

Competencies and Abilities of Motorcycle Safety Foundation Certified RiderCoach Trainers

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides the results of a qualitative study that was designed to 1) identify the competencies and abilities of MSF certified RiderCoach Trainers and 2) provide the rank order of these competencies and abilities as determined by currently certified RiderCoach Trainers.

The primary purposes of identifying and ranking the competencies and abilities of MSF certified RiderCoach Trainers were to establish sense of overall skill sets and experiences that are perceived as important, and to identify a rank order of importance.

A total of 40 competencies and abilities were identified by reviewing the RiderCoach Trainer certification processes from the 33 years of MSF existence and by surveying currently certified RiderCoach Trainers. These 40 competencies were mailed to RiderCoach Trainers who were asked to voluntarily rank each competency and ability in priority order. A total of 32 RiderCoach Trainers responded, which is a response rate of 14.9 percent.

The Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) has over 7,000 certified RiderCoaches and 215 RiderCoach Trainers. RiderCoach Trainers are primarily responsible for conducting the preparation workshops for motorcyclists to earn MSF certified RiderCoach status, but they are also integrally involved in quality assurance processes for state, local and independent programs. Different knowledge and skill sets are required beyond those of a RiderCoach to be an effective RiderCoach Trainer. Since 1979 the MSF has had a corps of train-the-trainers (the former title was Chief Instructor). Detailed competencies and abilities beyond those identified in the RiderCoach Trainer Preparation Course have never been formally identified, studied or prioritized.

INTRODUCTION

When the MSF began its efforts to provide quality education and training programs in 1973, the development and certification of instructors was a high priority. After all, the quality of motorcyclists who conduct safety training is a critical component in helping riders become safe and responsible. "In the early seventies, driver education programs were the domain of the traffic safety community. Colleges and universities prepared

individuals to teach driver education. So it was natural for the MSF to go to the college driver education community for help with training motorcycle safety instructors” (Weaver 1990). As the number of riders grew, so did the need for more instructors. The MSF staff became more involved in the instructor training process.

Over the years it became necessary for the MSF to establish a train-the-trainer program, which it called the Chief Instructor Program. Chief Instructors would become the mainstay of trainer-the-trainer functions as well as assist with quality assurance activities in the United States. Over the years the Chief Instructor training was conducted by the MSF staff and contractors, and the certification workshops ranged from 11-21 days depending on the curriculum used and the need for specific competencies by graduates. A Chief Instructor Guide was released in 1981 to provide a step-by-step curriculum for conducting Instructor Preparation Courses.

With the development and release of its Rider Education and Training System and the Basic *RiderCourse*SM in 2001, the MSF change the name of its certified Instructors to RiderCoaches and Chief Instructors to RiderCoach Trainers. Train-the-trainer processes were updated to reflect current teaching-learning philosophies and practices.

Over the course of MSF’s 33 years in existence (MSF was founded in 1973), the training landscape has changed markedly. In the humble beginnings of formal motorcycle safety training that largely relied on voluntary initiatives at the local level, the MSF stood as the primary provider and promoter of motorcycle rider education and training. There was not a state with formalized, motorcyclist-funded program until 1979. The skill sets of Chief Instructors were broad and varied. They were tasked with acquiring abilities well beyond merely conducting certification preparation programs related to conducting curriculum, primarily the basic learn-to-ride course curriculum. As programs grew more sophisticated, there was a need for administrative acumen, public relations talent, range design competencies, quality assurance expertise, program development skills, etc.

By 2001, forty-seven states had motorcyclist-funded, state administered programs. It became important for MSF to adjust and rework its train-the-trainer program to reflect this changing environment. With state funding available to implement quality assurance programs and RiderCoach oversight responsibilities, RiderCoach Trainers could focus on the important task of providing certification training related directly to curriculum processes. As the demand for more training skyrocketed in the early 2000s, the need for more RiderCoaches and RiderCoach Trainers became apparent. In the span a decade, the number of active MSF certified trainers doubled.

