Instructor Response – Harley Davidson

I liked the way the instructors analyzed the decisions Harley Davidson made that put them in their poor situation. They thought they were performing fine, and that Honda wasn’t a threat, but Honda adapted and changed to meet consumer needs. Harley Davidson no longer held their competitive advantages because they became complacent and missed out on key opportunities. However, Teerlink came in and emphasized how important change is to the success of a company, saying, “Change is here to stay. It’s never going to go away. Get used to it. If you want to feel comfortable, go out and be a consultant… Don’t get involved in the real world of business.” I agree with the instructors that the leadership at Harley Davidson during their time of crisis was paramount in their eventual comeback as an industry leader.

The instructors also list some key elements that were a factor in the company’s turnaround, and these follow the same points I laid out in my Comeback Analysis, with the exception of the dealer relationships that I mentioned and the change of ownership that the instructors call attention to. All of these changes in the Harley Davidson operations, employees, and management allowed them to get the company back on the right track and become the well-respected, growth company they are today.

Lastly, with regards to Zeimer’s current leadership role and the challenges he faces there, it will be interesting to see how Harley Davidson responds to the ever-increasing green initiative. Perhaps they can put more effort towards creating eco-friendly, solar motorcycles in order to tap into a new market segment. I am also excited to see how the company will attract more women and young riders in order to lower the average age of their customers. Many of the people I know who own a motorcycle simply have one for themselves, but they are good friends with many other Harley owners. When someone purchases a Harley bike, they purchase it for life. However, the culture that is created by the Harley Davidson family is very special in that once you become a part of it, you continue to purchase the extra amenities they offer for the motorcycle enthusiast. If Harley can continue to innovate their offerings in that area as well, they will easily make their customer base happy and excited about the new things they bring out. In terms of international expansion, countries, like China, Japan, and India, where a lot of the transportation is by bike, trolley car, etc. have a good customer base to offer Harley Davidson motorcycles. However, it is important to place your offerings in an environment in which the people can afford them. I also agree with the instructors that it will be important for the company to continually invest in more sustainable manufacturing processes, as there are always opportunities to be better and more efficient.