

KSU Center for Engagement and Community Development

USDA RBOG Project:

Rural Grocery Sustainability Project

Owner Survey

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LeGrand's Market, Alma

Nider's Thriftway, Onaga

Wilbur's Market, Potwin

Wilbur's Market, Florence

GCIA Grocery, Gove

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Introduction. In January of 2007, a group of rural grocery store owners, rural community development service providers, and economic development professionals requested a meeting with the Kansas State University Center for Engagement and Community Development to discuss the economic and operational realities confronting rural grocery operations. Declining population in rural areas continues to exert constant constriction on rural community business and service providers. Of the 627 incorporated cities in Kansas, nearly 75% are populated with fewer than 1,500 people. The majority of these communities do not have the business support network of a chamber of commerce or economic development director. For grocery stores, the declining customer base leads to longer product shelf time, reduces product reorder volume, and threatens business viability. Competition of larger regional stores can put smaller stores at a disadvantage.

Keeping these stores strong is a significant investment in the economy of rural communities. Grocery stores are an anchor business in rural communities. The issues facing rural grocery stores are common across Kansas, yet there has been little documentation of the issues. In spite of these constraints, two sources of hope surfaced. First is the belief that the rural population customer base is not beyond the point of business viability. The second point of hope lies in the creative solutions rural grocers are willing to embrace, including forming strategic partnerships, joint purchasing, and openness to trying new ideas for business creation.

Supported by funding from a USDA Rural Business Opportunity Grant, the Center for Engagement and Community Development (CECD) partnered with K-State Research and Extension, Kansas Sampler Foundation, Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, and Kansas Rural Grocers on a project to survey Kansas rural grocers and their customers to identify strengths and weakness of small town grocery stores. Through this project, rural grocery stores will be better able to understand economic and business models necessary for sustainability.

This report, along with a report on the survey of store customers, is part of the first stage of the project: surveying Kansas rural grocers and reporting the findings. The results of these surveys are summarized and cross referenced to the customer surveys to identify areas where customers' and owners' perceptions agree or diverge. Subsequent stages will include identifying and disseminating information regarding 'best practices' for rural grocers.

Survey. Recognizing the need to clearly define "rural grocery", CECD, in cooperation with the K-State Research and Extension (KSRE) Office of Local Government and through Web research, created a database of rural grocery stores in communities across the state with a population of 2,000 or less. Just over 200 stores were identified. Using the stores identified, CECD mailed a letter to the stores introducing the project, seeking interest in participation, and seeking confirmation of contact information. A return postcard was included in this mailing for store owners to reply to CECD. Information gathered from this mailing helped to refine the database. Subsequently, CECD sent surveys to 213 rural Kansas grocers. Of the 213 surveys sent, ten went to stores that had been closed in the interim, and there were two duplicates. This left a survey population of 201. Of those, 86 were returned for a response rate of 42.8%. The surveys and a cover letter were mailed February 11, 2008. A reminder letter was sent on March

20, 2008. Returned surveys were accepted until April 18, 2008. A copy of the survey can be found in the Appendix.

The project team designed the survey tool to:

- (1) document the range of challenges faced by rural grocery stores,
- (2) document the variety of market and supply environments faced by rural grocers,
- (3) document the current marketing practices of rural grocers,
- (4) detail best practices used by rural grocers,
- (5) contribute to the creation of an information sharing network for Kansas rural grocery stores.

The following tables summarize the information collected from owner surveys.

Tables

Table 1

Question #1. (OS)*					
What major products and services does your store offer? <i>Check all that apply.</i>					
ATM/ Bank	18.6%	(18/86)	hunting/fishing/camping supplies	12.8%	(11/86)
books/cards/gifts	79.1%	(68/86)	institutional supply (school, hospital)	46.5%	(40/86)
café/restaurant	20.9%	(18/86)	pharmacy	15.1%	(13/86)
catering	15.1%	(13/86)	photo development	37.2%	(37/86)
delicatessen	47.7%	(41/86)	pre-packaged snacks	82.6%	(81/86)
fuel	10.5%	(9/86)	self-serve snacks/drinks	52.3%	(45/86)
groceries	100.0%	(86/86)	video rental	55.8%	(48/86)
Other:	17.4%	(15/86)			
flowers, hardware, lottery, meat processing, soda fountain, work clothes					