The demand for the services of MSF certified RiderCoach Trainers has never been higher. Competencies and abilities have expanded and the use of this talent pool has become more important than ever. This is especially true in two key areas. One is in the training and certification of motorcyclists to become RiderCoaches; the other is in providing quality assurance activities that range from monitoring sites and providing program evaluation to implementing quality assurance measures and conducting RiderCoach and state program updates.

It was time to formally identify and prioritize the competencies and abilities of RiderCoach Trainers. This paper describes the process of identifying and ranking 40 RiderCoach Trainer competencies and abilities. The listing is a result of RiderCoach Trainer feedback that transcends the objectives of specific course requirements that have been developed throughout the years. The effects of training extend beyond what is minimally accomplished in a formal, time- and competency-based workshop. RiderCoach Trainers must provide leadership and demonstrate competencies to a broader and deeper degree than those simply the stated objectives in a train-the-trainer curriculum.

The results of this research may be able to provide a basis to improve the RiderCoach Training process as well as professional development and continuous improvement activities. It is important to identify specific areas of need as well as shed light on the nature of being an MSF certified RiderCoach Trainer.

MATERIALS

There were five primary sources of information used to identify the competencies and abilities of RiderCoach Trainers. These included 1) the Instructor Guide and Chief Instructor Guide for the Motorcycle *RiderCourse* (MRC) released in 1976; 2) the Instructor and Chief Instructor Guide for the *Motorcycle RiderCourse: Riding and Street Skills* (MRC:RSS) released in 1986; 3) the RiderCoach Guide and RiderCoach Trainers Guide for the Basic *RiderCourse* released in 2001; 4) the RiderCoach Trainer Certification materials developed for the MSF Rider Education and Training System; and 5) results of an MSF survey of RiderCoach Trainers conducted in 2005.

The training and certification materials contain course objectives, topics and learning activities specific to RiderCoach Trainer functions. But this information needed to be supplemented by actual RiderCoach Trainer involvements in their course of day-to-day roles and activities at national, state and local levels. In 2005, the MSF surveyed RiderCoach Trainers to get a general picture of the current MSF RiderCoach Trainer corps, to gain a better understanding of RiderCoach Trainer needs, and to obtain an overall idea of the challenges related to conducting RiderCoach Preparation Courses and professional development activities. A primary result of the survey was a list of competencies and abilities of a typical RiderCoach Trainer, and this listing formed the document by which RiderCoach Trainers rated and ranked each competency and ability.

METHODS

A thorough review of the objectives and learning activities related to Chief Instructor and RiderCoach Trainer certification process was completed, and a core list of competencies and abilities was identified. In the 2005 RiderCoach Trainer Questionnaire, one of the questions was “Name 3-5 competencies of a stellar RiderCoach Trainer.” The results of the survey were combined with the list of core competencies and abilities to yield a list of 40 competencies and abilities for RiderCoach Trainers.

A special assignment was offered to currently certified RiderCoach Trainers. Participation was voluntary. The survey consisted of 40 randomized competencies, abilities, and experiences and RiderCoach Trainers were asked to 1) rate on a scale from 1 to 5 the importance of each competency and ability, and 2) rank each of the 40 items from most important to least important (see Appendix A for this RiderCoach Trainer assignment).

A total of 32 RiderCoach Trainers have submitted the assignment to date. This is a response rate of 14.9 percent, although responses continue to trickle in. For each submission, the competencies and abilities were compiled to provide a summary of the rank order of each competency.

RESULTS

Forty competencies, abilities and experiences of MSF certified RiderCoach Trainers were identified, rated and ranked. Appendix B is a summary of the results, and shows the competencies and abilities in rank order from highest to lowest. These results will provide a basis for prioritizing training and professional development functions. Although there were no definitions or descriptions provided for each competency and ability for this study, each one in the context of motorcycle rider education and training is likely to be understood.

The results show the diversity of opinion of RiderCoach Trainers. Although the summary rank of competencies and abilities provides a snapshot of priorities based on their perceptions and experiences, the numerical difference between the high and low ranking for some of competencies and abilities is striking. For instance, although the competency ranked first (Possess character, competency, and leadership skills) received a high rank of “1” and a low rank of “34,” it was ranked first by 15 respondents. The competency ranked last (Have completed a track course or school) received a low rank of “40” and a high rank of “9,” it was ranked last by 23 respondents. Most other competencies and abilities had similar ranges. In fact, the average range from high rating to low rating for all of the individual competencies and abilities was 31.48.

