the Orange County bubble appear to have it made. Orange County is a cycling paradise. Year-round sunshine, wide bike lanes and plenty of protected bikeways create a bike-friendly atmosphere.

Southern California's mild winter climate is also a bonus for the region's retailers. It's not like selling bikes in the Midwest, said Mike Milano, owner of Team Bike Works.

And in this wealthy enclave, where gated communities,

lush landscaping and ocean views abound, it's hard to see any signs of an economic downturn.

Indeed, the Orange County retailers that BRAIN editors called on in early November seemed generally insulated from the economic tempest bearing down on the rest of the country.

Among the 18 store owners visited on the magazine's Dealer Tour, most reported steady to strong sales through last October, with many posting double-digit increases.

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Darrin Duhamel said to hell with the corporate world seven years ago.

"I decided to burn all the suits in my closet and open a small business," said Duhamel, owner of Revo Bicycles. Considering his two passions in life were biking and scuba diving, the choice was made simple by the lack of two-wheeled services in Dana Point. "I really wanted to have ties in the community," he added.

Mission accomplished.

Besides offering bicycle service and expertise inside its walls, Revo is going into its third year sponsoring the Dana Point Grand Prix. Last year's race drew 7,000 locals, with 350 children racing in the youngsters' division.

"Ninety-nine percent [of those people] probably haven't seen a bike race before," Duhamel, 44, said. He expects at least 15,000 attendees this year.

Two years ago Revo won Dana Point's Business of the Year award, not only be-

cause the shop sponsors a big local race, but because it has become a gathering place for the community.

"On weekends this place gets crazy," Duhamel said.

The reason for this craziness might have something to do with cyclists and their affinity for coffee. Tucked into the front, right portion of the store is a coffee and tea bar with seating.

"It's created an environment of a destination location," he said. Next year, Duhamel will add a more relaxed do-it-yourself coffee bar area for the cyclist on the move.

You might be hard pressed to find an owner as uncompromising as Duhamel. When approached not too long ago by a brand to become a concept store, Duhamel most likely already had his black marker ready to clear out inventory of that brand.

"I resisted instantly," Duhamel said. "Good customers want choices. Manufacturers have to realize that we're their customers, not their employees."

In the coming year, Duhamel is adding another top-tier brand in his shop while most likely offering some new boutique brands as well. "I haven't committed to anyone yet," Duhamel said. "But we're talking with everybody."

Duhamel, who employs 10 staffers in-season and five during the off-season, expects 2009 to be a tough year. But he hopes to stay on par with 2008, which saw 38 percent growth over the previous year.

"We're holding our own," Duhamel said.

A couple years ago, Duhamel hoped to open a second store by 2009, but he knows that wouldn't be a prudent move in the current economic climate. "In this economy it's definitely a wait-and-see attitude," Duhamel said.

Another "wait and see" is Duhamel's ability to get back on a bike. An avid road bike rider, Duhamel has been battling major foot problems since a fall from a cliff 10 years ago.



"Multiple foot surgeries have kept me away from pedaling," he said. But, he hopes, with his doctor's guidance, to be out riding again this year.

Even if he can't get on a bike right now, Duhamel still wakes up each morning living a dream. "I'm around great bikes and I've got a great cup of coffee in my hand," he said. —Jason Norman

Bicycle Discovery Fountain Valley, California

Beach cruisers rule the sales floor

at Bicycle Discovery in Fountain Valley, located about five miles from the sand in Huntington Beach.

"My biggest day of the year is July 3," said John DeHart, the longtime manager

of Bicycle Discovery. "If you want to get to the beach to watch fireworks, you've got to have a bike."

Bicycle Discovery sells a little bit of everything, from 12-inch kids' bikes to fixed-gear Masis to \$3,500 Trek road bikes, but much of its sales floor is devoted to cruisers, which account for about 40 percent of bike sales. DeHart carries Nirve,

Electra and Phat in a variety of colors and styles to cater to the cruiser crowd, who is typically looking for a ride that shows off their personality.

"It's all style. It's all fashion. It's 90 percent what it looks like, what you look like and 10 percent how it rides," DeHart said. "One brand can't cover it."

DeHart has been in the business for three decades and, naturally, has seen a lot change in the industry. The biggest change, he thinks, is the market is splintering into more and more categories.



"We didn't have an urban classification two years ago," he said.

He believes in forging strong partnerships with his major suppliers, like Trek, and blacklists brands that sell outside the IBD channel.

"I'm old school and of the opinion that if you're going to sell to that guy you're not going to sell to me. I've dropped brands for that reason. You can't have it both ways," he said.

He believes bike shops shouldn't be warehouses and keeps shallow quantities in stock. He reduced his BMX brands from five to three because the inventory wasn't turning over quick enough.

"It's not the money part, it's the floor

space. If something doesn't turn, you just don't need it," he said.

DeHart thinks the bike business is quite recession proof, although last year he noticed all the usual signs of customers cutting back—bikes sales in units were down while parts and service were up.

In fact, 2008 was the best year ever for labor at Bicycle Discovery as high gas prices propelled people to think about fixing up old bikes for commuting. In the height of the summer season, wait times were 10 days with a backlog of 65 bikes waiting to be serviced.

Bicycle Discovery also has a shop in San Diego. —Nicole Formosa



BiciSport
Laguna Hills, California

Marcel Calborn is a retail icon

with some impressive numbers behind his name.

He's been at his Laguna Hills location, BiciSport, for 26 years. Before that, the 64-year-old spent 18 years in Manhattan Beach. The former Colnago racer started his racing career at the tender age of 12, and to this day still logs triple-digit mileage on the pavement per week.

Beyond the numbers is a man with a loyal following, to the point of being a

little bit crazed.

"I have guys that send their bikes to me via courier," Calborn said. "It costs them \$100. I deal to the whole country."

And although Calborn was recently forced to cut his shop in half because his rent increased, the nondescript storefront located in a strip mall with a neighboring Chuck E Cheese and Big 5 Sporting Goods still reeks of nostalgia. Whether it be his own frames—Celo Europa and Calborn—or those of Colnago and De Rosa, Calborn's shop is for someone looking for excellence, both in product and repair.

"Some people say the [repair] price is high, but that's what it's going to be when I'm working on your bike for six to seven hours," Calborn said.

Like so many growing up in Europe, Calborn had a soccer ball at his foot. Next door to the soccer locker room, however, was Calborn's destiny—the bicycle.

"The guys [who ran the bicycle club] asked me if I had a bike. I said, 'Oh



sure I have a bike," Calborn said, with a smirk. "No, I didn't have a bike."