*OS refers to "Owner's Survey"

Table 2

Question #2. (OS)		
Who is/are your primary grocery supplier(s)?		
Affiliated Foods	70.6%	(60/85)
American Wholesale Grocers	16.5%	(14/85)
Nash Finch	5.9%	(5/85)
American Foods	1.2%	(1/85)
Amcon	1.2%	(1/85)
Convenience Store Services	1.2%	(1/85)
F&A	1.2%	(1/85)
Great Lakes Wholesale	1.2%	(1/85)
Saint Joe Distributing	1.2%	(1/85)

Table 3

Question #3. (OS)		
What products do your secondary suppliers supply?		
Pop	78.8%	(63/80)
Chips/snacks	67.5%	(54/80)
Bread/bakery	40.0%	(32/80)
Milk/dairy	21.3%	(17/80)
Beer	17.5%	(14/80)
Meat/deli	13.8%	(11/80)
Pizza	8.8%	(7/80)
Other: books/magazines, cards, coffee, gifts, hardware, ice, movies, propane, tobacco, water		

Table 4

Question #4. (OS)		
Do minimum (purchasing/ordering) buying requirements create a problem for your grocery store?		
Yes	47.7%	(41/86)
No	51.2%	(44/86)
If yes how?		
Surcharge if minimum not met	39.5%	(15/38)
Order quantity too high	36.8%	(14/38)
Delivery	7.9%	(3/38)
Limits products	5.3%	(2/38)

Table 5

Question #5. (OS)		
If minimum buying requirements are a problem, what solutions might you suggest?		
Combine orders	56.3%	(18/32)
Lower minimum	18.8%	(6/32)
Increase customer base	3.1%	(1/32)
Increase purchases	3.1%	(1/32)

Table 6

Question #6. (OS)		
As an independent grocer, do you feel you are getting fair pricing from your suppliers compared to chain stores?		
Yes	53.7%	(44/82)
No	40.2%	(33/82)
Yes-primary, no-secondary	6.1%	(5/82)
Comments:		
“Big” stores get preferred pricing	25.7%	(9/35)
Low volume increases prices	22.9%	(8/35)
Secondary suppliers (pop) are higher	17.1%	(6/35)

Table 7

Question #7. (OS)		
Have you had problems getting products delivered because of your location?		
Yes	34.5%	(29/84)
No	65.5%	(55/84)
Comments:		
Off main highway or remote location	38.1%	(8/21)
Reduced delivery schedules	14.3%	(3/21)

Table 8

Question #8. (OS)		
Do you sell locally produced food in your store?		
Yes	70.6%	(60/85)
No	29.4%	(25/85)
If yes, what products?		
Produce/fruits/vegetables	41.0%	(25/61)
Meat	18.0%	(11/61)
Tomatoes	18.0%	(11/61)
Melons	14.8%	(9/61)
Corn	9.8%	(6/61)
Eggs	6.6%	(4/61)
No, due to regulations	4.9%	(3/61)
No local supply	1.6%	(1/61)
Other: baked goods, bird seed, cucumbers, honey, noodles, pepper nuts, potatoes, sauces		

Table 9

Question #9 (OS)					
Which of the following are major challenges for your store? <i>Check all that apply.</i>					
availability of satisfactory labor	62.4%	(53/86)	lack of community support	40.5%	(34/86)
competition with large chain grocery stores	80.0%	(68/86)	low sales volume	39.3%	(33/86)
debt and/or high payments	24.7%	(21/86)	narrow profit margins	60.0%	(51/86)
government regulations	47.1%	(40/86)	required minimum buying requirements from vendors	30.6%	(26/86)
high inventory costs/low turnover	27.1%	(23/86)	shoplifting/bad checks/internal theft/unpaid accounts	36.1%	(30/86)
shortage of working capital	27.1%	(23/86)	taxes	51.8%	(44/86)
high operating costs (utilities, building lease, repairs/maintenance, etc)	74.1%	(64/86)	other (specify)	13.3%	(11/86)
Other: advertising, credit card fees, insurance, license, minimum wage, permits					
Which of the above do you feel is the most significant for you and your store?					
Operating costs/utilities				25.4%	(18/71)
Labor availability/costs				23.9%	(17/71)
Competition from large chain stores				22.5%	(16/71)
Taxes, regulations				16.9%	(12/71)
Lack of community support				14.1%	(10/71)
Low sales volume				5.6%	(4/71)