The competency and ability with the lowest range was Affiliate with Motorcycle Organizations, with a range of 12. Two competencies and abilities tied for the largest range; they were Screen Candidates, and Understand MSF Rider Education and Training System. The range for each of these two was 38. Clearly, further refinement of competencies and their meaning is indicated.

DISCUSSION

The primary purposes of ranking the competencies and abilities of MSF certified RiderCoach Trainers were to establish sense of overall skill sets and experiences that are perceived as important and to identify a rank order of importance according to currently certified RiderCoach Trainers. The 40 competencies and abilities identified should not

be considered an all-inclusive list, but rather a snapshot of the multitude of experiences and skills required, as perceived by currently certified RiderCoach Trainers.

A thematic categorization shows that the identified competencies, abilities and experiences may be divided into five broad categories, namely Personal Characteristics, Rider Characteristics, RiderCoach Curriculum Characteristics, RiderCoach Trainer Curriculum Characteristics, and Professional Characteristics. Appendix C provides the 40 RiderCoach Trainer competencies and abilities for each of these categories.

The listing within each category is presented in descending order of prioritization, and in total these categories may be considered the breadth and depth of RiderCoach Trainer competencies and abilities. For instance, the middle three categories are core abilities of RiderCoach Trainers, and of course for RiderCoaches, since these make up the content areas of certification courses. The first and fifth categories fall outside the parameters of motorcycle-specific preparation course content, but rather illustrate areas for more general development for both motorcycle safety and personal competencies.

For instance, Rider Characteristics, RiderCoach Curriculum Characteristics, and RiderCoach Trainer Characteristics are minimum definable competences within normal RiderCoach Trainer practice. RiderCoach Trainer development in these three areas may be considered the depth of practice. Personal Characteristics and Professional Characteristics fall outside formal certification processes, and may be considered the breadth of practice.

Interestingly when each of the five categories is compared, the three middle items (depth) rank in between the first and fifth. For instance, when the rank scores are totaled, the results show that the Personal Characteristics had a priority average of 6.5; the Rider Characteristics had a priority average of 20.8; the RiderCoach Curriculum Characteristics had a priority of 14.4; the RiderCoach Trainer Characteristics had a priority average of 14.9; and the Professional Characteristics had a priority of 25.4. Clearly, while RiderCoach Trainers place a high level of importance on personal characteristics and rider-specific characteristics, they find professional characteristics outside of direct RiderCoach Trainer-specific responsibilities to be a less importance. The message seems to be, other than for personal expectations inherent in professional conduct, professional development activities should emphasize more detailed, specific content areas directly related to motorcycle curriculum content as opposed to broader competencies.

The most notable aspect of this research is the diversity of perceptions of RiderCoach Trainers. It is striking that the average range of rankings was 31.48. Clearly this demonstrates the range of thought that exists in the RiderCoach Trainer corps. The size of this range should not be interpreted as disagreement, but rather as an illustration of the complexity and value conflict that exists among RiderCoach Trainers.

The 40 competencies and abilities identified in this study should not be considered the only ones that are important. Indeed, some may be viewed as not being competencies or

abilities at all, but rather experiences that are important based on RiderCoach Trainer perceptions and experiences.

Probably the greatest benefit of this research is that it forms the basis for professional development and program improvement. As RiderCoach Trainers reflect upon their experiences and what is most important in their task of training new RiderCoaches, the opportunity for more focused concentration on higher priority competencies and abilities now exists in a formal manner.

CONCLUSIONS

A total of 40 competencies and abilities were identified for MSF certified RiderCoach Trainers. The highest priority items highlight personal characteristics and evaluation skills. The highest ranked competencies and abilities were: 1) Possess Character, Competence, and Leadership Skills; 2) Ability to Teach Others to Evaluate and Coach; 3) Evaluate and Coach Effectively; 4) Understand Safety and Risk Management Principles; and 5) Understand Teaching/Learning Dynamics. The lowest ranked competencies, with the lowest one named first, were: 1) Have Completed a Track Course or School; 2) Affiliate with Motorcycle Organizations; 3) Design Ranges; 4) Possess Motorcycle Maintenance Skills; and 5) Be Adept and Public Relations.

