

The team dynamic in international markets

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Manufacturing and marketing swine houses successfully in countries around the world is a challenging business. There are the obvious issues that need to be faced, such as geography (climate considerations, earthquake or hurricane zones) and economics (size and cost).

These are routinely handled and most of the time do not pose major hurdles. In other words, if you produce a well designed, homogeneous and quality house that fits the needs of most producers, it will find its own audience.

The secret then becomes fourfold – how do you reach your prospects, how do you get them to sign a contract, how do you keep them satisfied and how do you make sure they become repeat customers?

Technology sets the pace

Certainly technology plays an important role in whether your product survives in multi-diverse countries around the world. In fact, there are instances where even the most modern designed farms need built-in obsolescence simply because technology changes, and after 30 or so years, a swine building needs to be replaced with a more updated version.

A good example of this occurs in many parts of Europe where pork farmers view their houses with an eye on longevity. Structures are often built with thick, concrete walls, clay tiled roofs and, as a rule, are very expensive.

An old adage reminds us of this tradition – ‘the farmer builds a swine building and his grandchildren pay for it’. Today this promise may not make sense. A more studied approach would be to stay aware of where the business is going and change with the times.

Often times, pig farmers in certain countries have become cheap improvisers. They see a structure, copy the design for their own use without a clear understanding of the technology involved.

Predictably, problems arise because while the copied structure



Finishing building, West Pork Farms, Australia.

looks good, it does not perform up to standard. It seems to be a trend in too many countries to create inferior houses because it is cheaper.

In many cases, the producer may not even be aware of his true costs.

Poor quality materials and improper design might appear to save money in the short term, but will have long term negative results.

So, a big part of the sales challenge becomes convincing the farmer that his ultimate goal is to be concerned with his ‘improved cash flow’ and ‘return on investment’ and not on short term cost cutting.

Experienced agent’s role

We mentioned earlier that technology plays an important role in staying ahead in the race for business. This is absolutely critical to the success of any business serving the swine industry.

However, in dealing with multi-cultures in multiple countries, it is the key role of the local marketing agent that becomes paramount.

In essence, the agent, the building manufacturer and equipment suppliers form a team, capable of providing turnkey solutions for pig producers.

It is only when the agent does his work that the team of distributors can do theirs. Synergy starts with the agent’s pre-planning. Buildings

can not be designed, flooring, feeders, stalls, and ventilation systems can not be ordered, until the agent evaluates the site, and decides on the most efficient use of the land.

In some cases, the agent’s good planning can result in a substantial increase in the production of market pigs.

For example, understanding the client’s production goals will allow, through creative site layout, the farm to maximise and increase the total sow capacity.

In fact, with this kind of help, a producer in the Philippines was able to increase a 4,400 sow site to a 8,800 sow site. That doubled the capacity, minimised wasted space, and reduced land requirements.

In addition, this kind of site design translates into significant building cost savings, which allows the producer to put his investment into automation for labour and feed efficiencies instead of a larger, more expensive building.

The very fact that representatives are available in specific locales, allows them to monitor every phase of the building construction and equipment installation. Not only do they provide the farmer with airtight, economical and efficient pre-fabricated buildings, ventilation and feed delivery systems, feeders, flooring, crates and stalls, they can, in most cases, arrange or provide construction crews, which will signifi-

cantly shorten the duration of the project. After all, lenders continue to demand assurances that projects be finished on budget and on time.

Along this same line, the agent’s contacts with financial institutions can assist the producer in finding short term credit insurance programmes or project financing programmes.

This kind of help will significantly improve cash flow, especially during the construction phase of the project, and many times can be the tipping point in securing a project for the agent’s team.

This kind of turnkey operation gives the farmer solid confidence in his team because he understands that accountability lies with one party – the local agent.

It is his company’s responsibility to be aware of local market conditions and assemble the package that will ensure the best price, quality, building and environmental design, equipment performance, labour and feed efficiency available.

The team concept

It is the concept of a well oiled team orchestrated by the representative that will allow any and all members of the group to reach out and generate new business through traditional marketing channels, or through referrals.

They become very important, particularly when the agent uses his connections and members of the team theirs, to network new business. There is nothing like satisfied customers to pass along their positive experience to others in the same business.

Anyone who has been in business any length of time knows that the majority of new business comes from repeat customers, so it is not enough to get business, the challenge is to keep it, and grow it.

This is when any company can use its own history to paint a picture of success to existing customers or new prospects and its history will, in all likelihood, be inexorably connected to the history and success of the team with which it is associated. ■