Table 10

Question #10. (OS)		
Do you collaborate with other small independently owned stores?		
Yes	67.9%	(57/84)
No	29.8%	(25/84)
Some	2.4%	(2/84)
If yes, for which purposes? <i>Check all that apply.</i>		
Cooperative advertising/marketing	32.1%	(27/84)
Grocery distribution purposes	24.1%	(20/84)
Sharing concerns and/or ideas	51.8%	(44/84)
To achieve minimum buying requirements	28.6%	(24/84)
Other: share labor, share orders		
If no, would you be interested in doing this?		
Yes	55.2%	(16/29)
No	37.9%	(11/29)
Maybe	6.9%	(2/29)
Why or why not?		
No		
too busy, too small, warehouse does it for us		
Yes		
Can learn a lot from other grocers, spillover effects, stronger buying power		

Table 11

Question #11. (OS)		
Do you feel that a statewide alliance of small, independently owned grocery store owners may have value?		
Yes	77.9%	(53/68)
No	17.6%	(12/68)
Maybe	4.4%	(3/68)
If yes, how could it help?		
<u>Share ideas</u> – marketing strategies, find different solutions to common problems, increased buying power, there is strength in numbers, increased lobbying power for government AND suppliers		

Table 12

Question #12. (OS)		
What marketing strategies have you used in your grocery stores that have been effective in drawing in customers?		
Advertising		
Newspapers	46.4%	(39/84)
Radio	26.2%	(22/39)
TV	7.1%	(6/84)
Flyers/inserts	76.2%	(64/84)
Internet/WWW	8.3%	(7/84)
Promotions	40.5%	(34/84)
Word of mouth	59.5%	(50/84)
Other:	13.1%	(11/84)
sponsor community events, promote extra customer service, special services (meat, delivery), senior citizen discount, specials		

Table 13

When running a grocery store, how important is it to you to offer each of the following? Rate the importance of each by circling the number that best fits your response. (OS)					
	<u>Not Very</u>				<u>Very</u>
	<u>Important</u>				<u>Important</u>
1. Quality of food	0%	1.2%	1.2%	5.9%	91.8%
Comments: Must have fresh products					
2. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	0%	3.5%	24.7%	36.5%	35.3%
Comments: Concentrates on staples, limited space					
3. Prices of items offered	0%	2.4%	25.9%	42.4%	29.4%
Comments: have to have low prices to be competitive with chains, still need to make a profit					
4. Customer service	1.2%	0%	2.4%	10.6%	85.9%
Comments: Advantage over chains					
5. Business hours	0%	0%	17.6%	48.2%	34.1%
Comments: Open for customer convenience					
6. Buying locally.	13.8%	13.8%	23.8%	8.8%	40.0%
Comments: Buy what we can, need more customers					
Which of the above do you feel is the most significant for you and your store?					
Customer Service				50.7%	(35/69)
Quality of food				44.9%	(31/69)
Prices				20.3%	(14/69)
Buying locally				7.2%	(5/69)
All				5.8%	(4/69)
Availability of food				5.8%	(4/69)

Table 14

How does your store do at providing the following to customers? Rate your store by circling the number that best fits your response. (OS)					
	<u>Not Very</u> <u>Important</u>				<u>Very</u> <u>Important</u>
1. Quality of food	0%	0%	4.8%	41.0%	54.2%
Comments: we do our best					
2. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	1.2%	3.6%	30.1%	44.6%	20.5%
Comments: minimum requirements causes problems, too rural -just the basics offered, we do our best					
3. Prices of items offered	1.2%	8.4%	25.3%	53.0%	12.0%
Comments: operating on low profit margins, shop with smaller suppliers that offer higher prices, sometimes too high for competition					
4. Customer service	0%	1.2%	1.2%	39.8%	57.8%
Comments: do the best we can, no credit card machine or ATM in the community					
5. Business hours	1.2%	2.4%	20.5%	43.4%	32.5%
Comments: closed Sunday, not enough business, the same for over 30 years, we are open as much as we can-these need to change					
6. Buying locally.	13.0%	15.6%	36.4%	18.2%	16.9%
Comments: buy what we can, do as much as possible, need customers to do better					
Which of the above do you feel is the most significant for you and your store?					
Customer Service				50.0%	(25/50)
Quality of food				38.0%	(19/50)
Prices				22.0%	(11/50)
Availability of food				6.0%	(3/50)
Buying locally				4.0%	(2/50)
All				4.0%	(2/50)

