AN OLD TIMER’S PERSPECTIVE ON PROSPECTING

By Pablo

I am 57 years old. I’ve been riding motorcycles since I was 9. My experiences include being a member of various motorcycle organizations and law enforcement agencies. I’ve been a trainee and a prospect and later a sponsor and a training officer. I’ve served as an LEO supervisor, manager, and administrator. I have ridden as a hang around, prospect, member and officer in the MC world. For me, motorcycle club life has been as much, or more, about the people as the bikes. I’ve learned that a club is only as good as its members. Prospecting in the proper context is critical for your club’s sustainability.

Today I am the National Road Captain of the Mettle Republic PS MC and a retired Assistant Chief LEO. An MC is similar to a LE agency in that the people who are attracted to them are often seeking the same thing - The acceptance of their peers. This acceptance is based primarily on trust. Trust can only be earned by demonstrating worthiness on the part of the prospective member. After many years of involvement and observation of the Prospect/Probation process, I’ve learned what works and what doesn’t work. What follows are some straightforward observations that MC members, sponsors and Prospects should know.

BRING IT, OR STAY HOME

If you have made the decision to prospect for membership in an MC, be prepared to put forth some effort. A true MC will not just give you a patch. You will be expected to earn it. Attend meetings and if you have not been given an assignment, ask what you can do. Show up early for meetings and rides. Be prepared, gassed up, bike ship shape, and ready to ride. If anyone has a problem offer to help.

If your club is putting on an event you should be working as hard as everyone else to make it a good one. Learn how to be a good ambassador for your club with everyone else out there. Your efforts should be directed toward building and keeping your club’s good name.

Prospecting is a learning process. You will learn what it takes to earn and keep the respect of those who will eventually decide if they want you to stay or go. Keep an open mind and ask questions. Remember that Motorcycle Clubs want members who will be long term assets, not short term liabilities. If you don’t see the possibilities of long friendships in them, they won’t see it in you. If you have a personal agenda, keep it to yourself. There’s no “I” in club. Your own goals and objectives can be accomplished in time. Now you should only be doing one thing; earning that patch.

Learn to be respectful of others. No-one likes an as kisser or a smart-ass. Treat others as you would have them treat you. Be polite and check your opinion and ego at the door. Take criticism calmly and for what its worth. Remember, if they let you prospect it’s because they want you to succeed. Most importantly, know when to keep your
mouth shut. Your input will become more valuable over time, but only if you haven’t already alienated every one by being obnoxious.

Any task or job that is given to you as a prospect is meant to allow you to demonstrate your understanding of the need for that service and the proper way to perform that job. You are nobody’s servant. You should not be asked to do anything that your sponsor would not do themselves. If you are not willing to contribute then you should not be here. This goes for all members. You must be willing to demonstrate your commitment.

You may be asked to do some security, guard the motorcycles, or to escort a female member at a public event. You may be asked to help a member with a personal matter. You may be asked to man a booth, solicit donations, stand a flag line, pour drinks, or assist with a ride plan. You may be asked to help clean up a members yard for a meeting or barbecue, or help with food or drinks. You should not be asked to do anything as a prospect that you won’t be expected to do as a full patched member later on.

LEARN TO RIDE

Club riding means group riding. If you make those you ride with uncomfortable they will hold it against you. This is not the time for horseplay or showing off. Your riding skills should be solid at all speeds and under all conditions. You must ride with every ones’ safety as well as your own in mind. Don’t be afraid to seek training and/or advice if you need it. Be open to the advice of more veteran riders. Remember that group riding requires skill, patience, and discipline. Initially you will be riding at the rear of the group. Eventually you will be trusted to ride in the middle of the pack, in the front, or even in the lead position. It is on you to demonstrate that you can ride safely in all positions.

TREAT PROSPECTS WITH DIGNITY

There is no honor or pride in the mistreatment of a person who is prospecting for a club. Prospecting should not be about suffering indignities and enduring demeaning tasks and treatment. This does not serve the club and it does not help the prospect become a valued member. There is no advantage whatsoever to exploiting or encouraging low self esteem in a potential member. It will only perpetuate the cycle of abuse and it is unacceptable.

The club’s mission should be to develop a member by education, training, positive reinforcement, and strong self esteem. The club must decide in advance what it expects from its members and the prospecting period should explore these things.

We expect prospects to perform security duties. The reason for this should be obvious and it isn’t just because they lack seniority. It is because solid security is essential to our safety and survival. Any task assigned to a prospect should have a point that is relevant to the mission and objectives of the club. The prospect is expected to perform in a way that demonstrates commitment to the club’s mission, thereby providing a basis for evaluation when vote/patch time comes.

Any form of hazing should be strictly prohibited, period. No prospect should ever be required to do anything that is illegal or in conflict with their core beliefs. Any form of meaningless servitude should be ignored and no individual member should require a prospect to perform personal tasks for them.

I have never met a club member who was able to articulate the usefulness of hazing or demeaning servitude during the prospecting period.

For patched sponsors and members I say this; Get your own beer. Wash your own Bike. Buy your own meals. No hazing or demeaning. These things will not develop trust or loyalty, only resentment. Lead by example. Never ask or tell a prospect to do something that you wouldn't do yourself right then and there.

Treat your prospects the way you would want to be treated if you were them. Evaluate their willingness to participate and put forth some effort. Judge their commitment to the club members and mission. Ask yourself what kind of member this person will be a year from now or five years from now.