The Baker DD7: When is enough, enough?!

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When Lisa and I decided to pawn her jewelry, quit our jobs at GM, and cash in the kids’ college savings to start making six-speed transmissions in our basement, everyone around us thought we’d lost our minds. We had both worked our asses off to get through college and had great jobs as engineers for the biggest, best company in the world, The General. Neither of us being the type to do what people expect us to do, we followed our hearts and traded it all in to follow our dream of bringing the six-speed overdrive to market. Here we are over a decade later, and while we’re sitting around dreaming up new, cool shit, the rest of the world is still copying our original six-speed design. But how do we decide what to bring to market and when?

As I see it, if you understand the market, the market tells you. The need for the six-speed was driven by the surge of big-inch motors in the market. The stock five-speed, standard for decades was no longer enough. The need for right-side drive was driven by the need to counter the powertrain offset and maintain the balance of the motorcycle during the wide tire craze. The noise and vibration characteristics of Harley’s Twin-Cam motor were the inspiration for the birth of the Direct Drive Six Speed. Once six-speed transmissions became standard on nearly all production motorcycles, the game changed again.

It’s funny, the first suggestion of a seven-speed transmission came from our 6-year old son as he watched the very first six-speed ship off to Ron Simms (OK, so we gathered up the kids and made them watch, but that’s beside the point). He was a curious fellow, a real thinker and he asked with boyish wonder ‘When are you going to make a seven-speed, Bert?’ Now, I’m an independent thinker, I like my ideas to be my own. Without giving it any thought, I brushed off the question with a quick, ‘no one needs a seven-speed Joe’. Truth is, at the time, no one did need a seven-speed transmission. For the time being, enough was enough.

Time has a way of changing things. In 2006 six-speed transmissions final-