His first race was on a women's-specific bike much too small for his frame. "I had to ride the whole time standing up," Calborn recalled.

These days Calborn is more than happy to give back to the sport that has given him so much. Every Sunday for the past six months he's forgone his 50-plus mile rides for something much more mellow for beginners.

But that doesn't mean he doesn't like to challenge himself.

"Once a year I take a group of riders to the Dolomites," Calborn said. "It's so beautiful." —Jason Norman



Orange Cycle
Orange, California

Among the retail lessons John Pavlisin has learned

from his father is the importance of owning your building.

"Money stays in your pocket. I've heard of stores doing OK moving, but you can be knocked out if someone else is willing to pay more rent. When you've put time into a location, that can be devastating," said Pavlisin, whose father, John Sr., built the building that houses Orange Cycle in 1974 on a former gas station site.

John Sr. purchased the shop on a whim in 1969. At the time an employee of Douglas Aircraft, John Sr. didn't want to relocate to Long Beach with the company. He walked into a bike shop to buy a tube for his daughter's Schwinn and walked out the new owner of the business. His wife said it was the only time he was ever late coming home for dinner.

The shop remains a true family busi-

ness. John Sr., now 82, still works the floor. And working behind the counter on a busy Tuesday afternoon along with John Pavlisin Jr. was his mom, and sister, Vicky. And like any family, they don't always get along.

"We argue like siblings," said Al Boneta, the store's manager.

But that formula seems to work. Pavlisin said sales were up 38 percent in October, much of that due to increases in labor and parts from people bringing in old bikes for service.

"People are bringing out relics—stuff I remember selling 20 years ago," he said.

Still, Pavlisin is playing it safe with purchasing for this year.

"In the past we've bought heavy; this year we're not going as deep," he said.

Specialized is its No. 1 supplier, but the shop stocks a wide range of brands including Giant, Diamondback, Schwinn, Bianchi and Electra.

"My definition of concept is choice," Pavlisin said.

He said price increases on new model

year bikes are making him nervous for the coming year.

"People are balking a bit," Pavlisin said, particularly at price increases on cruisers, BMX bikes and kids bikes.



One other lesson Pavlisin has learned from his dad: you gotta buy right. "If you buy right, you can sell right," he said.

To ensure the right product mix, he stays involved in purchasing.

"One thing I will never give up is buying," he said. "That's a mistake most owners make—they give up on purchasing and are out of touch." —Megan Tompkins

Surf City Cyclery
Huntington Beach, California

High-end bikes reign supreme

at Huntington Beach's Surf City Cyclery.

"We just sold a \$10,000 bike last week," Surf City manager TJ Jordan said in November, citing a Cervélo R3 spec'd with Campy's new 11-speed gruppo and a \$3,000 wheelset.



At 11,000 square feet, Surf City is the largest Specialized concept store on the West Coast. Specialized graphics adorn the shop's red and white walls and the brand's accessories fill the racks. The shop is immaculate with an open floor plan, exposed ceiling and bright lighting.

Surf City is known in the beach community for selling high-end road bikes, and is the No. 3 SL2 dealer in the country. And while mountain biking isn't accessible from town without a short drive, Jordan attributes about 40 percent of sales to the mountain category.

Although about 89 percent of sales are Specialized bikes, the shop also carries Intense, Felt and Niner, as well as Nirve to please the cruiser crowd that's inevitable in any Southern California beach town.

The shop is located in a former furniture store anchoring a shopping plaza off Huntington Beach's main drag, Beach Boulevard. It's across the street from the upscale outdoor Bella Terra Mall, which received a massive overhaul in late 2005.

The following June, Sean Flynn opened Surf City after leaving Supergo Bikes, which had recently been bought by Performance. Jordan and 12 other Supergo employees came with him.

Choosing to be a Specialized concept store was a no-brainer, according to Jordan, as the group had already been selling the brand at Supergo, and many customers who followed them to the new store were loyal to the brand. —Nicole Formosa

Rock N' Road Laguna Niguel, California

Armed with a loan from his father,

Rock N' Road Cyclery founder Matt Ford opened his first bike shop in Mission Viejo in 1991 when he was just 22 years old.

By then, he'd already been working in bike shops for six years and was ready to venture out on his own.

A decade later, he opened his second shop in Laguna Niguel. Next, Ford expanded into Anaheim Hills where, with Specialized, he built the first concept store in the United States from the ground up.

For Ford, a former Trek dealer, partnering with a strong supplier like Specialized was strictly a business decision.

"We were interested in making a big operation, moving inventory and obviously making as much money as possible," he said. Besides Specialized, Rock N' Road also stocks Look, Nirve and Haro bikes.

The Irvine location, which opened in

May 2007, was also built as a concept store and the Laguna Niguel shop has been remodeled to reflect the concept style with hardwood floors, custom displays and Specialized graphics.

The Mission Viejo shop is slated for a similar renovation early this year.

The four locations employ 50 people and Ford also maintains a business office and central warehouse in Lake Forest.

In 17 years, Ford has built an impressive company, especially considering he's still in his 30s, but he hasn't done it alone—he has three business partners who all have an ownership stake in the company.

That's not to say there haven't been a few rough patches along the way. In 2007, the company experienced its first down month in its history as wildfires closed popular trails and clogged the air, right around the same time as the Orange County housing bubble began to burst.

Last year business rebounded, although it still hasn't surpassed 2006 numbers. September and October were up in 2008, but Ford has noticed changes in how cus-



tomers are shopping. Sales under \$1,000 and over \$6,000 are strong, but the mid-range has suffered as middle-income consumers are holding onto their money.

"They're playing it safe," he said.

As for the future, Ford says he's in no rush to expand his Orange County bicycle empire, but new stores are likely thanks in part to the security he enjoys from his alignment with Specialized.

"We're able to weather the storm pretty well," he said. "Some companies who aren't partnered with a Specialized or Trek won't weather the storm as well."
—Nicole Formosa

The Path Bike Shop Tustin, California

Tani Walling was a 24-year-old bartender and manager

at the Tustin Brewing Company when he decided to trade in pints for another passion: bikes.

"I liked working on bikes and I found

myself selling my friends mountain bikes at shops I had no affiliation with," Walling said.

So he opened his own. The Path Bike Shop debuted in 1998 in a 500-square-foot space in a small commercial building in downtown Tustin.

Little by little, Walling has taken over more space as it's become available and today his shop occupies 4,000 square feet, including storage rooms and office space.

Every nook and cranny of the main sales floor is filled with display cases of components. Armor, gloves, saddles and other accessories cover the walls. Wheels and frames dangle from the ceiling and Ellsworth, Turner and Pivot frames protrude from the wall behind the cash register.

