



Ben Serotta

Founder and CEO
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Shopping for a new bicycle can be a trial. One by one, cyclists hop on each model only to discover that the handlebars are too far apart or the seat is just not comfortable enough.

Ben Serotta did not believe that the one-size-fits-all approach worked for bicycles so he set about carving out a niche in the world of cycling. Instead of selling mass-produced brand name cycles, he decided to design a bike to meet the specifications of each individual rider.

If you're going to spend upwards of \$4,000 on a bike, you want it to fit you perfectly. Serotta is guided by the idealism of the 1960s generation in which he grew up. The principles he acquired shape the way he runs his business, which focuses on "the fanatical pursuit of the perfect ride." At Serotta, the word "perfection" is used seriously.

Serotta abandoned his college education in environmental science to pursue his real passion: building custom bicycles. He became an entrepreneur when most of his peers were finishing high school. At the age of 14, he managed a bike shop, and by the age of 16, he owned it. He interned at England's Witcomb Lightweight when he was 18.

"If I was going to give up environmental biology, which was going to allow me to change the world, then I was going to change it while pursuing my passion," he says.

Serotta Competition Bicycles is the product of innovation and prideful craftsmanship in a world of assembly-line production. It is also a testament to how careful design and applied training can drive strategic goals and elevate a profession.

Founded in 1974, one of the company's first innovations was the Serotta Size Cycle, an infinitely adjustable stationary bike that permits dealers to

make an extensive series of detailed measurements to customized the frame.

There are more than 5,280 ways to build a Serotta bicycle and nearly 9,000 possible combinations of multidimensional tubing. As part of the design phase, the bike fitter interviews clients to determine how and when they ride, their injury history, and their cycling goals.

"The reality was that the world really didn't need another bike company," Serotta says. "I had to commit to validating my business by offering something totally new."

Building a successful business was not enough. Although the Size Cycle was new, Serotta eventually discovered that dealers weren't using it—largely because of a lack of proper training.

"We had given out a manual, but providing that tool without training was foolish," Serotta says. "Bike fitting is very visual."

Further, the industry as a whole had no standard method for bike fitting, which could be confusing and frustrating for a consumer who attempted to comparison shop.

In 1998, Serotta invited the most talented bike fitters in the United States to his Saratoga Springs facility. He led brainstorming sessions over several days in an attempt to standardize a best-practices bike-fitting method. The results led to the creation of the School for Cycling Ergonomics, known in shorthand as "fit school." Open to anyone, even dealers who don't carry Serotta products, the school was the first of its kind in the industry. In an unprecedented move, attendees paid \$1,200 to participate.

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