

BOOKsmarts

A quarterly newsletter from Nebraska Book Company, Inc.

Summer 2002

A Day In The Life of a NBC Customer Support Representative

Tuesday, April 23, 2002: *Kim helped the University Bookstore in Des Moines with credit card settlement early this morning. C.J. resolved a problem at the Rother's Bookstore in Houston with a system slowdown. Ron has spoken with a user from Gettysburg about how to handle out-of-print books that appear on a credit memo.*

This is a sample of a call log reviewed by Gail Hankins, manager of College Bookstore Management Systems, the division that provides technical support for customers who purchase Nebraska Book Company (NBC) software. NBC's dedication to customers' needs spurred the formation of this department in 1985 after the first software products became available to college bookstore personnel. At that time, the department employed three individuals. Currently, there are 35 experts available to respond to phone calls, faxes and e-mail questions.

The NBC Customer Support Team members have extensive knowledge of all product lines, such as the PRISM suites and Legacy products. It is not uncommon to have days when representatives navigate through technical questions and concerns for up to 200 calls. According to Hankins, NBC representatives took 40,000 calls from customers throughout 2001. The mission of customer support is to help users be successful with NBC software.



Gail Hankins, manager of College Bookstore Management Systems, says the customer support group fields more than 40,000 calls per year.

"We are somewhat unique in the customer support and help desk industry because our representatives are not judged by the amount of time spent on one call," says Hankins. "We want our team to spend the time necessary troubleshooting customers' problems until they are resolved."

Over time, NBC representatives naturally form long-term relationships with customers from several college bookstores. Gloria Melendez, manager of the University of Texas at El Paso Bookstore, understands first-hand the value of having this support, and she praises the customer support team.

"These representatives make my life working at the bookstore so much easier," says Melendez. "The high quality of service from NBC representatives is by far the best I've ever dealt with over the years."

According to Melendez, she remembers turning immediately to a NBC representative for help when she had difficulties with transactions at the cash registers during a past Spring Rush. "Jeff, the customer service representative I worked with, went above and beyond the call of duty to help me solve my problems. I was so thrilled with his dedication that I sent him a gift!"

The NBC customer support representatives are rarely bored, and most have interesting stories to tell

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CUSTOMER SERVICE

from years of experience on the job. Hankins recalls one memorable customer call. A long-time customer frantically called one afternoon from outside her bookstore. There was a fire, and she called to find out if the server had been damaged. With a quick investigation on the part of NBC, the server was accessed, the bookstore's data was zipped into files, pulled across the Internet and stored on a machine at NBC until bookstore personnel could get back into the store. As a result of quick thinking on the part of the user and the magic of modern technology, the bookstore's transaction records were saved.

"Our customers run their operations with our software, so when they have a crisis, we have a crisis," Hankins points out.

What Else Can NBC Customers Expect?

The department is responsible for more than technical support. Employees are responsible for writing all of the user documentation, research and updating the Web

site (www.support.nebook.com). A primary goal of the department is to provide training for any user of NBC software. Training will be featured in the next edition of *BooksMarts* in Part II of "A Day In The Life Of A Customer Service Representative at NBC."

Questions, crises and training are all in a day's work for Hankins and the other NBC customer service representatives who keep college bookstore managers' businesses up and running. When asked, "How do you handle the truly stressful days," Hankins' response is as follows, "I close my eyes, take a deep breath and exhale slowly. This tactic works every time!"

For technical support, call toll free at 1-800-733-4489. Call Center operators are on duty to direct your call from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. CST, Monday through Friday. For any other customer support, check the Web site, www.support.nebook.com.

NBC Customer Support Representative works through a customer's software problem.



Nebraska Book Company Lets You Run the Show With the Foremost Buyer's Guide in the Industry!

Computer buy back systems humming, mile-long lines of students waiting to sell back their textbooks (which will soon need a new book bag to call home). At the end of each semester, this is a familiar sight seen on college campuses nationwide.

How did you survive the chaotic time known as Buy Back? Nebraska Book Company experts give you the tool to run your business effectively and profitably with the *Nebraska Book Company Buyer's Guide*.

Why Do More Than 1,700 Bookstore Personnel Love Their Buyer's Guide?

