

# booksmarts



A quarterly newsletter from Nebraska Book Company • [nebook.com](http://nebook.com)

Fall 2007

## National Sales Meeting Plays to Win in Las Vegas

Nebraska Book Company (NBC) took this year's National Sales Meeting on the road to Las Vegas, Nevada. Braving the hot-but-dry heat of late July, more than 70 NBC sales and account service reps descended on what has come to be known as the Entertainment Capital of the World.

Befitting its new venue, the theme of this year's meeting was "Play to Win." This translated into a renewed focus by the sales force on aggressively meeting customers' needs by proactively addressing each store's unique requirements. Everyone left the three-day event refreshed and invigorated for the year ahead.

The final night of the meeting culminated in an awards banquet, during which the following honors were given out to NBC sales reps for their efforts:

### Business Growth Award

Two or more consecutive years of 10 percent increases in either sales or purchases:

- Dan Hild
- Steve Morris
- Lorin Price
- Tom Hansen
- El Gottlieb
- Jason Skiff

### Purchases Growth Award

Two or more consecutive years of 10 percent increases in purchases:

- Dan Hild
- Lorin Price



### Sales Growth Award

Two or more consecutive years of 10 percent increases in sales:

- Steve Morris
- Jason Skiff

### Regional Performance Award (new this year)

Given to the regional manager whose region showed the best performance this past year: Woodie White

**Rep of the Year:** Dan Hild

### Special Recognition Award

Steve Bartek – for his untiring efforts this past year to bolster NBC's position in the marketplace and spearhead the initiative to increase student participation in buybacks.

## Five Ways You Can Help Drive Early Faculty Adoptions

As a college bookstore manager, you know that timely faculty adoption is one of most important factors governing the price and availability of used texts. One example is *West's Business Law* (10th ed.), which sells new for \$156.60 and \$117.45 used. If the course instructor doesn't re-adopt the book or doesn't get his or her order in on time, the student will receive \$49.00 for the book – making the true cost of the new textbook \$107.60 and the true cost of the used \$68.45.

However, if the professor re-adopts the textbook for use the next term prior to the start of the book buy, the student will receive \$78.30 back for the book – making the true cost of the new textbook \$78.30 and the true cost of the used \$39.15 – a savings of nearly \$30 in both cases.

When you consider the number of books students are required to purchase each semester, it's easy to see that this savings adds up in a hurry. The problem is, though this may all seem obvious to you, many faculty members are still unaware of the effect they have on pricing and availability. The following five steps can change that.

### 1. Get Out of Your Bookstore

Don't expect faculty to come to you – hit the campus and go to them. Meet with instructors, department chairs, faculty senates and the dean's council. Talk to them about:

- a) Publisher merchandising techniques – requiring fully disclosed information from publishers
- b) Specific examples of affected textbooks within their discipline
- c) Importance of buyback and timely adoptions – including their role and the benefit to students
- d) Strategies and examples of how the bookstore is working to reduce the costs of textbooks for students

