

The Two-Percenter

A recent study in organizational management shows that as little as two percent of a population can bring about a dynamic cultural change within that population. It made me think about the community of motorcycling and how bikers are portrayed in the media and the entertainment world. I recalled that Honda, at one point, even had a marketing campaign to attempt to offset that portrayal with the slogan, "You meet the nicest people on a Honda". While perhaps true, nice people ride all makes and models of motorcycles. So do people with other agendas. Oftentimes, those with the other agendas, with their attitudes of devil-may-care selfishness, rebellion, and even lawlessness, can cause much discredit and harm to themselves and the rest of the motorcycling population. It can cause an erosion of a culture of passion, fellowship, and risk management, into a culture of heightened-vulnerability, jeopardy, and danger.

Being a biker, one embraces travel with inherent risk. In 2006, the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA), revealed bikers are 35 times more likely to be killed, per mile of travel, than operators of other vehicles. Being a safe rider requires a constant state of awareness of your surroundings and being mindful of the connection between you, your bike, and the road. There are all kinds dangers lurking in the interstate highways and the theoretically paved county roads. One of the biggest is driver distraction, not only of the other drivers on the roadway, but of motorcyclists as well. The highway is no place to be fumbling with your navigation system, scrolling through your music list, or - Heaven forbid - taking a "selfie".

The Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) encourages riders to "SEE" the road and the potential hazards. "SEE", is an abbreviation for "Search, Evaluate, and Execute".

When you SEARCH, you are scanning your mirrors, looking side-to-side, and even doing "head checks" to monitor blind spots. The things you will want to be looking for are:

- Traffic control devices and markings
- Road characteristics and surface conditions
- Other roadway users.

EVALUATION of the information you see and hear needs to be constant. Being distracted from your situational awareness can cause you to not have time to evaluate options before a danger arrives. MSF recommends predicting the worst possible outcome of any given situation. This does not mean that one must ride in a state of paranoia, but evaluation will be able to help prepare for events such as:

- Traffic failing to observe control devices and markings
- Potholes, tar covered cracks or debris in the path of travel
- Other drivers exercising poor judgment and pulling into your path of travel.

Even when you properly SEARCH and EVALUATE, you may still have less than a second to EXECUTE your plan of action. The possibilities for execution include:

- Communication - usage of horn or even arm waving, while passive, can help.
- Adjust speed - Is it possible to stop in time? Would you be better to accelerate through the situation?
- Adjust your position - Can you maneuver your bike around the hazard?

It could even be possible or necessary to execute two, or even all three of these options!

While the SEE system is broken into steps, in reality, your focus and resulting action should be fluid and constant. Don't, however, outride your capabilities or, inversely, underestimate what you can do in any given situation. Take a training course that teaches these techniques, practice what you learn, and encourage others to do the same.

Follow the rules of the road and be a part of the change that will keep the population safe. Create a culture of safety, lawfulness and wellbeing within your community. Care more about yourself, your passengers, and those who ride around you. Live to ride another day. Be a two-percenter.

...and, "Hey! Let's be CAREFUL out there!"