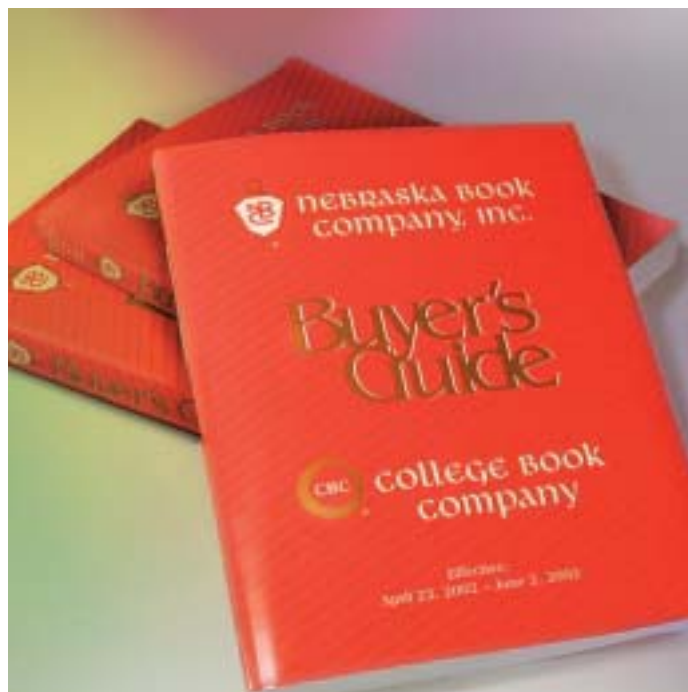
The *Nebraska Book Company Buyer's Guide* is the foremost in the industry, providing the most comprehensive and up-to-date textbook pricing aid for Nebraska Book Company (NBC) and College Book Company (CBC) customers. Within each issue produced, you will see a listing of bibliographic references providing author, title, edition, copyright, publisher, ISBN and publisher price information. From "AABERG: Muscle Mechanics '98" to "ZWILLINGER: CRC Standard Mathematical Tables & Formulae 30th '96," the *Buyer's Guide* provides a comprehensive list of textbooks from A to Z. Buy back prices for used books range from 25 cents up to \$75.

In industry-wide surveys conducted by the National Association of College Stores (NACS) and Gallup, the NBC *Buyer's Guide* was voted the top buying guide in the country due to its accuracy, pricing structure and usefulness.

"We are dedicated to making bookstore managers' lives easier and more profitable," says Jim Bartlett, database and inventory control manager.

History In The Making, Or Is It Pricing?

The 600-page guide, distinguishable by its bright red cover, has evolved since its humble beginnings more than 60 years ago. In the early 1940s, the production of new textbooks slowed as the country devoted its resources to the war efforts. NBC quickly became one of the first in the industry to buy books back from students and resell them at the bookstore. The company soon became one of the largest wholesale used textbook distributors in the nation. NBC employees obtained books for the company by traveling to colleges in the region at the end of each semester and buying their books. The guide at that time consisted of a simple,



The Buyer's Guide has evolved since its inception more than 50 years ago to become the foremost guide in the industry. Now, the pages within the guide include more than 44,000 textbooks consisting of the most widely used titles on North American campuses. Each page displays five columns of information with suggested list prices for books on the far left and the ISBN on the far right.

typed listing of the titles without buying prices; instead, a letter code system was used to indicate the price that could be paid for each title.

A huge milestone occurred when pricing was added to the guide in the early 1950s. Bookstores were now able to purchase books from their students and send them directly to NBC. At that time, the guide had a listing of 4,000 titles. Now, there are more than 44,000 titles consisting of the most widely used titles on North American campuses.

Who Compiles & Maintains the Lists at NBC?

Currently, the guide is updated nine times per year, and 3,000 copies are distributed nationwide. Accuracy is a primary reason for the success of the guide in the textbook industry. NBC Database Management researches and inputs new information and adds it to the NBC Textbook Database of nearly 170,000 titles. To give some perspective as to the volume of updating that takes place, in November and December 2001 more

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The NBC Buyer's Guide began in the early 1950s and consisted of single sheets of paper with typed listings of titles without buying prices. A letter code system was used to indicate the price for each title.

than 30,000 publisher price changes were entered into the database. According to Bartlett, it is not unusual for the number of bibliographic and price changes in the guide to exceed 10,000 in any one issue.

“The success and strength of the *Buyer's Guide* lies in the talent, dedication and experience of the 11 people involved in its production,” says Bartlett. “The staff has more than 260 years of combined experience with NBC.”

The Inventory Control Department analyzes the market for each title and determines the buying price. Prior to the two major buyback periods each year, a thorough review of nearly every title in the *Buyer's Guide* is conducted.

“Reacting to the ever-changing world of the college textbook provides us with some interesting challenges,” Bartlett points out. “The packaging of electronic media with textbooks and the more frequent revision cycles have made maintaining the *Buyer's Guide* much more complex. That's where the experience of the Database Management and Inventory Control staffs really pays off.”

For more information on how you can receive the NBC *Buyer's Guide*, contact your NBC sales representative, or call 1-800-869-0366.

What Is the Answer To This Equation?

What is $9 \times 600 \times 44,000$? This may seem abstract to you, but there is meaning to this mathematical equation. The answer is a compendium of useful and accurate information when buying back students' used textbooks.

Answer : 227,600,000 is the total of the number of *Buyer's Guide* editions that are distributed nationwide, multiplied by the number of pages found within the guide, multiplied by the number of textbook titles.

WE WANT YOUR BUSINESS—NOT YOUR CUSTOMERS

- We believe the student is your customer.
- We believe the bookstore is our customer.
- We believe in integrity in business dealings.
- We believe college bookstores should be independent.
- We believe in providing solutions to keep your business independent.



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