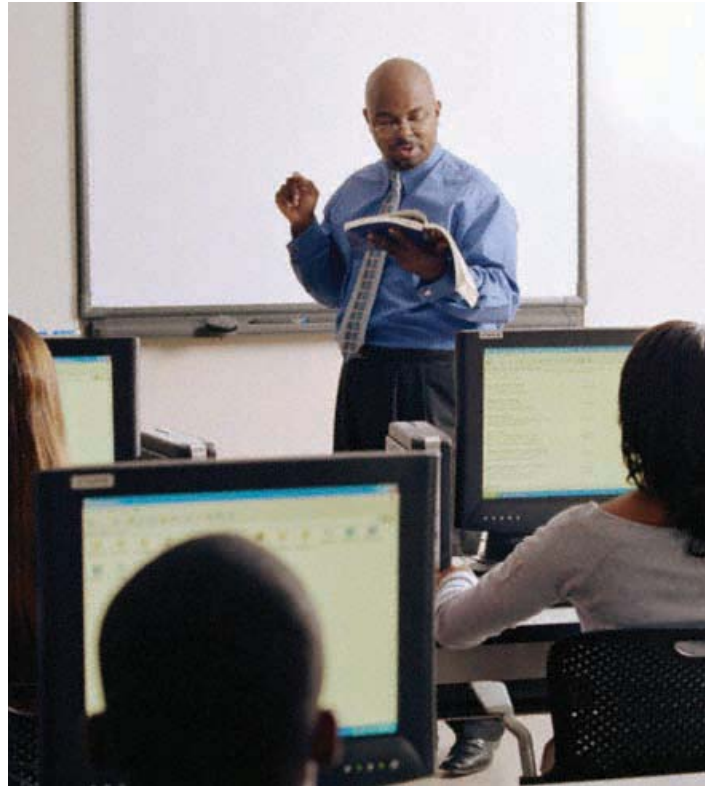
### 2. Become a Trends Expert

You know the facts regarding industry and student trends, textbook data and buyback. Leverage your knowledge to enhance your position with faculty members by:

- a) Sharing data on new trends
- b) Discussing the impact of textbook decisions on students
- c) Recommending textbook options

### 3. Promote Important Dates

You must stay vigilant and remember that being proactive pays. That means, you must:



- a) Remind faculty of adoption deadlines again and again
- b) Communicate the importance of timely adoptions
- c) Don't forget: Even a slight increase in your adoption rates means more money for your students at the buyback counter

### 4. Involve Students

Students can be great allies in the cause for early adoptions. After all, it's their welfare that's at stake. So don't forget to:

- a) Build awareness for the true cost of textbooks
- b) Encourage your students to ask their professors to re-adopt – it's a simple thing that can really help promote adoptions

### 5. Recognize Success

When all is said and done, a simple "thank-you" can go a long way.

Of course, recognizing the problem is only the first step. Going out there and actually doing something about it is the key. The bottom line is, as is the case with so many aspects of your business, when encouraging early faculty adoptions, communication is critical to success.

## Fall Rush Trends

Despite fierce competition from online retailers, bookstores across the country experienced a busy book rush this fall. Part of these stores' success can be attributed to adapting their business models, and a part can be attributed to the inherent advantages bricks-and-mortar stores have over their virtual counterparts.

Gary Thompson, director of St. Mary's University Bookstore in San Antonio, Texas, says, "I thought we had a very successful rush." He continues, "We did still have kids shopping on the Internet – coming in and writing down the ISBN numbers and such." This is the reason Thompson reduced the refund period for texts to just one week. He found students were using the store as a makeshift library, buying books while they waited for their Internet orders to arrive and then returning them for a refund. He did notice that some ISBN shoppers came back to buy used, however. "I think our selection of used books really got their attention," says Thompson.

Interestingly, Thompson says, "Our Web orders were up." He explains, "We see a lot of students reserving books via our Web site and picking them up in-store." In his mind, this benefits both store and students: "We get early-bird students reserving used texts before they even get to school, and I like it because it cuts down on lines in the store during rush."

Mike Schmidt, manager of the UNO Bookstore, which serves students attending the University of Nebraska at Omaha, saw an increase in the sale of used texts. According to Schmidt, "I think there are a couple of things going on here. Number one, students are obviously interested in paying less for their books and, number two, we've been very aggressive, along with Nebraska Book Company, in providing those used books."

As far as Internet competition goes, Schmidt says matter-of-factly, "Students are always going to shop for the best deal." He continues, "But when they come into our store, they know they're getting the right book for the right course – which is especially important because there are a lot of custom books for our campus, which they simply can't get anywhere else."