There is a diversity of perception and opinion among the RiderCoach Trainer corps. The range of priority ratings for individual competencies was quite large.

RiderCoach Trainers put more importance on core competencies related to rider training or the 'depth' of RiderCoach Trainer competencies, abilities and experiences. RiderCoach Trainers put less emphasis on professional development competencies, abilities and experiences outside of specific rider training activities. An exception is the overall number one competency of Possess Character, Competence and Leadership Skills.

Further research should be conducted to refine the findings of this paper. Suggested approaches would be to define the meaning of each competency and ability so there would be greater clarity as to the meaning of each one, and to discover the effectiveness of individual or multiple competencies in RiderCoach preparation courses and quality assurance activities. Also, the results of this research could benefit professional development practices for MSF certified RiderCoach Trainers.

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APPENDIX A

MSF RiderCoach Trainer 2005 Special Assignment Competencies and Abilities of MSF Certified RiderCoach Trainers

If you haven't done so already, please complete this optional assignment as a professional development learning experience. Once a sufficient number have been completed, we will provide the results. The first part of the activity is to complete the ratings on this sheet; the second part is to organize all 40 items in rank order.

Directions (1): Below are 40 competencies and abilities of RiderCoach Trainers. Evaluate the importance of each by circling the number that most nearly describes its importance. Circling a "5" for example, will indicate that you believe the item is very important for success. Circling a "1" will indicate that in your opinion the ability is much less important.

<u>COMPETENCIES & ABILITIES</u>		<u>EVALUATION SCALE</u>				
		Highest			Lowest	
1.	Determine instructional objectives for the classroom.	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Determine instructional objectives for the range.	5	4	3	2	1
3.	Analyze and interpret written test scores.	5	4	3	2	1
4.	Analyze and interpret skill test scores.	5	4	3	2	1
5.	Diagnose problems and determine remedial activities.	5	4	3	2	1
6.	Construct efficient schedule.	5	4	3	2	1
7.	Screen candidates.	5	4	3	2	1
8.	Prepare lesson plans.	5	4	3	2	1
9.	Collaborate with program administrators.	5	4	3	2	1
10.	Use instructional aids well.	5	4	3	2	1
11.	Design ranges.	5	4	3	2	1
12.	Ability to teach others to evaluate and coach.	5	4	3	2	1
13.	Know motorcycle research.	5	4	3	2	1
14.	Know motorcycle dynamics.	5	4	3	2	1
15.	Understand teaching/learning dynamics.	5	4	3	2	1
16.	Understand motor skills principles.	5	4	3	2	1
17.	Understand safety and risk management principles.	5	4	3	2	1

18.	Facilitate group activities.	5	4	3	2	1
19.	Evaluate and coach effectively.	5	4	3	2	1
20.	Use RCG/RCTG effectively.	5	4	3	2	1
21.	Use range cards effectively.	5	4	3	2	1
22.	Conduct peer teaching effectively.	5	4	3	2	1
23.	Schedule peer and student teaching effectively.	5	4	3	2	1
24.	Conduct quality assurance effectively.	5	4	3	2	1
25.	Possess character, competence, and leadership skills.	5	4	3	2	1
26.	Conduct skill test proficiently.	5	4	3	2	1
27.	Conduct simulated practice activities properly.	5	4	3	2	1
28.	Be adept at public relations.	5	4	3	2	1
29.	Possess motorcycle maintenance skills.	5	4	3	2	1
30.	Make and apply safe riding decisions.	5	4	3	2	1
31.	Keep records accurately.	5	4	3	2	1
32.	Wear full protective attire when riding.	5	4	3	2	1
33.	Wear an appropriate helmet when riding.	5	4	3	2	1
34.	Handle a motorcycle as a rider.	5	4	3	2	1
35.	Maintain professional development.	5	4	3	2	1
36.	Affiliate with motorcycle organizations.	5	4	3	2	1
37.	Possess CPR/First Aid skills.	5	4	3	2	1
38.	Maintain good human relationships.	5	4	3	2	1
39.	Understand MSF RETS.	5	4	3	2	1
40.	Have completed a track course or school.	5	4	3	2	1

