

BOOKsmarts

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A Behind-The-Scenes Look At The 11th Annual NBC Sales Meeting

A group of Nebraska Book Company Regional Managers huddle together, reaffirming goals for the three-day national sales meeting. The five managers resemble football players preparing for the big game – without the uniforms. Seasoned veterans and new representatives traveled in July from across the U. S. to Lincoln, Nebraska, for this year's 11th annual Nebraska Book Company Sales Meeting. The regrouping of these Sales Representatives provides them with an opportunity to hone their skills and deepen the camaraderie with their peers.

“Our Sales Representatives are critical to the success of NBC,” says Jerry Hiller, National Sales Manager. “They are in direct contact with our customers on a daily basis.”

Have you ever wondered how these representatives stay on top of their game? *Booksmarts* took a behind-the-scenes look at what sets NBC Sales Representatives apart from the competition.

This Year's Theme

“Step-by-Step” was the theme of this year's meeting, and the group focused on charting a course for the future of NBC. The group met to strategize on the best way to enhance relationships with bookstore management and identify opportunities to succeed as advocates for bookstore staff.

“Our Sales Representatives are advocates for the customer. Representatives feel a sense of ownership and responsibility to our customers. Because of this belief, they go the extra mile to serve them,” says Hiller.

According to an industry-wide survey conducted by The Gallup Organization, NBC Sales Representatives are ranked highest for customer service. Polished,

outgoing, honest and dedicated are accurate characteristics of NBC Sales Representatives. A top priority for NBC is to ensure that its Sales Representatives foster successful business relationships with bookstore employees and managers.

NBC consistently provides bookstores with opportunities to be profitable, to get their students the most money for their books, and to increase the amount

of used books available through numerous NBC products and services. Bookstore management can expect their Sales Representative to take a serious look at their business needs and assist them in achieving projected goals. In one presentation hosted by Hiller, the topic focused on building relationships with potential and existing stores.

475 Years' Book-Selling Experience

“We have 475 years of book-selling experience among all of our representatives,” comments Hiller. “We are always interested in offering innovative ways to help make the independent college bookstore stronger, so we have created an interactive process through which we can accomplish that.

“Our customers are very knowledgeable and have definite opinions about their needs. Our Sales Representatives translate which NBC programs, products, or services work best to meet individual bookstore manager's needs,” Hiller concludes.

For more information on how NBC products and services can make your job easier, visit www.nebook.com, or contact your NBC Sales Representative.



Jerry Hiller, National Sales Manager, hosted presentation focusing on building relationships with potential and existing stores.

PART 2

A Day In The Life

of an NBC Customer Support Representative

Nebraska Book Company (NBC) has taken its experienced and knowledgeable customer support for bookstore management one step further by offering training courses on NBC products to customers. The company recognizes that although NBC programs are easy to use, they are comprehensive and sophisticated, and bookstore managers can get the most out of these products by being thoroughly trained in how to use them.

The NBC Training Experience

After stepping off the hotel shuttle at one of NBC's buildings in Lincoln, Nebraska, bookstore managers enter the training classroom where they will spend time learning about the new program they've purchased for their store. Training varies from three to four and one-half days. The length of a training session is determined by what needs to be covered in order for the bookstore employee to successfully use the NBC system purchased. NBC representatives estimate how much time is needed for each topic and then develop materials to support the training session.

"The goal of each training session is to send the bookstore manager home with practical knowledge that can be used on the job," says Gail Hankins, Manager of College Bookstore Management Systems.



Sandy Conrad, Accounting Support Representative and Trainer, enjoys leading training sessions for bookstore managers.



On the left, Sandy Conrad, Accounting Support Representative and Trainer, is one of the team support representatives providing individualized training for participants.

Eager to begin the day, a training team of three to four support representatives meets before each training session to make sure the agenda is organized to provide optimal learning. Once the day is complete, the team meets again in order to analyze how the session went and to go over any training evaluations that have been received.

"We listen to every comment from participants, and it is not uncommon for us to change the training class in order to provide the best training to suit the managers' needs," states Ms. Hankins.

Real Learning, Real Relationships

NBC's training philosophy over the last 16 years has been for NBC customers to use the program they purchased and to spend time on the computer with directed learning experiences. Each participant can expect to sit at a monitor that provides direct access to his or her own training data. The training provides real-life exercises, guided by NBC instructors.

Several courses are available, and they vary depending on the season. This calendar year, 115 training sessions will occur at NBC offices. Currently, bookstore managers can choose from such training sessions as: WinPRISM ICS, PRISM ICS, and WebPRISM, PC Text.

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NBC Quality Control Salvages Thousands of Used Books Every Day

Used books are recycled over and over each semester. Notes, highlighted paragraphs, torn pages are signs that a book has supported a student through his or her class. How does a used book make it through every semester?

Nebraska Book Company (NBC) Quality Control department knows the answer to this question. More than 23 full-time employees await the arrival of carts full of used books – and more than 350 books can easily be found in one cart that regularly rolls through the Quality Control department. Each book is carefully reviewed. In more cases than not, the used book has a broken spine or repairs that need to be made before moving on to another bookstore.

“We salvage a great number of books that otherwise would have been thrown away,” says Amy Kapperman, NBC Quality Control Supervisor. “We use tape and a hot glue gun to mend a great deal of the used books.”

The number one goal of the department is to ensure that the finest used books are sold by NBC representatives to bookstores nationwide. An estimated 960,000 books came through the Quality Control department in 2001. According to Mrs. Kapperman, 800,000 of those books were repaired by the department and returned to bookstores. Books that are not salvageable are recycled, not destroyed.

The work done in Quality Control ensures that bookstores can offer used books that look their best and are accurate. Another responsibility of the department is to ensure that textbooks sold in a set are together when they arrive at a bookstore.

“The efforts made by our staff are tremendous. They do a great job for our customers,” says Mrs. Kapperman.

With Technology Today the Only Constant is Change

The technology offered with textbooks today has required the NBC Quality Control department to evolve its reviewing process. CDs are now commonly sold with textbooks, and it is up to the department to ensure that CDs are updated as well.

“Reviewing CDs is becoming more commonplace,” notes Mrs. Kapperman. “We see many of these trends in the use of technology.”

The department goes the extra mile by working diligently with NBC’s Inventory Control Department to monitor which textbooks are likely to resell with a CD. This allows bookstore managers to spend their budgets efficiently by offering complete used textbooks to students.

“It’s a constant challenge to keep inventory moving,” says Mrs. Kapperman, “but the goal of keeping our customers happy never changes.”



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