The service area is in an adjoining room, allowing customers to chat with the techs as they work. Another small room houses neat rows of Bianchi, Specialized and Kona bikes.

Ten years after he opened The Path, Walling said he still enjoys bikes, but running a bike shop has been a bit of a rollercoaster ride.



The biggest dip occurred in late 2007, when a series of devastating wildfires ripped through the region, forcing the closure of nearly all the popular mountain bike trails nearby.

Business flatlined for several weeks. The shop was ringing up \$200 days compared with the usual \$6,000 days.

To adjust, Walling cut his costs by foregoing new hires or technology upgrades and changed his product mix to include more transportation bikes, fixed-gear and single-speed urban brands and sub-\$1,000 road bikes.

"There were plenty of times throughout the last 12 months where it really was for survival. We're not used to that," Walling said.

At the end of 2008, things were looking good—as of October, sales were up 4 percent and service was up 20 percent over the year prior—despite one week-end of almost no sales courtesy of another round of Southern California wildfires.

This year, Walling is moving out of defense mode. He plans to hire more staff and start placing larger orders with suppliers. —Nicole Formosa

Edge Cyclesports Laguna Woods, California

You won't see any kids, mountain, cruiser or commuter bikes at Edge Cyclesports.

But for road and tri enthusiasts, walking into the 2,000-square-foot shop is like strolling the aisles of a candy store.

Husband and wife team Hank and Mary Ann Iglesias opened the business 10 years ago to sell and service high-end road and tri bikes—a niche they claim keeps growing despite mounting local and online competition.

"We wanted to build the shop around enthusiasts, racers and triathlons. Distributors were skeptical at first and look at us now," Mary Ann Iglesias said. "Many shops are now doing it. But up until four years ago, we were the only tri shop in the area."

The shop expanded four years ago, adding 800 square feet of showroom space.

Hank got his start in the industry in 1979 working for various bike shops in Ohio. He worked for Raleigh in the 1980s when the company gave concept stores a try, opening five shops in three states with central buying in Columbus, Ohio, Iglesias said.

But a job opening for a landscape architect in California prompted them to move in 1990. The job fell through, but an opening for a mechanic at Bicycles Etc kept them in the sunny state where years later they would open Edge.

The Laguna Woods shop, which employs four full-timers and one part-timer, lures in customers from as far as 90 miles away with brands such as Cervelo, Calfee, Felt, Guru, Independent Fabrication, Ridley and Seven, as well as some tri accessories such as wetsuits.

Business is evenly split, with 50 percent of sales coming from tri and the other half from road. And while road sales mostly span from January through June, triathlon is almost a year-round business, Iglesias said.

She attributes the shop's success to its longevity, Hank's experience and their





Two Wheels One Planet Costa Mesa, California

As a child in the 1960s,

Mike Mulrooney cut the ribbon for the grand opening of the bike shop that now houses Two Wheels One Planet. Four decades later, he's still showing up at the shop.

In 1972, Mulrooney's family bought the Costa Mesa shop from a family friend, and Mulrooney now runs the business, which also includes a shop in Lake Forest. For many years the Costa Mesa shop was known as Sea Schwinn Bicycle, but Mulrooney changed the name two-and-a-half years ago when it began causing confusion because the shop no longer sold Schwinn bikes.



Now it's filled with a range of bikes from Trek, Giant, Nirve, Electra, Masi and Haro. A large selection of cruiser bikes—a sign that the beach is only a

mile away from the shop—welcomes customers as they walk in the door.

The environmental undertone of the shops' current name is no accident; Mulrooney wanted something that spoke to the advocacy side of the business.

Two Wheels One Planet has worked with Rails to Trails and other local advocacy groups and this past summer started a commuter incentive program offering discounts to customers who pledged to go by bike.

"In this part of the country, in this part of the state, people are starting to realize that they can do a few things without being in the car. For us, this whole thing is forcing us to rethink the wheel," Mulrooney said, standing in front of a poster displaying customers' commuting pledges.



While the commuter category has done well for Two Wheels One Planet, Mulrooney admits he's pessimistic about the current economic climate.

After seeing strong growth during the first nine months of the year, "October hit and it was like slamming against the wall," he said.

The shop is promoting its layaway program and sales staff are upselling the consumer financing program and following up with potential customers who visit the shop, but don't make a purchase.

"I think that's the only way we're going to stay in business. We can't just wait for customers to come in the door," Mulrooney said. —Nicole Formosa

customer base, made up of affluent and highly active road and triathlon racers.

The Iglesiases have worked hard to establish strong ties to the racing and enthusiast community. Aside from sponsorships, their shop offers full race support, including wheel and tri wetsuit rentals, and through a partnership with TriBike Transport, serves as the pick-up and drop-off store for triathlons.

Customers drop off their bike, which is then shipped fully assembled to their event or race destination. Afterwards, the bike is shipped back to the shop for the customer to pick up. "This allows us to have direct contact with new customers and it's a good way for us to get in with the tri market," Iglesias said.

Their clientele, many of whom are engineers or workers in high-tech and finance sectors, demands quick service and immediate response to e-mail or calls asking about new product in stock. To keep up, they installed a high-speed T1 line in the shop a few years ago. "We have to be on the cutting-edge—constantly shifting to what's hot," Iglesias said.

They also focus on quick service, providing a 48-hour turnaround, and offer same-day service by appointment. "We are built around service," Iglesias said, adding that bike fit is a big part of business. The shop does on average 120 bike fits per year.

Summing up the essence of their business model, Iglesias said, "Our customers come to hang out after work to talk tri. They're not looking for the cheapest price." —Lynette Carpiet

www.bicycleretailer.com

Team Bike Works Huntington Beach, California

Mike Milano lives in the heart of surf culture.

This ocean side town made famous by Jan and Dean's 1963 summer hit, Surf City, is a Mecca for low-tech, low-cost, high-style beach cruisers.

And the beach goes flock to Milano's unassuming storefront in a tiny strip mall with a pizza place next door and a

7-Eleven on the corner. Last year sales at Team Bike Works were up more than 25 percent and he's about to bust down some walls in preparation for a \$15,000 remodel.

Is he worried about the economy? Yes, but Milano sells lots of bikes in the \$200 to \$700 range and for most consumers, it's a price they are willing to pay to be seen on a cruiser in Huntington Beach.

While Milano's main brand is Giant, it's beach cruisers that fly out the door. And, as he says with a smile, Christmas comes twice a year—once in December and once again on July 4th.