Directions (2): Now comes the fun part! Rank each of the forty items from most important to least important. A good way to do this is to sort out all the “5” ratings first and rank them, all the “4” ratings and rank them, and so on. The goal is to have all 40 items ranked from most important to least important. Use the table on the next page to put the ability and competency number next to your ranking. Then send or fax to Training Systems.

Name _____ RCT # _____

Rank Position of the 40 RCT Competencies and Abilities

<u>Ranking</u> (most to least important)	<u>Competency and Ability #</u>
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APPENDIX B

MSF RiderCoach Trainer Competencies and Abilities Ranking

Below is the listing of RCT Competencies and Abilities in rank order as determined by a self-reporting process by RiderCoach Trainers. The number of RiderCoach Trainers submitting their ranking was 32 (from a total of 215), for a 14.9 percent response rate.

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Competencies and Abilities</u>
1	Possess character, competence, and leadership skills.
2	Ability to teach others to evaluate and coach.
3	Evaluate and coach effectively.
4	Understand safety and risk management principles.
5	Understand teaching/learning dynamics.
6	Understand motor skills principles.
7	Diagnose problems and determine remedial activities.
8	Use RCG/RCTG effectively.
9	Use range cards effectively.
10	Conduct peer teaching effectively.
11	Facilitate group activities.
12	Maintain good human relationships.
13	Wear an appropriate helmet when riding.
14	Make and apply safe riding decisions.
15	Conduct simulated practice activities properly.
16	Wear full protective attire when riding.
17	Conduct skill test proficiently.
18.5	Screen candidates.
18.5	Handle a motorcycle as a rider.
20	Maintain professional development.
21	Conduct quality assurance effectively.
22	Schedule peer and student teaching effectively.
23	Construct efficient schedule.
24	Use instructional aids well.
25	Determine instructional objectives for the range.
26	Determine instructional objectives for the classroom.
27	Collaborate with program administrators.
28	Keep records accurately.
29	Know motorcycle dynamics.
30	Prepare lesson plans.
31	Understand MSF RETS.
32	Analyze and interpret skill test scores.
33	Analyze and interpret written test scores.
34	Know motorcycle research.
35	Possess CPR/First Aid skills.
36	Be adept at public relations.
37	Possess motorcycle maintenance skills.
38	Design ranges.
39	Affiliate with motorcycle organizations.
40	Have completed a track course or school.

APPENDIX C

<u>Personal</u>	<u>Rider</u>	<u>RiderCoach: Curriculum</u>	<u>RiderCoach Trainer: Curriculum</u>	<u>Professional</u>
Possess character, competence, and leadership skills	Wear an appropriate helmet when riding	Evaluate and coach effectively	Ability to teach others to evaluate and coach	Understand safety and risk management principles
Maintain good human relationships	Make and apply safe riding decisions	Diagnose problems and determine remedial activities	Use RCG/RCTG effectively	Understand teaching/learning dynamics
	Wear full protective attire when riding	Use range cards effectively	Conduct peer teaching effectively	Understand motor skills principles
	Handle a motorcycle as a rider	Facilitate group activities	Screen candidates	Maintain professional development
	Know motorcycle dynamics	Conduct simulated practice activities properly	Conduct quality assurance effectively	Determine instructional objectives for the range
	Possess motorcycle maintenance skills	Conduct skill test proficiently	Schedule peer and student teaching effectively	Determine instructional objectives for the classroom
	Affiliate with motorcycle organizations	Use instructional aids well	Construct efficient schedule	Collaborate with program administrators
	Have completed a track course or school	Keep records accurately		Prepare lesson plans
				Understand MSF RETS
				Analyze and interpret skill test scores
				Analyze and interpret written test scores
				Know motorcycle research
				Possess CPR/First Aid skills
				Be adept at public relations
				Design ranges