Table 15

Combined.	a) Importance to you	b) How well do you do (OS)				
		Not Very <u>Important</u>			Very <u>Important</u>	
a. Quality of food		0%	1.2%	1.2%	5.9%	91.8%
b. Quality of food		0%	0%	4.8%	41.0%	54.2%
a. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)		0%	3.5%	24.7%	36.5%	35.3%
b. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)		1.2%	3.6%	30.1%	44.6%	20.5%
a. Prices of items offered		0%	2.4%	25.9%	42.4%	29.4%
b. Prices of items offered		1.2%	8.4%	25.3%	53.0%	12.0%
a. Customer service		1.2%	0%	2.4%	10.6%	85.9%
b. Customer service		0%	1.2%	1.2%	39.8%	57.8%
a. Business hours		0%	0%	17.6%	48.2%	34.1%
b. Business hours		1.2%	2.4%	20.5%	43.4%	32.5%
a. Buying locally.		13.8%	13.8%	23.8%	8.8%	40.0%
b. Buying locally.		13.0%	15.6%	36.4%	18.2%	16.9%

Table 16

<u>Customer Survey (CS)* Question #1: Please circle the number that best represents the importance of each of the following to your grocery shopping expectations.</u>					
	<u>Not Very Important</u>				<u>Very Important</u>
1. Quality of food	0%	0.4%	3.7%	21.3%	74.6%
2. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	0.2%	2.3%	20.2%	42.6%	34.8%
3. Prices of items offered	0.3%	0.7%	14.5%	31.0%	53.5%
4. Customer service	0.2%	2.3%	15.4%	42.0%	40.1%
6. Convenient business hours	0.4%	1.7%	13.9%	45.5%	38.5%
9. Buying locally grown foods	4.6%	10.9%	26.1%	28.4%	30.0%

*CS refers to “Customer Survey”

Table 17

<u>Customer Survey Question #2: Please circle the number that best represents how well your local grocery store meets your shopping expectations.</u>					
	<u>Doesn't meet Expectations</u>			<u>Exceeds Expectations</u>	
1. Quality of food	5.4%	11.1%	34.1%	35.0%	14.0%
2. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	5.3%	17.4%	40.6%	27.9%	8.4%
3. Prices of items offered	6.7%	19.2%	42.3%	23.5%	7.8%
4. Customer service	3.6%	8.1%	23.3%	33.8%	30.7%
6. Convenient business hours	2.2%	5.8%	17.5%	43.3%	30.8%
9. Buying locally grown foods	7.1%	15.7%	40.0%	23.6%	13.2%

Table 18

Customer Survey Question: Combined	a) Importance		b) Meets expectations		
	Not Very Important				Very Important
a. Quality of food	0%	0.4%	3.7%	21.3%	74.6%
b. Quality of food	5.4%	11.1%	34.1%	35.0%	14.0%
a. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	0.2%	2.3%	20.2%	42.6%	34.8%
b. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	5.3%	17.4%	40.6%	27.9%	8.4%
a. Prices of items offered	0.3%	0.7%	14.5%	31.0%	53.5%
b. Prices of items offered	6.7%	19.2%	42.3%	23.5%	7.8%
a. Customer service	0.2%	2.3%	15.4%	42.0%	40.1%
b. Customer service	3.6%	8.1%	23.3%	33.8%	30.7%
a. Convenient business hours	0.4%	1.7%	13.9%	45.5%	38.5%
b. Convenient business hours	2.2%	5.8%	17.5%	43.3%	30.8%
a. Buying locally grown foods	4.6%	10.9%	26.1%	28.4%	30.0%
b. Buying locally grown foods	7.1%	15.7%	40.0%	23.6%	13.2%