"This is my best year ever," he said, noting that his 3,000-square-foot store is one mile from the beach. Milano has owned it for 10 years.

The 46-year-old Milano has been in the industry for 25 years and is a former regional sales manager for Serfas.

He enjoys another advantage in this small non-descript strip mall. His landlord is the convenience store chain and former cycling team backer 7-Eleven. He has a cordial rental relationship with the company.

His store also lies in an upscale,

well-established community with a culture that thrives on "cool."

Where else can you sell a basket for \$25 and then sell a Terry-cloth basket cover to keep your Chihuahua from trembling for another \$35? And, for the truly fashion-forward, one cover isn't enough. "I can't believe how many people put their dogs in those baskets," Milano said.

Like other retailers in the area, he's seen a spike in fixie sales as young kids buy parts and try to build their own bikes. And like others, he also enjoyed a sharp spike in parts and accessory sales during last summer's run-up in gas prices.

But as gas prices tumble to near record lows, particularly in car-crazed Southern California, it's uncertain whether the region's newfound love of cycling will continue at levels seen last summer.

If Milano has a concern—besides the current economy—it's the Internet. Young kids are very savvy when it comes to the Web, he points out, and that puts pricing pressure on all retailers.

Still, Milano is optimistic and he offers two words of advice: Stay focused. —Marc Sani



Jax Bicycle Center Irvine, California

Dave Hanson got his start as a bicycle shop owner in a rather unusual place—

television's "The Newlywed Game."

He and his wife won the game show in 1986 and sold their prize for a down payment on their first home. They later borrowed against the equity in the home so Hanson could buy his first shop.

Fast forward almost two decades, and he's built up his company to include seven Southern California shops with an eighth in the works—all Trek concept stores.

He recently broke ground on the new store in Murrieta, which is slated to open April 1. The new shop is the first he's built from the ground up, and the logistics—from planning and permits to responding to concerned neighbors—have proved challenging.

"It's the hardest thing I've ever done in business," Hanson said.

The new building is 16,000 square feet, but Hanson plans to lease half the space. He will dedicate 1,500 square feet of the new space to a women's-specific store to help capitalize on that demographic.

"I don't know how to do women's business," Hanson admitted. "By going that direction, it will really force us to sink or swim."

Hanson is a gregarious man who speaks in a booming voice and gestures excitedly as he describes his business practices.

He prides himself on honesty and shares the shops' financial figures with his 80 employees three times a month. He's a numbers man and abides by the motto: "If it gets measured, it gets done."



Hanson's goal is to run his business as efficiently as possible and he's taken steps over the years to achieve that goal.

In 2005, he was working with 101 vendors and his top three suppliers were Specialized, Trek and Electra.

He decided to simplify and transitioned his stores to the Trek concept

model. Within 30 days, he'd dropped to 23 vendors.

In 2006 and 2007, he scaled back his marketing, implemented a payroll budget at his shops, reduced the number of employees in his business office from eight-and-a-half to three and began receiving shipments at individual stores instead of taking products in at a central location then redistributing orders to his various stores.

He also reduced his inventory by 14.5 percent and raised prices 2 percent on products like tubes, floor pumps and helmets.

His adjustments seem to have paid off. Although he started the year in the red due to a slow second half of 2007, by early November 2008, profits were up 61 percent, although sales were down 8.5 percent.

In the year ahead, he's planning remodels at four stores as well as opening the Murrieta location.

While it may seem a bit hectic, it's all part of what attracted Hanson to the bicycle industry more than 30 years ago.

"I like working for myself," he said. "I like figuring stuff out." —Nicole Formosa

Rainbow Bicycle Co. Laguna Beach, California

Chuck Densford saw his first mountain bike in 1981—

a Mountain Goat built by Jeff Lindsay—and chucked a 15-year career as a mechanic wrenching on German machines named BMW, Mercedes and Porsche.

Selling bicycles had to be more fun than putting up with snooty customers complaining about their Teutonic en-

gines, Densford reasoned. "I saw that bike and thought, 'That's the perfect form of transportation.'"

Densford owns Rainbow Bicycle Co., a small, cluttered shop along the main drag through Laguna Beach, California—a beachside town with attitude. This seaside resort attracts scores of tourists who flock to its galleries and restaurants. And Densford's funky shop is easy to miss if you're not looking.

But its ambience offers some of the old vibe that once characterized Laguna Beach. It's a hodge-podge of bikes, a mish-mash of accessories hanging from the wall and the repair area—wide open to customers—takes up as much room as his retail floor.

Densford also operates the most diversified shop from those visited during the weeklong tour. He sells new bikes, he sells used bikes, he sells his own brand of bikes, he services and repairs bikes, and he services, repairs and sells FlyScooters and old Vespas.

Do you want a 1966 Vespa 150 Super, clean as a whistle, and painted a shade of green that shouts Bianchi for \$3,795? He also sells new FlyScooters like the Il Belo. It pumps out 8.4 horsepower and gets 74 miles to the gallon. It seems to be the preferable choice when compared to pedal-



ing the steep hillsides that cradle Laguna Beach.

A few are parked outside his store, a civic privilege bestowed by city officials who blessed his motorized endeavor after much wrangling over the details.

"To me these are legitimate transportation," he said, noting the difficult terrain Laguna residents face when it comes to day-to-day commuting.

But Densford also has the mechanical training needed to service them, a skill most bicycle dealers lack. As a result, that part of his business now accounts for about 50 percent of his income.

Bike rentals are also part of his business. While talking, a customer dropped in to ask about renting two mountain bikes for him and his wife. "No problem," Densford said. "Come in tomorrow," he added. A few minutes later, a local walked in pushing a cruiser. He

needed to pump up the tires. Densford grabbed the air compressor hose, filled the tires, and thanked him for coming in.

And if there's a name-brand bike on the floor it's Densford's own—Psy-cleWerks—a full-suspension frame he has made here in the States. A dozen, most painted red, hung from the ceiling waiting to be built.

Densford has been riding bikes all his life and once commuted by bike between Laguna Beach and Balboa, where he lived.

Densford has been a longtime advocate of mountain biking and devoted years to fighting for trail access. Many Laguna Beach residents at one time opposed allowing mountain bikes on the many trails that lace the San Joaquin foothills that rise abruptly from Laguna's white-sand beaches. —Marc Sani



Laguna Beach Cyclery Laguna Beach, California

Patrick Fetzer came to Southern California because of bikes and stayed because of a girl.

A native of San Antonio, Texas, Fetzter came with his buddy who owned a bike shop there to Anaheim to attend Interbike in 1995. His buddy's sister took him to a beach party, where she wanted to introduce him to an Australian girl.

