



How We Grow (Part 2): Fishing For Five Touches

[This is part 2 of a 3-part series of the authors' opinions on how the GWTA should approach our need for growth. This series is neither endorsed nor supported by GWTA leadership; the opinions are the author's alone.]

So there I am at another motorcycle group meeting (this time it was CMA). The State Director was trying to help a Membership Director be patient with their recruitment efforts.

"We went to that show, got 50+ names, and sent them all an invitation to our meeting," said the Membership Director. "Do you know how many people came? None! It was very frustrating."

The State Director was calm and understanding. He asked the Membership Director, "Have you ever gone fishing?" "Sometimes," was the answer. Then the State Director asks, "Did you ever have a day when you caught your limit in the first hour?" "Well, maybe not in an hour, but I've had some good days," was the answer. So the SD says, "OK, did you ever have a day when you didn't catch anything?" The Membership Director says, "Sure, it happens all the time." SD then says, "But you know the fish were there, right? They just weren't biting that day, on that bait, or something else, right?" The MD replies, "Yeah, but that's how it goes with fishing." And the SD says, "Yes, and that's how it goes sometimes with membership recruiting. Some days, no matter what you do, the fish don't bite, and prospects don't sign up."

And then, very wisely, the State Director added, "But you still go fishing, and you still go recruiting. You know you'll have a better day another time."

I like this story because of the message to never give up on recruiting.

My own experience is that it often takes 5 or more "touches" to change someone's behavior, and get them consider visiting or joining the GWTA. By "touches", I mean anything that makes a suggestion or leaves a positive impression about visiting or joining your GWTA Chapter. This might be a Ride Flyer, a conspicuously placed business card on a bike parked at a restaurant, a Chapter newsletter at a Dealership, a postcard after attending a ride or show, or a personal invitation from an acquaintance or co-worker. It could be anything.

The important point to my theory is that it isn't just "one" thing: it is the culmination of many things. Tried the postcards, but didn't get a response? Maybe it was only the first touch. Put up a flyer at the grocery store, but nobody came? Maybe it was only the second touch. Left a bunch of newsletters at the dealership without results? Maybe it was only the third touch. Put on a ride, got some guests, but they didn't come to a meeting? Might have only been the fourth touch. Made a personal invitation to a co-worker, they show up and join? Might have been the fifth touch!

Yes, of course, some “touches” are obviously more effective than others. The more “fun” the touch, the more likely it is to be effective. In-person touches are clearly more effective than impersonal ones. Newsletters with pictures and stories of people having fun are better than ones with pure text. The important thing to remember is that it typically takes multiple touches, so keep trying different things. Think about it this way: just because something works for one person does not mean it will work for everyone. You might need different approaches for different people. So keep trying and using different recruiting methodologies.

Part of the process is to realize that just because you don’t get an immediate response doesn’t mean you aren’t making a positive impression. In all likelihood, you will need multiple “touches” to get someone to visit and/or join. [Yes, some people do respond to just one approach, but they are in the minority. You’ll get more success by trying and using a wide variety of recruitment techniques.]

Never forget, however, that once someone visits (or even joins), our task is not over. People need to feel welcomed and involved, or they may fade away. We need a “Sunshine” person to remember birthday’s and anniversaries and to help new members understand the upcoming events/rides. We need to keep reaching out with invitations to this or that ride, this or that dinner, or this or that event. We need to make phone calls and other personal touches to help new people become part of the group.

Fishing for five touches is just part of the fun in growing the GWTA, on the way to “Destination Friendship.”

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