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The Fit-First Sales Process

Building Your Business
With Wheels

What You Don't Know...

THE FIT-FIRST SALES PROCESS

A BETTER APPROACH?

BY COLBY MARPLE

ONE OF THE MOST COMMON CHALLENGES FACING RETAILERS AND CONSUMERS TODAY IS SELECTING THE BEST POSSIBLE BIKE TO MATCH AN INDIVIDUAL CYCLIST'S NEEDS. WITH MORE BRANDS AND MODELS AVAILABLE AT RETAIL THAN EVER BEFORE, IT'S BECOME INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT FOR CONSUMERS TO MAKE AN INFORMED DECISION AS TO WHICH BIKE IS ULTIMATELY THE BEST CHOICE. IN TURN, RETAILERS WILL OFTEN NEED TO SPEND A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF TIME DEMYSTIFYING THE VAST ARRAY OF AVAILABLE PRODUCT BEFORE THEY CAN ACTUALLY START ENGAGING IN A SALE WITH PROSPECTIVE CONSUMERS. HERE'S A COMMON EXAMPLE OF INITIAL CONSUMER CONFUSION:

A first-time buyer walks in with 20+ pages of product overviews printed from three to five different manufacturers' websites. Their first question is, "Can you please explain all the differences between each of these bikes to me?" Inherently, 80 percent of the products shown are inappropriate for this consumer's intended use. As a result, the retailer spends more time talking about irrelevant product than they do engaging with the consumer about logical product recommendations.

As time-consuming and frustrating as this can be for both parties, this sort of interaction can certainly help a retailer endear themselves to a particular consumer. For instance, a first-time consumer will likely develop some degree of appreciation for a sales associate who takes the time to help them gain clarity on which bikes actually make sense for their intended use. However, time is valuable for retailers and consumers alike. Both parties



would benefit greatly from a more streamlined and efficient bike selection process, one that enables retailers to quickly and accurately guide their consumers to appropriate bikes for their intended use.

Even if the retailer and consumer can identify a bike that is agreeable to the consumer's intended use, there are no guarantees that the bike of choice will actually fit that particular consumer. A certain selection of bikes, in spite of the best efforts from the most experienced bike fitters, will simply not be able to fit a particular consumer on account of the rider's anatomy, frame geometry and component selection. These factors are largely ignored in the standard model that most retailers follow when fitting a consumer

on a particular bike, as the retailer will "make a bike fit," as opposed to identifying which consumer to available brands and models.

As a result, consumers receive a bike that is either improperly configured to match their preferred riding position or, worse, a consumer leaves with a bike that is simply the wrong size and cannot be retro-fitted to create a proper riding position. Proper bike fit is the key to ensuring ultimate riding satisfaction for cyclists of all ages and abilities, providing a comfortable and efficient riding position that maximizes on-bike performance to deliver the best possible cycling experience. Whether a consumer is in the market for a \$500 commuter bike or a \$10,000 super bike, selecting a bike based on proper sizing and riding

position is the best way to ensure that consumers make the right decision about the bike they wish to purchase. Welcome to the “fit-first” sales process.

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The fit-first sales process is a paradigm shift in the way retailers engage with consumers in selling bikes. Instead of walking the shop floor and selling available brands and models from the start, the fit-first sales process flips the traditional sales script and begins with an analysis of a consumer’s riding position. This change in initial engagement between retailers and consumers is beneficial for both parties, as the retailer is able to provide more informed product recommendations to consumers from the very beginning. As a result, the “product/brand overload” that most consumers face when they enter a bike shop is eliminated.

Most importantly for retailers, the act of selling fit-first places emphasis on the retailer’s individual brand and is inherently more consumer-focused, as opposed to the bike brands that they carry. For example, consumers in any given locale can likely find the same bike brands carried at a variety of retailers. Outside of the retailer’s proximity to the consumer’s neighborhood and their price offerings, consumers are looking for a retailer that they can trust. By selling fit-first, a sales associate is able to instill confidence with their consumers by offering a superior brand of customer service and product expertise. This initial foundation of trust between the retailer and consumer leads to higher closing rates and greater profits for retailers, and builds long-term relationships with consumers.

From a technical perspective, the fit-first sales process eliminates the guesswork that so often confronts retailers when attempting to optimize a consumer’s preferred riding position on a particular bike. For example, many consumers can often ride multiple sizes of a given bike model (the classic “am I a 54 or a 56 cm?” dilemma). The old sales model would force a retailer to have to make a semi-educated guess on frame size based on height and inseam, or an in-store demo of both sizes on a trainer. These options are inaccurate and time-consuming respectively, and ultimately do not provide consumers with a clear point of view on which model or size is the best choice for them. By following a fit-first sales protocol, platform selection (race vs. endurance) and appropriate size (54 vs. 56 cm) are addressed before a consumer

even looks at colors or price points.

This protocol ensures that a consumer’s final bike selection will give them the best possible cycling experience.

There are a number of tools that retailers can utilize to execute a fit-first sales process with their consumers. There are a wide variety of algorithm-based formulas, fit bikes and other methods that can provide retailers with the data needed to give their consumers an informed product recommendation. The most accurate and consumer-focused approach to use in selling fit-first is the use of a dynamic fit protocol, an interactive process that incorporates fit science with rider feedback to establish the best possible riding position for any cyclist. The very nature of dynamic fit ensures that riders are able to compare and contrast a variety of riding positions, which instills immediate consumer confidence that they have found the riding position that matches their personal needs. In addition, the retailer executing the dynamic fit is able to follow one consistent protocol to create the best possible riding position for their consumers. This regimented approach establishes a consistent fit process for a retailer’s staff to follow.

The fit-first sales process has become the best approach for retailers to utilize when selling bikes to their consumers -- one that is beneficial for both sides and improves the overall shopping experience at bike shops everywhere. By placing emphasis on a consumer’s individual riding position, retailers are able to help consumers identify the best possible bike platform and size for their personal preferences. In total, the fit-first sales process ensures that riders of all ages and abilities are able to experience ultimate satisfaction when riding their bike of choice.



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