



Planning For Success

The first month of the year tends to be a great time for making plans. Chapters plan rides, activities, meetings, events, promotions, help for charities, and other common dates/projects. And people either volunteer or get assigned (!) to manage or coordinate this or that happening. I'd like to take some time to write this month about how you can get more juice out of your Chapter Calendar of Events.

First, start with all the "givens". It is a given fact that you'll have chapter meetings on this day, and social dinners on this day, every month. So write them down first.

Then consider your other "almost givens": things like your State/Provincial Gathering, Gold Rush, your Holiday Party. Chances are strong that you have your own big annual Chapter Event, too. (If you don't, perhaps it time to decide to do one.) And it's also quite likely that your state/province has an Officers Meeting planned, so put it down, too. (If not, be proactive and ask your leaders to coordinate one.) I recently heard from Executive Director Bruce Keenon that he wants all Regional Directors to have a Regional Meeting with time for reports, Education, and coordination of Region-wide events during 2005, so you might ask about that, too, and put it on your Chapter Calendar of events.

Up to now, we've been outlining the normal, straightforward kinds of things that don't require much creative thought. Now I would like to have you open up the box a bit, and add some creativity to your Calendar, especially if it's not already there.

First, I suggest you put a long, LONG, L-O-N-G ride on your Calendar. Something other than Gold Rush. Maybe have a theme to it. But a three-day, 1000-ish miles event. Someone in my home Chapter had their informally-called "Invitational Iron-Butt Ride". We put on a photographic tour of Washington state, with as many as 35 pre-determined sites you had to get to and get a picture of yourself and your bike. And he'd invite people to hit the road with him to get as many as half in one long weekend. We'd be moving, but we'd be talking on the CB and having a blast a night, too. We're a Touring Association, and people remember stories about rides. Generally doesn't really matter where you go, it's who you go with.

I'd also suggest you plan after (or before) meeting rides, but get different sponsors for each. Get people to sign up to design the ride for this month or that month, and try to have something different. Get your members involved with the ride, help them promote it, let them add their own twist or uniqueness to them. One of my favorite riding memories was when a former Chapter Director put together a "Maltby Mystery Ride" (as it came to be called.) He had spent several weekends scouting out a 100-ish mile ride. Took estimates from people about how many miles they thought it would be, and had a mileage contest. Along the way, he'd give clues to "Remember something in this town". At the end, he had a quiz about the route, and bought the lunch (or some other prize) for the person with the most correct answers. It was cool, and it was fun. Get your own members to design your rides, and you'll have fun, too.

I'm sure our Rider Education Directors would appreciate it if you also planned either an ERC course weekend or a First Aid Course weekend. My buddy from Region C, Burt Wagner, would like to schedule a Region-wide Safety Emphasis weekend, getting people to various levels in our GWTA Safety program. As an organization, we promote safety in group riding. Think of something that would help your Chapter membership grow in awareness and appreciation of safety ideas, and put it on your Chapter Calendar.

Some other ideas might include having one issue of your newsletter be a "Memory-book Edition", including photos from events over that last year. My home chapter has adopted a section of a highway near us, and we have 2-3 clean-ups a year. Camp-outs are great ways to build community in a Chapter, so have a few on your Calendar. You might think of an event (such as an "Open House" at a Honda dealer) you can use to recruit new members. Again, the idea is to let your imagination have some levity, and try some new things.

Finally (and this may sound counter-intuitive), I also suggest you have a "Non-Event Weekend", where you don't commit your membership to anything, but instead invite folks to keep this or that weekend open for whatever comes up. And fiercely hold on to it. Promote that fact that you have an open weekend coming up.

Plan to have fun, and you will on the way to "Destination Friendship".

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