

# Earning Your Marketing Diploma



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As cattle producers we tend to earn our “degree” in genetics or production. We spend hours trying to figure out the perfect mating or investigating ways to manage our land or cattle better. Marketing is something that does not come easily for some producers and, in many cases, takes second place to everything else a producer does.

If you were asked the question: what do you do, I would predict many of you would say, “I breed or raise registered Hereford cattle.” Hereford breeders are proud to be in the cattle business.

But marketing experts say the most successful business people say “the customer is their business.” Keith Evans once wrote, “The key to becoming customer oriented is to develop customer loyalty, and to constantly monitor their needs and wants, as you adjust production accordingly. The customer is not always right, even the customer knows this. But he or she is always the one who allows you to pay your bills, and hopefully put a little extra in the bank. That’s why their satisfaction and loyalty are so important.”

People who complain are sometimes not the most-liked people, but complaining customers are important because they give you a chance to set things straight and keep their business. Evans says it’s the customer who complains to someone other than you who is the big problem, because these dissatisfied

customers will tell others about how unhappy they are with you.

The customer who complains to you first and gets a satisfactory solution will, on the other hand, often tell potential customers how fair you are and how much he likes you and your service. Surveys show that from 50-70% of complaining customers can be kept as customers if their complaints are resolved satisfactorily.

So when a customer complains, take him seriously, ask questions, evaluate his needs, offer him a set of possible solutions, and explain exactly how you can and will resolve his problem.

Loyal customers are not created by chance, says Patricia Fry, a writer for *Communication Briefings*. Successful business people, she contends, know that the health of their business depends upon loyal customers. Fry recommends a four-pronged approach to creating loyal customers (see sidebar).

She also recommends you establish a line of communication with customers that allows you to listen carefully to them. You will discover both positive and negative things about the way you do business. It is important, Fry concludes, to ask customers what they need, rather than telling them what you can do for them.

In another column, Evans wrote about relationship marketing, which goes beyond mere customer knowledge. “Relationship marketing means getting in synch with customer goals, aspirations, needs and wants — whatever makes the customer’s life better.”

Those who are engaged in relationship marketing ask customers questions like, “How are we doing?” and “How can we be of further help to you?”

Evans says breeders who are intimately acquainted with their customers and their customers’ cow herds will find that they are making breeding decisions with the needs of particular customers in mind. The result should lead to more satisfied customers and a stronger bond between buyer and seller.

Yes, we are in the cattle business, but customers are our business.

## Earn your marketing degree

In this issue we have set out to help Hereford breeders “Master Marketing.” Inside you’ll find marketing ideas from seasoned cattle producers, Hereford fieldmen and other marketing specialists. We take a look at the different strategies available to market different types of cattle — bulls, females, feeder cattle and cull cows (see Page 100). We also investigate the different types of sales used today — auction, private treaty, Internet and video (see Page 130).

This issue also includes an article about cattle photography that contains tips on how to get that perfect photo as well as suggestions on how to buy and use a digital camera.

As an editorial team, we hope you enjoy reading this 85th annual Herd Bull and Reference Edition. Hopefully it has some tips that will help you enhance your marketing program.

## Four-pronged approach for customer loyalty

Patricia Fry recommends this four-pronged approach to creating loyal customers:

- 1) Acknowledge the customer as a person — an individual with a name, a life, needs and concerns.
- 2) Learn everything you can about each of your customers.
- 3) Ask what each customer wants from you.
- 4) Make it easy to do business with you. **HW**