Fetzer said from the moment he saw Mango he was smitten. Surrounded by admirers, he wasn't sure how he could attract her attention. But she picked him out of the crowd and the rest is history. Fetzer and Mango are now married with

two kids, and Fetzer owns Laguna Beach Cyclery.

Established in 1971 in a building styled after a red barn, the shop exudes character with wood floors, jerseys hanging from the rafters and a range of boutique bike brands including Time, Cervelo, Pinarello, Yeti and Turner. "People appreciate the charm," said Fetzer, who took over the shop 10 years ago from an older couple.

"They maybe had one bike over \$400. To them it was more of a hobby. I would drop by to help out on the side or after a ride on the weekend," Fetzer said. His interest resulted in an offer to buy the store. "They gave me the better part of a year to get an SBA loan," he said.

Fetzer said buying into an existing store was helpful because the locals knew about it, but converting roadies into customers took some time.

"There wasn't a single road bike in



here when I bought it. Within two to three years the entire top row was road bikes," Fetzer said.

With his long untrimmed goatee, the 37-year-old looks more the part of a backpacker than a clean-shaven roadie. But his small frame and his racing pedigree, which includes a year in Italy, give him street credibility. "It assures I can speak confidently and truthfully when I give people advice," he said.

The shop, located on Thalia Street, made famous for its surf break, does a steady rental business of high-end road and mountain bikes. Fetzer hired some-

one to promote his bike rentals to local hotel concierges. He said the insurance to cover rentals eats up his rental income, but pulling in customers makes it worthwhile. "When you factor in the premium, we're not making much money, but it brings people into the shop and gets them spending," he said.

He said he has seen the customer base change over the past 10 years to be much more broad. "The group of people is not as exclusive," he said. "The exotic nature of brands has changed. Prices have come down, making it more accessible." —Megan Tompkins

Santiago Cycling Tustin, California

Robert Kahler minces no words.

He describes himself as a lousy businessman and a reluctant retailer.

But Kahler is modest when referring to his store, Santiago Cycling. At one time *The Orange County Register* picked it as one of the county's top three stores—no small achievement given the number of retail outlets in the county.

And his store organizes the Breathless Agony Ride, a century that starts in Sylvan Park and gains 12,000 feet in elevation over 114 miles. Kahler bills it as the toughest century in Southern California.

Santiago Cycling, while a Trek store, also offers its customers a peek at cycling history. Kahler has a dozen or more old framesets hanging from the ceiling. (When's the last time you've seen a titanium Teledyne?) "I like to collect them

when they come in," he said.

This former California master's champion (1986) and 61-year-old Vietnam Air Force veteran has carved out a unique niche in Southern California's diverse retail culture that combines his love of cycling, bicycles and fitness physiology.

His real passion is fitness physiology. Lined up along a wall are more than a dozen Monarch exercycles. Nearby is a



stack of rollers. And hanging above the exercise area is an array of fans to cool off the riders.

And as a national team coach, it is training, fitness, discipline and a commit-

ment to cycling that drives his business. And among the dealers visited during the tour, Kahler is the only one who runs a side operation centered on his store.

"My profit is far and away in the exercise business," he said. Kahler runs four fitness classes a year: an eight-week long session in the fall; a nine-week class in the winter; a six-week session in the spring and in late summer an eight-week class for middle-age riders 40 years and older. He can manage about 50 people per class, but said his business has fallen off slightly over the last two years.

He typically charges \$300 to \$400 per person. Each rider's VO2 max is tested; body fat is logged as well as weight and other physical information. Each participant logs data from every session and Kahler scrutinizes it for improvement.

As for the retail side of his business, he's been a Trek dealer for years, in part because Trek bikes had been made in the United States and he's disappointed that most of them today are made in Taiwan or China. But he remains committed to the brand.

Kahler predicts that Lance Armstrong's return to cycling will be "great



for the business and the industry." And given the slumping economy, the time may be right for the public to see the return of a genuine sports hero.

While Kahler sells mostly road bikes, and has a strong local following, he has seen sales dip. "Sales are down for me, especially in road bikes," he said. But like others, his repair business boomed last summer, with customers sometimes waiting up to 10 days to get their bikes.

As he looks back over his years in the industry, he sums his experience up in a simple phrase: "It's a good life." —Marc Sani

Cycle Werks Costa Mesa, California

Paul Deem took a chance on a new retail location nine years ago.

In Orange County, where the strip mall is ubiquitous, a local developer had pitched him on space in a strip mall with a twist.

“I bought it on concept,” said Deem, the owner of Cycle Werks. Two years later, he opened a shop in the upscale center, aptly named The Camp, which exudes an outdoor, earthy vibe with an outdoor store, an action sports store, a yoga studio and a vegan restaurant.

“The center has only come of age in the last three of the seven years,” he said.

In addition to the walk-in traffic, he benefits from buying into a marketing pool with other tenants to promote the center. “I’m always amazed at how hard it is to market a strip center. They do a lot of activity from a marketing standpoint,” Deem said.

The 2,750-square-foot store looks bigger than it is due to high ceilings and windows, but has little space for inventory. That’s not an issue, Deem said, because he’s not in the business of storing bikes.

“That’s what bike companies are for,” he said, adding that inventory is a horrendous burden on the retailer.

“It used to be you could buy one model of bike and put them in a warehouse. Today that’s hard to do. No one can stock anywhere near the product representation,” said Deem, who carries primarily Trek bikes and considers Trek a strong partner.

He said he refuses to sell based on



model year to keep stock from becoming outdated. “All we sell are new bikes,” he quipped.

Having worked in sales for Lawee Inc. in the 1980s, Deem was well schooled by Ben Lawee in how to run an efficient business.

“I don’t think what he did in the industry many people understand,” Deem said, of the man behind Univega. “He could design a bike, he could negotiate

with vendors and he could manage a warehouse.”

After Deem left Lawee, he slowly grew Cycle Werks into a five-store OC chain.

But feeling burnt out and overweight, the 51-year-old began to look at reducing his store count. The lanky former racer who rode on the ’76 U.S. Olympic team wanted to ride more. “I’d just as soon ride my bike 300 to 400 miles a week,” he said.

He has whittled his stores down to two locations. He sold his original Mission Viejo store to the owner of the local Jax chain last June. “We just continue to simplify,” Deem said.

Though his many years in the industry tell him he will weather this economic storm, he said the key for store owners will be to be present in their stores. “Owners have to spend more time in the store. A friend of mine who owns a pool business said, ‘I gotta go back to the store,’” Deem said.

