

# doing a better job

## MERCHANDISING

by Keith Evans, Director of Communications and Public Relations

Ted Turner, the colorful owner of the Atlanta Braves and Super (television) Station WTBS, is a man one would expect to have exotic ideas about running a successful business.

But that is not so. In a recent television interview he listed two factors that account for most of his business success.

First—Make your product easy to sell. That is, make it as good as possible.

Second—Service your accounts properly.

Angus breeders, for the most part, religiously follow Turner's first rule. We are production oriented and over the years have

their business each year to more aggressive seed stock producers.

Every good sales person knows it is infinitely easier to keep a good customer than it is to develop a new one. That's why Ted Turner and every other good business person take good care of their customer accounts.

There are probably as many ideas on how to provide good customer service as there are successful business people. But the following will give you some basic ideas that you can flesh out as you develop your own customer service program.

- Keep a card file on every customer you have and every potential customer you would like to have. It should include name, address and telephone number. For a current customer, the card should include the customer's sales history, such as when bulls are purchased and the prices paid. It should include the size of the breeder's herd and the kind of cattle. If the person has a nickname, note that. Also list the name of the customer's spouse and names and ages of children, if possible. Remember, children age 9 through 21 are prospective customers for project heifers.

Always consult the appropriate card when you deal with a customer. And remember, keep it up to date.

- When you sell bulls or females, make sure you know what the customer expects of them. If a customer is going to use a bull on first calf heifers, you will sell a different bull than if the animal is for use on mature cows. The battle is half won if your customer buys a product that you know will meet his expectations.

- Follow up on the sale. A telephone call to insure the bull is healthy and getting the cows bred shows concern and allows you to handle minor problems before they develop into major ones.
- Handle complaints quickly and to the satisfaction of the buyer if it is humanly possible. A dissatisfied customer, even one who is unjustly so, can cost you money for years. On the other hand, a satisfied customer, particularly if you have gone the second mile, is one of your best sales people.
- Visit the herd of each customer every year or every other year. It demonstrates good will and interest in your customer. But more importantly it allows you to see how your cattle are being used and under what management conditions they are expected to perform. Without this kind of information you can't develop an effective breeding and merchandising program.
- Don't wait for old customers to show interest in buying more cattle from you. Take the initiative and keep them informed about what is going on at your place. When your bulls come off yearling test, or when your yearling weights are

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completely redesigned our product to meet changing demand. Angus breeders have led the industry for years in using every tool available to improve the quality of their cattle.

On the second point, we aren't so religious. Many successful Angus breeders do a good job of servicing their customers. But, unfortunately, a great many good Angus breeders do little or nothing at all. I personally know of breeders who take no active interest in how their cattle perform in commercial herds. Once they have made a sale and transferred the certificate, they initiate no further contact unless the buyer comes back later for more cattle. These breeders are almost sure to lose some of

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processed, make up a simple flyer showing the results and send it or hand deliver it to everyone whose name is in your card file. You can't provide customers with too much useful information.

- And finally, make sales calls, by telephone or in person. People buy most often when they are asked. Remind customers that now is the time they usually buy bulls, stress again the strong points of the new crop of cattle you have for sale, and then ask for the sale. Just come right out and ask them how many of your cattle they want this year. It is the proper and accepted thing to do.

The principles of good selling and customer service apply as much to Angus cattle as to any other product. What works for Ted Turner will work for you too. Just give it a try.

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