

Ken Schmidt

Authentic Leadership and Customer Loyalty Expert; Senior Role in Harley-Davidson Turnaround; and Author, *Make Some Noise: The Unconventional Road to Dominance*

It's an impersonal world, where so many products and services are seen as easily-replaced, indistinct commodities. Whether you stand out or get lost in the crowd is a choice. A mindset. Ken Schmidt faced those same challenges himself and gained acclaim for his role in the extraordinary turnaround of the legendary Harley-Davidson Motor Company. That transformation was based on a change in mindset and a focus on answering three key strategic questions. While times have changed, what humans want and need from the businesses they buy from and work for hasn't. In his high-energy speeches, Ken inspires companies and individuals to shift their thinking and ride a path to success by becoming memorable – not for what they do or what they make, but for how they connect with people. Ken is author of *Make Some Noise: The Unconventional Road to Dominance*. He's also host of the *Tailgating with Geniuses* podcast and co-founder of Torque Sessions Leadership Training. In all of his endeavors, Ken brings an unconventional perspective that helps organizations and individuals reframe how they engage with their marketplace.

Ken Schmidt's career in the motorcycle industry began in 1985 as a specialist in corporate positioning and media relations for the then-struggling Harley-Davidson. He was tasked with helping the company restore its image, improve its competitiveness, and create demand for its motorcycles. Within a few short years, sales of Harley-Davidson motorcycles skyrocketed, and the company returned to prominence as one of the most respected, profitable, and frequently reported-on companies in the world.

In 1990, Ken became director of Harley-Davidson's corporate and financial communications, serving as its primary spokesperson to the media and the financial communities. He frequently appeared in mainstream and business media to offer insights on nontraditional communications, customer attraction, and brand-building. His expertise and success at Harley-Davidson ultimately led to consulting assignments and speaking invitations from all over the world.

In 1997, Ken left Harley-Davidson to take an ownership position with a highly successful Chicago-based marketing firm, VSA Partners. In addition to Harley-Davidson, VSA served a virtual who's who of the world's best-known brands. In 1999, he sold his portion of VSA to start his own business, Ken Schmidt Company, to combine two of his greatest passions, motorcycling and speaking. He uses motorcycles as a metaphor to expose people to proven ideas and concepts they've likely never imagined.

In addition to speaking and consulting, Ken is co-founder of Torque Sessions Leadership Training. Through a combination of hands-on training and interactive workshops, these sessions help individuals and organizations reposition themselves to become dominant competitors, maximize leadership effectiveness, build a people-first culture of innovation and foster loyalty among customers and employees.

Ken is also the host of the popular podcast *Tailgating with Geniuses*, wherein he talks with some of the most innovative and successful leaders in a variety of industries to discuss their unique perspectives on leadership, major challenges, and success. Ken's relatable and engaging hosting style has made the podcast a hit with listeners looking to learn from the best and achieve their own personal and professional goals.

Ken authored *Make Some Noise: The Unconventional Road to Dominance*, which gives business leaders an easy-to-follow roadmap for improving their competitiveness, using many of the techniques he championed at Harley-Davidson. He considers his work on *100 Years of Harley-Davidson*, a global best seller, to be one of his greatest and most rewarding achievements.

After all he has accomplished, Ken remains committed to his philosophy of standing out, taking risks, and having fun in both his personal and professional life. He says, "Never do what's expected, make yourself as noticeably different as possible, and have a lot more fun than you're supposed to."