And though he, too, intends to spend more time in his stores, he still plans to put in 200 to 500 miles per week. —Megan Tompkins

Buy My Bikes San Juan Capistrano, California

Suppliers need to get on the same page.

Jim Curwood, the owner of South County Cyclery, better known by its marketing catchphrase “Buy My Bikes,” said com-

panies need to stop promoting their own brands and cooperate to promote bicycles. “That’s where we’re flawed,” Curwood said. “We have to stop bickering.”

He said the industry has to do its part to get people off the couch and onto bikes. “The whole industry is just ripe to explode,” he said, gesticulating wildly.

But, he said the industry is guilty of overanalyzing product trends. “Just give me what I need,” he said.

He said it’s difficult to know what to buy when it’s time to place pre-season orders and it’s impossible to tell what will be hot for Christmas. So he holds a Thanksgiving weekend sale, where he’s been known to make \$30,000 in three days. The following Monday, he puts in orders with his vendors for everything that sold well. Everything that didn’t sell goes on sale.

“That’s the time to sell—don’t hang on to it,” he said.

With shoulder-length, sun-bleached hair, Curwood looks like he’s spent the better part of the past 30 years surfing. And he has. The lifelong surfer

still gets out in the water five to six times a week.

Shortly after moving to this beachside community when he was 20, he was asked to run a bike shop in 1978 as a retail storefront for Laguna Distributors, selling BMX bikes. He quickly added road bikes and later expanded the mix to include mountain bikes and beach cruisers. He currently carries brands including Giant, Kona and Electra.

Over the years he has taken on additional space twice, spreading across three retail spaces. He said the building’s owner promised him for years that he would have the opportunity to buy the building. But instead he sold it to the mayor’s son, Curwood said.

Curwood said he still believes the store has greater potential, but he likes his low-key lifestyle. “I haven’t worked super hard since 1992,” he said.

He said at one point he planned to relocate and open a larger store, but figured he would spend \$1 million to make \$4 million and simply have a bigger ego. “I just went surfing instead,” he said.



Instead of ambitious remodels or relocations, he sticks to the basics. His rules to recognize and reward staff are simple. “Tell your employees thank you at the end of the day,” he said. “Buy lunch for your employees each day.” —Megan Tompkins



Ladera Cyclery Ladera Ranch, California

Jeff Davis has followed a big learning curve since opening his store exactly four years ago.

“My biggest learning curve is if someone is going to pay \$6,000 for a bike, they’re going to wait for it. They know we’re going to get it for them, and we give them a realistic expectation for when to expect it,” said Davis, who said he has learned how the more tenured customer thinks.

A cycling enthusiast who worked for Siemens for 11 years before he burned

out, Davis had written a business plan for a bike shop a few years before he talked his wife into the business venture. Ladera Cyclery was the fifth business to open in a strip mall in a new planned development. In March 2007 Davis doubled his space by taking over the empty retail space next door.

“It grew with the community, it just snowballed,” said Davis, who lives in the



planned community with more than 8,000 residents. Davis said 75 percent of his customers come from Ladera Ranch, an area that has been hard hit by the Orange County housing slump.

When Davis opened the shop, he worked the service area in the front of the shop so he could greet customers. He asked friends to bring in their bikes to hang from the rafters to make it appear that service business was brisk. Now, he said, he can't keep service away.

He ensures quick turnaround times of less than five days, even during the summer crush. “We offer quick turnaround times and set expectations that are not more than we can achieve,” he said.

Although he has learned he doesn't need to have the exact model in stock to make a high-end sale, he carries an array of brands, including Cannondale, Felt and Scott. His sales track about 70 percent road to 30 percent mountain, and he said he sold a few more flat bar road bikes when gas rose this summer. His best-selling bike is Electra's Townie, which is a good fit for residents in the hilly neighborhood.

“I hear the comment our selection is good, especially because we're surrounded by concept stores,” Davis said. “I think it's refreshing for customers to see the number of brands.”

Although Davis said he thinks the media has made the economic downturn sound worse than it is, he has seen a slowdown in his business. He said



growth has plateaued, adding that margins have shrunk. “It's a little more difficult to maintain cash flow,” he said.

Among the steps he has considered to deal with tight cash flow is consolidating into his original retail space. “It's one of the things we have an option to do,” he said, adding that his landlord is flexible.

Still, he said he is willing to ride out these tough times.

“I opened the shop to be in the community for a long time, and hopefully my son will take over,” he said, referring to his 4-year-old who was born just weeks before the store opened.—Megan Tompkins

Fullerton Bicycles Fullerton, California

Mike Franze knows the dark side of the corporate world.

The former vice president of sales and marketing for Arizona Iced Tea landed in New York on 9-11 just 15 minutes before the first plane hit the World Trade Tower. At 2 p.m. that day he sat in a meeting where the executives acted as though nothing had happened.

“I lost my passion for that job that day,” he said.

Franze, a self-described inspired BMX racer, conveys his passion for cycling when he speaks about his current business. He bought his Fullerton store, a former Two Wheel Transit store, six

years ago this March. Three years ago he took over the Buena Park store from the same owner.

Combined store sales were up 25 percent last year through October. And he said last year, for the first time, Buena Park saw a good sales bump. But

his Fullerton store still outperforms the Buena Park location.

“The fact that it's still a family store—not a stiff concept store—works. It just has a good aroma and good flow,” he said.

Before Franze even purchased the Fullerton store, he began talking to Giant about the potential for the location. “I said, if I buy this business, will you help me out? Here we are six years later,” Franze said.

Fullerton Bicycles was the first pro-

totype Breakaway store—a base level Giant Retail Partner store—and has prominent Giant racks, fixtures and signage. Franze said as part of the remodel three years ago, he opened up the shop floor and created a retail environment suggestive of high-end brands like Armani and Gucci.

He said 55 to 60 percent of his purchasing dollars goes to Giant and he does well with the brand. He said his Giant Maestro full-suspension mountain bike sales, in particular, have been phenomenal.

“A lot of it is my passion for Giant—if I'm hustling a bike, it's going to be a Giant,” he said.