Table 19

Combined Owner & Customer - Importance	a) Owner		b) Customer		
	Not Very Important				Very Important
a. Quality of food	0%	1.2%	1.2%	5.9%	91.8%
b. Quality of food	0%	0.4%	3.7%	21.3%	74.6%
a. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	0%	3.5%	24.7%	36.5%	35.3%
b. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	0.2%	2.3%	20.2%	42.6%	34.8%
a. Prices of items offered	0%	2.4%	25.9%	42.4%	29.4%
b. Prices of items offered	0.3%	0.7%	14.5%	31.0%	53.5%
a. Customer service	1.2%	0%	2.4%	10.6%	85.9%
b. Customer service	3.6%	8.1%	23.3%	33.8%	30.7%
a. Business hours	0%	0%	17.6%	48.2%	34.1%
b. Business hours	0.4%	1.7%	13.9%	45.5%	38.5%
a. Buying locally.	13.8%	13.8%	23.8%	8.8%	40.0%
b. Buying locally.	4.6%	10.9%	26.1%	28.4%	30.0%

Table 20

Combined Owner & Customer - Expectations	a) Owner		b) Customer		
	<u>Doesn't meet Expectations</u>		<u>Exceeds Expectations</u>		
a. Quality of food	0%	0%	4.8%	41.0%	54.2%
b. Quality of food	5.4%	11.1%	34.1%	35.0%	14.0%
a. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	1.2%	3.6%	30.1%	44.6%	20.5%
b. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	5.3%	17.4%	40.6%	27.9%	8.4%
a. Prices of items offered	1.2%	8.4%	25.3%	53.0%	12.0%
b. Prices of items offered	6.7%	19.2%	42.3%	23.5%	7.8%
a. Customer service	0%	1.2%	1.2%	39.8%	57.8%
b. Customer service	3.5%	8.4%	22.9%	34.2%	30.5%
a. Business hours	1.2%	2.4%	20.5%	43.4%	32.5%
b. Business hours	2.2%	5.8%	17.5%	43.3%	30.8%
a. Buying locally.	13.0%	15.6%	36.4%	18.2%	16.9%
b. Buying locally.	7.1%	15.7%	40.0%	23.6%	13.2%

Table 21

How do you assess the buying needs of your customer? (OS)	
Customer requests	51.7% (30/58)
Monitor sales	15.5% (9/58)
Ask	3.4% (2/58)
Experience	1.7% (1/58)

Table 22

Is your stocking of products responsive to customer requests? (OS)	
Yes (unqualified)	57.7% (41/71)
Yes (qualified) when customers ask if possible, try	40.8% (29/71)
Use to	1.04% (1/71)

Table 23

What other concerns or comments do you have? (OS)
<p>We need help educating people that shopping locally, not at Wal-Mart, etc. out of town and county hurts their community. Taxes are not paid in their county or town. If local people would support the store better, the easier it is to afford employees, etc. I could go on for page after page.</p>
<p>We need a system in which an older operator can come into contact with an interested party to buy grocery stores so they will be able to keep a store in a community. This is needed for all types of retail.</p>
<p>We live in a community with a older population, most high school graduates are leaving the area. It's hard to find employees now! What will it be like in 5 yrs?</p>
<p>We know we are needed in our community. We get that all the time. But, I have not yet figured out how to take my "community service" paycheck to the bank to pay off bills.</p>
<p>We just completed a survey of our services, products, and operational standards. Our customers are very satisfied in their shopping. This leads me to ask if our customers are happy with our store . Why do we struggle to retain only 40-42% of the available food dollars in our area.</p>
<p>The store must support the local economy in what supplies and services it purchases, along with attending all local events in order to expect community support</p>
<p>Space is a concern. We can't stock everything everyone wants.</p>
<p>We need recommendations on good financing options.</p>
<p>Probably my biggest concern in the communities that we do business in is the changing demographics and the reduction in population. Our customer base is either slowly dying or moving away.</p>
<p>Once again the manufacture could gear more for smaller stores. i.e. smaller purchase requirements</p>
<p>Low volume items</p>
<p>Limited space is a factor, keeping track of outdated products is difficult</p>
<p>It's so easy for people to go out of town to buy groceries. Wal-Mart takes a lot of customers away from a small town store.</p>
<p>I was the only pharmacy in our county and then our grocery store closed so I remodeled and put in a full line grocery store. By this diversification I think we will be able to succeed and stay in business. Our biggest struggle is keeping people's money in our own county.</p>

Table 23 (Con't)

Government regulation, like minimum wages will increase salaries, mandatory health care for employees will be costly and minimum buying requirements will force small stores to close

Declining population

Cost of deliveries (fuel charges) freight charges

Community support is a BIG part of the equation

Community doesn't value the local store

Collecting sales tax, receiving no compensation. Too many government regulations to comply with. Little government help compared to large corp, large agriculture, energy grants etc.

