



Satisfying Customers

Hello from the road! My latest flight is just pushing back from the gate as I write this message the old fashioned way — pen and paper. I want to capture some thoughts right now, before I can power up my laptop in flight.

Allow me to introduce myself; I'm Arden Gremmert, interim general manager of Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) LLC. Though I've worked for the CHB program since its start in 1995, I was only recently entrusted with managing, developing and growing the company.

One of my personal foundational business principles is this: retaining existing customers comes first. My experience confirms that without satisfied, profitable, long-term customers, it is very difficult to attract new ones. Most, if not all, who will read this column subscribe to this same basic idea — the better we are at serving our customers the more others trust us with their business.

For instance, one of the most predictable requests asked of me by new retail grocery prospects is for a list of current customers. Inevitably, our prospective buyers and their top managers want to speak directly to CHB-user counterparts. They simply want to know from firsthand accounts what they can expect when they join us and start selling Certified Hereford Beef® product.

The questions are detailed, intense and searching:

- Is Certified Hereford Beef really as good as the CHB staff says it is? Do you personally find it to be as consistently tender, tasty and juicy as they claim?
- Do your customers love it? Do they know what Certified Hereford Beef means to them as consumers?
- How well does the CHB staff execute their promised promotion work? Is their in-store training really as effective as promised? Are the written CHB manuals and other materials truly useful and informative?
- How's the pricing as compared to other beef products you use as benchmarks? Are you offered competitive ad feature items that are financially attractive to you and your customers? Are these feature items what you want and need to draw customers to your stores? Do your gross profit margins meet your goals?
- Do the delivery trucks arrive on time? How is it going week to week for your wholesaler or warehouse? Describe the order fill rate — is it poor, adequate, good or excellent? Can you count on CHB LLC and its licensed packer partners to handle challenges, issues or problems professionally and promptly?

The list of questions goes on and on. It should. This change from a prospect's current suppliers to CHB's single-source supply branded beef program is not undertaken lightly. The beef category is a huge contributor to store profits and must be protected carefully by competent, responsible meat category managers.

You can see why happy CHB customers are critical to new sales. A few wrong answers and what was a promising sales opportunity turns cold. Or worse.

For this reason, since early April, our staff's highest job priority has been complete customer satisfaction. To grow Certified Hereford Beef sales, we must be doing our very best every day on every front for those who've entrusted their beef case and company profits to Certified Hereford Beef.

That means when our staff members are providing customer service, their performance is very important. Their proactive solutions prove our dedication to our retailers more reliably than any hollow promise from a distant office.

Every customer need or want that we fulfill goes in the win column for our clients and for Certified Hereford Beef. Customer satisfaction is the way we earn the confidence of beef professionals nationwide. Simple? Yes. Easy? No. Like our CHB product, we must be consistent time after time,

day after day, year in, year out for us to succeed in this highly competitive world. We must rely on every segment of our beef industry to perform each CHB function perfectly along the way.

Please read this *Hereford World* CHB issue carefully and let me know what you think of our work for you. Please e-mail your comments to ardengremmert@usa.net or call (425) 333-6622. Your comments, questions and concerns are important to me.

For more stories about our recent efforts, visit HerefordBeef.net and click on the links to this summer's e-newsletters.

Thanks very much for your amazing support through all these years. As a staff, our pledge to you is to work hard for every existing customer and to compete aggressively for new business. Combined, these two driving forces will build value in the Hereford breed for decades to come. **HW**