The store dedicates a good portion of the floor to BMX bikes and accessories. Franze said BMX is a gateway for many of his family sales. He cited as an example a dad who came in to buy BMX parts for his son and came back a few months later to buy a Giant Trance for himself.—Megan Tompkins





Orange County Dealer Tour

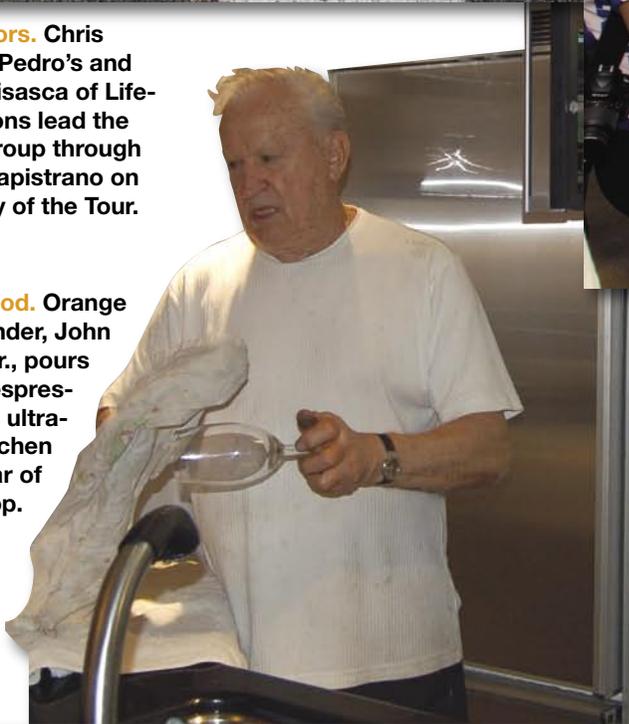
Photos by Nicole Formosa and Jake Orness



Road Warriors. Chris Zigmont of Pedro's and Lance Camisasca of Lifeboat Solutions lead the extended group through San Juan Capistrano on the final day of the Tour.



Kitchen God. Orange Cycle's founder, John Pavlison Sr., pours wine and espresso in his ultra-modern kitchen in the rear of the shop.



Captive Audience. Darrin Duhamel, owner of Revo Bicycles, explains to Tour participants his philosophy of offering brand choice and selection.



In Tandem. Giant president Tony Lo and BRAIN publisher Marc Sani share views on how specialty retailers are faring in this economy.



Caffeine Fix. The group fuels up on day two of the Tour with a quick pit stop at The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf in Irvine.





Tech Expert. Giant tech rep Evan Kay sets up a Giant road bike for NBDA executive director Fred Clements. Giant provided bikes for all Tour riders.



The Love Van. Tyler James, the man behind the wheel of Pedro's biodiesel love van, strikes a pose. James and his van accompanied riders, spreading Pedro's love to shops along the way.



Master Mechanic. Mainer Umana has been wrenching for 40 years, the last 10 at Bicycle Discovery in Fountain Valley. Like other O.C. shops, it reported strong repair business last year.

Still Smilin'. The group enjoyed blue skies, sunshine and jaw-dropping ocean views on the last day of the Tour. Here, riders pose outside Revo Bicycles in Dana Point.



On Air. Callers to Giant's toll-free line hear Giant athletes and dealers telling stories instead of hold music. Patrick VanHorn of Giant interviews Mike Milano, owner of Team Bike Works in Huntington Beach, for future air time.



Retailers...

Continued from page DT-1

Propped up by stellar service business and a healthy commuter trend, many expected to close out the year ahead.

Looking ahead, they expressed confidence in an industry that offers a strong value proposition to consumers looking for solutions to health issues, gas consumption or simply looking to fuel their passion for cycling.

Still, they see some dark clouds on the horizon and are making business adjustments in purchasing and inventory management to weather the storm.

Concern over the environment and a desire to be less dependent on foreign oil brought new customers into Orange County dealers last year. Many reported sales increases, buoyed by strong sales of commuter bikes, fixed-gear bikes, and parts and accessories.

Jim Curwood, owner of Buy My Bikes, said the store had its best June, July and August sales ever, attributing the boost to the spike in the cost of fuel.

Mike Franze's sales at Fullerton Bicycles and Buena Park Bicycles were up 25 percent last year through October compared to the previous year and were up in the month of October.

"In June it looked like the commuter bike boom was going to take off. We've seen some of that go away, but business is still better this year than it's been," Franze said in November.

Much of the increase shops saw last summer also was due to a sharp rise in service business. At Orange Cycle, sales

were up 38 percent in October thanks to service, labor and parts sales as consumers brought in bikes for repair.

Still, not all reports were rosy in the region, which saw overinflated home values fall back down to earth last year.

Many residents have lost home equity in Orange County, where median home prices declined 25.4 percent from September 2007 to September 2008.

In Ladera Ranch, a new housing development that has seen one of the

Recognizing that consumer spending may tighten, Orange County retailers are heading into the New Year with a healthy measure of caution.

Many have made adjustments, including buying more conservatively, choosing vendors more selectively and in some cases delaying pre-season orders.

Patrick Fetzter, owner of Laguna Beach Cyclery, said for 2009 he has been aggressive with softgoods buying but has held back on bike purchasing. And he's

**"They might not get their clothes to the dry cleaner or go skiing in Aspen, but they buy and want the latest equipment."
—Mary Ann Iglesias, Edge Cyclesports**

worst declines in the region, median home prices fell 34.5 percent in the same period.

Ladera Cyclery owner Jeff Davis said last fall growth stalled, sales flattened, and margins shrunk as he had to offer more discounts. "It's been a little bit more difficult to maintain cash flow," he said, adding that he's considered measures to reduce overhead.

Other retailers felt they had already survived the worst of the housing fallout the previous year. Matt Ford, owner of Rock n' Road Cyclery, with five locations in Southern California, said his business hit bottom in late 2007.

"We saw our first down month in 17 years last fall right when the housing bubble burst," Ford said, adding that sales have since stabilized.

dedicated his dollars to brands that have shown flexibility with payment terms.

"I've gone aggressive with a few vendors we have good relations with," Fetzter said. "Those who are really firm money collectors, I've held off from them."

Adding to the purchasing picture is concern over how price increases for 2009 model year bikes will impact sales. Retailers said price increases at the low-end in cruisers, BMX bikes and kids' bikes were particularly worrisome.

"We've never seen this big an increase. I think there are going to be a lot of obstacles in the next year," said Franze, who carries a wide selection of BMX bikes and parts at Fullerton Bicycles.

Although Franze has seen more price-conscious shoppers, he said he still sees traction in high-end sales, citing Giant

Trance full-suspension mountain bikes moving off the floor.

With an estimated median household income in 2007 of \$73,263, most Orange County residents have discretionary income. Even as locals have seen stock market values plummet and 401Ks wiped out, many still have cash to spare and a willingness to spend it on bikes.

"There are still people with plenty of money; we just have to figure out what they want to buy," Curwood said.

