

It's Not About The Competition



Gosh we hear it all the time in business and motorcycle riding. We especially hear this perspective on the sales side of insurance brokerage companies. What is your competition doing? Who is the competition? How much did the competition charge? Well, while it may not make sense, getting the checkered flag is not about the competition.

It was around 9:00 AM and we had just finished the riders meeting. The track Marshall was pleased to announce the two guys who went down the day before did exactly what they were supposed to do. They left their trashed bikes, kept their helmets on and backed away from the track keeping their eyes toward on-coming riders. He went on to say what a wonderful job the medics did when a woman went down. She just wanted to get up and go home to bed. She was very agitated and wanting to leave. The medics kept her down and clearly helped prevent long term damage resulting from several cervical fractures and a concussion. Lastly the guy who blew turn 3 and went into the lake is OK. He did find out that motorcycle helmets make very poor diving helmets. They have a tendency to fill up with water. That is a bad thing.

We had a very special day as about ten highly accomplished riders were there as part of a charity for fallen riders. We had some of the best motorcycle riders in the USA with us on the track. Having professionals with us on the track redefined the term expert, intermediate and novice. Many of the regular "experts" did not want to be on the track with guys who are faster than a speeding bullet. So the regular experts moved down to intermediate which caused the intermediates to move down to the novice. For me it was a no brainer. I am riding novice.

Here I am, in the line at pit exit and track entrance waiting for the signal to let us go. This is my first time back on the track in a couple of years so the butterflies are alive and well. There is nothing like a little Imodium and cereal to keep things where they should be. I twisted the throttle and my brand new black shiny Honda CBR 600 RR lets out an adrenalin pumping shrill that can be heard for at least 500 miles. There is nothing like the sound of a 600 CC four cylinder motor at 15, 000 rpm.

The morning is dry, cool and perfect for going fast. I ease out the clutch and follow several riders down pit exit onto the live track. OK here we go. All the lessons learned in Freddie Spencer's High Performance school, tons of reading, tons of practice are about to help me manage the risk associated with going fast on a motorcycle track.

I get around the track a few times getting warm and loose. This is my first time on my new Honda. Previously I rode a Ducati 749S. I am working to sort out new shift locations, brake points, reacquainting myself with race lines and generally getting comfortable. Things are coming together. I manage to keep my eyes way down the track; hit apex corners like my life depended on it, and attempt to be almost imperceptibly smooth on the brake. I am smoking and in the groove, with the engine screaming leaned over in turn 8 and Yes, Yes, Yes; it is the incredible sweet sound and feel of a knee puck scraping the turn as the motorcycle and I become one with the track. I pick up a good drive out of turn 8 providing good drive into turn 9, which puts me in shape for turn 10.

I come up on a couple of riders and I am closing fast. One of the most important lessons one can learn in motorcycle riding is the phenomenon called target fixation. Target fixation is all about the competition. In the heat of competition it is very easy for a rider or broker to become fixated on the competition or target. This fixation leads to the belief that beating the competition gets you the checkered flag.

You can witness target fixation on a motorcycle race track when the leader makes a mistake, goes off track to be followed by a train of riders. In the insurance brokerage business you see target fixation manifested as written presentations that look like a yellow pages advertisement where you can insert any broker name you want and they all look, sound and feel the same.

Motorcycle technology being mass marketed in the motorcycle world is just astonishing. The major manufacturers are producing out of the box machines built with state of the art brakes, suspension and motors. This technology comes directly from the highest level of competition directly to the mass marketed sport bike available at your local dealer. That means none of these bikes have any meaningful technology advantage over the other. They have reached a state of capability parity. They **all** can produce a win. Can a Honda really claim that they are superior to Yamaha which claims superiority over Ducati? Even when one manufacture does win it is by the slimmest of margins

The same can be said for insurance brokerage organizations that have reached critical mass. Many of the top regional firms and all the global firms have attained resource and capability parity. Can a case be made that Marsh, Willis, Aon, or any of the national leading insurance

brokers is any less capable than the other? They might try to make the case but by virtue of the size of these organizations and client list, it is just not true. They all can produce a win.

So what makes the difference in motorcycle riding? What makes the difference in business? How do you get the checkered flag?

The answer resides in understanding and serving your track/client at a level that exceeds everyone else. Getting the checkered flag is a **symptom and the result** of having a competitive machine ridden by a racer who understands every inch of the track. And knows how to manage his machine to the fullest extent of the race track. It is about understanding the track, not the competition.

If you want to see the checkered flag as an insurance broker; work for a brokerage firm that is competitive with your chosen market, avoid competition target fixation, demonstrate you understand your client, and become one with your client. If you do this, the competition will take care of itself. It is not about the competition. It is totally about serving your client.

If you want to see the checkered flag then avoid competition target fixation, demonstrate you understand your client, favorably impact their enterprise, and the competition will take care of itself.

Oh, I only stepped the rear end out once and had one minor front end wash out. It was a slight track misunderstanding on my part. It was a great day.

Bruce Carr works with the insurance industry to achieve **different results** by adopting a client advocate business model.