Schmidt is also able to provide a wide selection of used texts thanks to a good adoption rate. "By the time buyback rolls around, our faculty adoption rate is probably 70 percent, which is pretty good considering a lot of faculty aren't assigned until the last minute," he says. He, too, has reduced his store's return period – in his case, not necessarily to combat the "rental"



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— Mike Schmidt, manager of the UNO Bookstore

phenomenon Gary Thompson was experiencing, but rather to bolster his inventory. "We cut it back because we had a three-week return period, during which, we'd essentially be out of books," he explains. "We really did it so the students who were actually in class could get the books they needed."

As for competing with online retailers, Schmidt feels his store offers advantages that virtual stores simply can't match. "They really can't compete with our flexibility. If a student drops a class, they can return the book easily. They can come in early and get all their books – new, used, optional – at one time. Then they can return the ones they don't need." Schmidt continues, "In the end, when you order online, you're never sure if you're really getting the right book – and who's going to take care of you if you get the wrong one? And, if they drop a class and add a new one, we can swap those books out easily." He sums up: "We're really just more convenient."

## A Conversation With College Store Design's Randy Stejskal

On a recent crisp and brilliantly sunny autumn afternoon in Lincoln, Nebraska, Booksmarts met with Randy Stejskal, Vice President of College Store Design (CSD). During the visit, Stejskal gave *Booksmarts* a tour of the division's recently opened Retail Design and Fixture Showroom, located on the Nebraska Book Company (NBC) campus in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Entering the building, we pass the smiling faces at the reception desk. "These professionals take calls from bookstores across North America, all day long, It's really amazing to see them in action," says Stejskal. We then make our journey down a long hallway, past several high-tech classrooms. Stejskal explains, "Bookstore directors, managers and associates fly into Lincoln to train on our state-of-the-art point-of-sale systems and CampusHub-hosted Web sites."

One more turn, and we enter the showroom. Not just a mock-up, but an actual college bookstore, complete with a 1 1/2 story store front, show windows, Checkpoint® EAS security systems, Security APV monitors, Lavi® crowd control stanchions, PromoOnly Networks® playing recently released music videos, specialty flooring by Centiva® and Mohawk®, and a plethora of College Bookstore specific fixtures by OPTO International®, Lozier Corporation®, L.K. Schweitzer, Inc., Windmill Woodworking®, Kimball International® and Omaha Fixture.

After the showroom tour, Booksmarts sat down with Stejskal and asked about the latest goings on at CSD.

**RS:** Most exciting is that, as a distributor for OPTO International, we have added OPTO International's "Quick Ship" interactive ordering program to the CSD web site. It's an awesome tool, and has been an immediate success. Basically it takes the mystery out of ordering (OPTO) fixtures. We formatted a similar system for Checkpoint's® EAS security system several years ago, and it, too, has been a great tool.

We've also recently signed agreements to become a distributor for additional manufacturing and service companies, including PiPP® mobile storage systems, PromOnly Networks® music signage experience (video), Lavi® crowd control stanchions, Omaha Fixture and a fixture manufacturing facility in the Chicago area that will co-manufacture our very popular "Signature Collection" store fixtures.



### **BS:** What else is new?

**RS:** We've had considerable success in designing Convenience Stores and Specialty Stores that are operated by the bookstore.

### **BS:** What kind of specialty stores?

**RS:** We designed and manufactured a Cruise Ship store for the University of the Virgin Islands – St. Thomas at the port of Crown Bay. A CSD store planned and designed their new bookstore the year earlier. It was an interesting project as the bookstore location was previously a three-story business office. The interesting part is that before it was an administrative office building, it was a US Navy Officer's home.

### **BS:** That must have been interesting. Were you required to make a site visit?

**RS:** (Laughs) Of course! I got a lot of offers for people to carry my luggage.



**BS: What other specialty retail have you done?**

**RS:** We've done several Sports Shops and Fan Shops, including Oregon State University's Beaver Fan Shop, Gonzaga University's Gonzaga University Bulldog Store, the Spirit Shop at the University of Dayton, and a specialty Football Event Tent Store for Central Michigan University.