"These people are savvy and smart and they have money. They have jobs where they have time during the day to search for new product," said Mary Ann Iglesias, co-owner of Edge Cyclesports.

Iglesias believes affluent and highly active road racers and triathletes will continue to spend money to support their cycling obsession.

"It's their passion. They might not get their clothes to the dry cleaners or go skiing in Aspen, but they buy and want the latest equipment," she said.

Surf City manager TJ Jordan agreed cycling enthusiasts aren't willing to sacrifice their passion for cycling even in challenging times. He sees no reason why the industry won't continue to be successful this year, citing the return of Lance Armstrong as a positive factor.

Cycle Werks owner Paul Deem, who has more than 20 years of retail experience, characterized the mindset of Orange County retailers who are confident they can withstand the economic challenges ahead. "Historically speaking, my knowledge tells me we'll be just fine," Deem said. —Megan Tompkins



Thank You
to the Orange County dealers
that shared valuable insight
with BRAIN editors and sponsors.
We congratulate you on creating
unique and successful businesses.

Bicycle Retailer
AND INDUSTRY NEWS

Where Everybody Knows Your Name Optimism Thrives Among So Cal Giant Dealers

BY ELYSA WALK

Giant helped sponsor BRAIN's Dealer Tour of Southern California in early November. The purpose was to get an idea how bicycle retailers in the area did in 2008, what kind of business they foresee for 2009, and what challenges they face.

I rode part of this tour, as did Giant president and CEO Tony Lo, and many others from the Giant team. Hearing from shop owners directly, in their stores, gave both of us a good opportunity to see if the optimism we feel is shared where it counts.

Mike Franze, owner of Fullerton Bicycles, told us that he's experienced a 25 percent sales increase in 2008. He credits the success to his shop's environment. "The fact that it's still a family store—not a stiff concept store—works. It just has a good aroma and good flow," he told BRAIN editors.

Mike has a set aside a large part of his showroom for BMX bikes and parts. That helps drive sales for all parts of his family store, he reports, telling BRAIN about a father who came into the store

to buy BMX accessories for his son. A few months later, the dad returned to purchase a Giant Trance X for himself. He expects the trend for repeat business to continue.

Michael Milano, owner of Team Bike Works in Huntington Beach, reported similar success. "We're up quite a bit, approximately 18 to 20 percent for this year," Michael said. "It's been almost like a perfect storm this year, with everybody wanting to be green, everybody wanting to be more fitness-oriented, and with the high gas prices at the beginning of the year."

Michael is seeing a trend where his customers are staying closer to home, instead of traveling and spending dollars elsewhere. "We have such beautiful beaches and bike paths," he said. "Where people may have transported to other parts of the country for vacations, they're spending time here at the beach now."

Things have gone so well in 2008 that Michael is considering enlarging his store in 2009. "We're going to expand because I think the consumers are dictating it,"



Elysa Walk is the general manager of Giant USA.

he said. "If you can stay positive, stay focused on the customers, there are definitely some brighter times ahead, too."

Time and again, these were the kinds of comments we heard. So, is this optimism just a Southern California thing?

No, because I hear similar thoughts from Giant retailers across the country. Is the upbeat outlook limited to shops that primarily sell high-end products? No again. Retailers that sell low-priced and mid-ranged bicycles also tell me they look forward to 2009. Bike stores that are successful in a downturn do well for the same reasons they're successful in a booming economy: they're smart, they're cautious, they plan carefully—and they listen keenly to their customers.

And, perhaps as important, they realize their customers look at them as something more than just another retailer. Good bike shops are like the bar "Cheers"—sometimes you just want to go where everybody knows your name. Maybe it's that a bike shop—like that favorite watering hole—offers a little bit of comfort in an uncertain world: a friendly face, a product that is simple and familiar, and a staff that seems to enjoy what they do. You know you can come back time and again and the chances are good you'll be greeted by name.

How many other business can offer that now?

Notes From the Handlebars

The Independent Dealer in All its Diversity Is Alive and Well

BY CHRIS ZIGMONT

I noticed this morning that the riding tan I earned on the Bicycle Retailer Orange County Dealer Tour is fading. The education from the retailer visits is thankfully more durable.

What fun, to ride every day and call it work. We do our best at Pedro's with lunchtime rides and squeezing in weekend time on the bike, but five days in a row on the bike for many in the industry is a true luxury, and it was for me.

As the only sponsor representative to ride every day of the tour, it was gratifying to make these valuable visits by bike.

It was important to pedal. An objective of ours was to remind ourselves and others that much can be done by bike; to remember that the bike is an excellent conveyance and could and should replace the car for many short trips and errands. I was fully self-contained, bringing notepad, camera and riding junk in my pockets.

The notebook is full of the details and anecdotes that the Orange County retailers offered for the sweaty delegation.



Christopher Zigmont is the president and chief executive officer of Pedro's.

I learned a few things and I've offered some here in no particular order:

- Despite the extreme diversity of retailers, most feel optimistic about cycling's future, especially given the economic climate. It is the right time to be in the bicycle business.

- Retailers get it. Most have successfully addressed and some have aggressively pursued the transportation and utility business. Dealers we saw successfully promoted the bicycle as an instrument of good in some way, promoting commuting and short trips by bike, fighting congestion and developing the social benefits of riding.

- There is apparently zero consensus among dealers as to the value, future or necessity of "concept stores." I recorded as many reasonable arguments for the idea as I did of those against.

- Orange County, California, has many more Maseratis and Ferraris than Rockingham County, New Hampshire. (We do, however, have a mighty impressive snow removal fleet.)

- More industry types could spend more time behind the handlebars.

- More industry types could spend more time listening to retailers.

- It is rewarding to do both at the same time.

- Surprisingly, it was sometimes difficult to ride up to some shops and go in-

side due to a lack of bike racks. It seems bike shops ought be ride-up-on-a-bike friendly.

- Regardless of the aforementioned optimism, the economic crisis has impacted shops. While some retailers were less open, it is clear that some had to make adjustments in purchasing and inventory management, shifting the burden up the supply chain. Real estate was a big issue, with some shops reviewing lease and purchase options to secure their future.

- Baskets, fixies, asphalt bikes and repair parts. Invest now. That tip is on me.

My 25 years spent in bike shops as an employee, rep and manufacturer taught me that the bicycle business is resilient and adaptable. Today retailers are adjusting to shifting economics and changing demands on the floor. With our 3 percent of the planet's population drinking 25 percent of the world's oil (and much of that from unsavory places), there truly hasn't been a better time to peddle bikes. From what we saw in Southern California, the IBD, in all of its glorious diversity, is alive and well.