**BS: So, in addition to Cruise Ship Stores, Convenience Stores and Sports Stores, what else is CSD doing out there?**

**RS:** Dining room design. Most recently, we entered a dining room design contest for a college in Texas and competed against a well-known architectural firm. And we won the contest, which was very rewarding.

**BS: It sounds like CSD is really busy. How do you find your next client or project?**

**RS:** Certainly the NBC Textbook division representatives who are on-site to perform the book buy at college bookstores help to spread the word about our products and services. We also tend to find a lot of our projects via word-of-mouth and repeat business, which is the most gratifying way, of course.

CSD is also a huge NACS supporter. We're committed to putting our best foot forward at CAMEX in an effort not only to showcase our products and services, but also to make CAMEX a great event in general. We also make a generous donation each year to the silent auction held before and during CAMEX.

**BS: Final question: What's the main benefit to redesigning your retail space?**

**RS:** If you look at the demographics, the students our customers serve are becoming increasingly sophisticated. You could say they were born in the shopping mall, and that's what they expect from their shopping experience. It just makes sense to offer them that experience when they visit the college bookstore, too.

For more information regarding College Store Design, visit [www.collegestoredesign.com](http://www.collegestoredesign.com) or call Randy Stejskal at 1-877-622-2731.

## College Bookstore Management Support Group Restructuring Benefits Customers

Nebraska Book Company's (NBC) College Bookstore Management Support Group (CBMSG) helps install new technology and solve IT challenges, handling approximately 1,100 calls a week. Recently, the group was restructured to provide better, more efficient customer service.

When customers purchase or install a product, the CBMSG helps them understand the installation process and what they need to be aware of as they migrate data. Once something is installed, they may call into the group if they need help understanding a feature or if they need additional help with a software update.

According to NBC Vice President of Information Technology, Kevin Wright, "CBMSG acts as a help desk for internal customers and commercial customers. Our 245 internal customers include the Validis bookstores we operate and the stores NBC owns. Our commercial customers include the 800-plus bookstores that buy our software and systems."

CBMSG was recently restructured to better benefit both its internal and external customers. Wright states, "Until recently, we divided our help desk support based on specific software products – POS, inventory control, accounting, etc. With the founding of Validis, we realized we couldn't continue to manage this way." He explains, "At that time, we had a large number of stores coming online, and they each needed to learn the system and get up and running in a short amount of time. This kept our help desk team busy and led to an inequitable amount of resources assigned to our internal customers." Wright continues, "We decided to separate the help desk into two areas: commercial customer support and Internal NBC/Validis store support. This ensures that a change or new initiative with one set of customers won't take away resources from the other."

Training, too, has been optimized. "Previously, the support group was responsible for everything: answering help desk calls, creating documentation and providing training." Wright explains, "Now, we have dedicated resources to provide training. This gives us flexibility in the type of training we can provide, and allows our support group to be more focused on help desk activities."



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— Kevin Wright, NBC

The group has also implemented a new tiered support structure for the help desk. In the previous model, every help desk rep, whether new or experienced, took the next call in the queue. Using a tiered help desk structure, CBMSG has the newer reps answering the calls and asking questions to understand the problem. If they can solve the problem in 20 minutes or less, they complete the call. But if the customer

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## How Third-Party Logistics (3PL) Can Make Your Life Easier

Third-party logistics, or 3PL, involves contracting with an outside organization to handle your freight management needs. As a bookstore manager, you might think 3PL typically applies to large manufacturers and wholesalers; but in reality, anyone who ships or receives freight can benefit from 3PL – including bookstores. In fact, outsourcing your freight handling allows your store to cut costs while saving time through efficiencies gained in purchasing, shipping/distribution, accounting and customer service.

Using a 3PL allows you to access a single source for all inbound shipping needs. This means an end to making multiple phone calls to find the best price for your shipments. It also means no more unpleasant surprises when your vendor chooses the method of transportation for your inbound loads. With a 3PL, you control both of these factors.

When shipping outbound, a single phone call is all you need to route your shipments. A 3PL will also optimize your shipment choices. For instance, if they see that a shipment may be large enough to qualify as a volume discount, they can assign the freight on a truckload carrier, which will save time and money versus an LTL (less than truckload) shipment.

*Your 3PL checks every bill for accuracy. That means you never need to worry about overpaying for something or be concerned that an incorrect class was attributed to your shipment.*

Your 3PL checks every bill for accuracy. That means you never need to worry about overpaying for something or be concerned that an incorrect class was attributed to your shipment. Not only that, you'll also receive one simplified billing statement from the 3PL – instead of multiple invoices from various carriers.

To Amy Thomson, Assistant Director of Bowling Green State University Bookstore, employing a 3PL (in this case, Group Transportation Services) has meant a savings of both time and money. She says, "We're actually managing everything a lot better, and it's made our lives simpler." She explains, "They find the best carriers and the best prices for our shipments." Thomson continues, "We just call an 800 number and tell them how many pallets and a weight, and they take care of everything else."

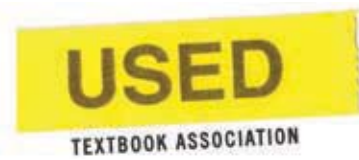
At a glance, the major benefits of using a 3PL program are:

- Time savings for scheduling inbound and outbound shipping
- Peace of mind – tracking of shipments, proof of delivery and simplified billing
- Reduced freight expenses
- Vendor routing instructions to ensure program compliance
- More time to focus on your primary business

When it comes down to it, a 3PL is much more than just another vendor. It's really a business partner that will immerse itself in a store's culture and business model. And, ideally, the store then sees the 3PL as an extension of its team. Bottom line: If you ship or receive product, chances are you can benefit from using a 3PL. Group Transportation Services 3PL is offered through Nebraska Book Company (NBC). To learn more how 3PL can improve your shipping efficiency, talk to your NBC rep.



## UTA Adds New Toolkit, Continues Fighting for Affordable Textbooks



The Used Textbook Association (UTA) is continuing its mission to advocate the role and value of used textbooks in the

marketplace and, in turn, increase the supply of used textbooks available to students. In addition to its advocacy activities, the UTA is committed to providing its members with the tools they need to drive adoptions and better communicate the benefits of used texts to customers, faculty and other stakeholders.

In the members' section of the UTA Web site ([www.usedtextbookassociation.org](http://www.usedtextbookassociation.org)), bookstore managers can download advertising materials, email templates, PowerPoint presentations, fact sheets and other customizable documents that can help them drive greater faculty adoptions and explain the importance and pricing of buyback to students. A third toolkit, called *Stop High Prices*, is now available. It is designed to help members communicate the realities of textbook pricing

to their student-customers and demonstrate that the bookstore is, in fact, on the side of the students. This is intended to combat the long-held misperception by students that bookstores are out to somehow "gouge" students when pricing texts.

These toolkits are only one of many benefits of UTA membership. For more information, visit the Web site, above, or call 888-724-3338.



## College Bookstore Management Support *continued...*

describes something more involved, they transfer the call to a representative who is experienced with that particular issue. This system enables us to put the group's best resources on the problems that most require them.

As for other new developments, Wright says, "We've implemented a new call tracking system that's issue-based rather than contact-based." He elaborates, "When customers call to report a problem, they're issued a reference number and all information about this problem is tracked by this number in our system. For the reps, it's easy to see what activity has already taken place to resolve the problem, and it's much easier for the customer to give a reference number, rather than explain the situation multiple times."

Overall, the CBMSG is now better able to provide the timely help-desk service NBC's customers need. And, as anyone who has experienced a frustrating IT issue can tell you, customer service is everything.

## Support Hours

The College Bookstore Management Support Group's Help Desk is manned from 7:00 am - 6:00 pm Central Time. Hours run longer during Rush. To reach the CBMSG, call 877-443-5763.