As small retailers we need to stop whining, and get to work. You have to earn customer loyalty every day.

About to retire and hope someone will buy the store and keep it in the community

Table 24

Tell us about your store: (OS)		
How long have you been in the grocery business as an owner? (Average)		22.1 years
How long has there been a grocery store at your current location? (Average)		37.3 years
Do you have more than one location? Yes		25.3%
How many? 65% = 2 15% = 3 20% = 4 (20 Responses)		2.6 average
What are your hours of operation? (av.)		
Mon	<u> 7:45 </u> to <u> 8:00 </u>	
Tues	<u> 8:00 </u> to <u> 8:00 </u>	
Wed	<u> 8:00 </u> to <u> 8:00 </u>	
Thur	<u> 8:00 </u> to <u> 8:00 </u>	
Fri	<u> 8:00 </u> to <u> 8:00 </u>	
Sat	<u> 8:00 </u> to <u> 8:00 </u>	
Sun	<u> 9:00 </u> to <u> 6:00 </u> (20% closed)	
Are you open on the major holidays (Christmas, New Years, Thanksgiving, etc.)?		
Closed all		60.2% (50/83)
Closed Easter		16.9% (14/83)
Open all		6.0% (5/83)
Closed Christmas		6.0% (5/83)
Reduced hrs.		4.8% (4/83)
Closed Christmas and New Years		1.2% (1/83)
Closed Christmas, New Years, Thanksgiving		1.2% (1/83)
Are there other grocery outlets in your community?		
	<u> 69.5% </u> a 'quick shop'	
	<u> 8.6% </u> another full service grocery	
How far is it to the nearest discount grocery (Wal-Mart, etc?)		
	<u> 29.4 mi </u>	
How many employees do you have, not counting yourself?		
	<u> 5.4 </u> full-time (40 hrs/week minimum)	
	<u> 9.0 </u> part-time (less than 40hrs/week)	
What are your average weekly gross sales?		
	<u> 10.4% </u> Less than \$5,000	
	<u> 11.1% </u> Between \$5,000 and \$10,000	
	<u> 22.1% </u> Between \$10,000 and \$20,000	
	<u> 55.8% </u> Greater than \$20,000	

Appendix Grocer Survey

1. What major products and services does your store offer? *Check all that apply.*

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ATM/ Bank | <input type="checkbox"/> hunting/fishing/camping supplies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> books/cards/gifts | <input type="checkbox"/> institutional supply (school, hospital) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> café/restaurant | <input type="checkbox"/> pharmacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> catering | <input type="checkbox"/> photo development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> delicatessen | <input type="checkbox"/> pre-packaged snacks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fuel | <input type="checkbox"/> self-serve snacks/drinks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> groceries | <input type="checkbox"/> video rental |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) _____ | |
-

2. Who is/are your primary grocery supplier(s)?

3. What products do your secondary suppliers supply?

4. Do minimum (purchasing/ordering) buying requirements create a problem for your grocery store?

yes no

If yes, how?

5. If minimum buying requirements are a problem, what solutions might you suggest?

6. As an independent grocer, do you feel you are getting fair pricing from your suppliers compared to chain stores?

yes no

Comments:

7. Have you had problems getting products delivered because of your location?

yes no

Comments:

8. Do you sell locally produced food in your store?

yes no

If yes, what products?

9. Which of the following are major challenges for your store? *Check all that apply.*

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> availability of satisfactory labor | <input type="checkbox"/> lack of community support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> competition with large chain grocery stores | <input type="checkbox"/> low sales volume |
| <input type="checkbox"/> debt and/or high payments | <input type="checkbox"/> narrow profit margins |
| <input type="checkbox"/> government regulations | <input type="checkbox"/> required minimum buying requirements |
| <input type="checkbox"/> high inventory costs/ low turnover | <input type="checkbox"/> shoplifting/bad checks/internal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> shortage of working capital | <input type="checkbox"/> theft/unpaid accounts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> high operating costs (utilities, building | <input type="checkbox"/> taxes |
| lease, repairs/maintenance, etc) | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) _____ |

Which of the above do you feel is the most significant for you and your store?

10. Do you collaborate with other small independently owned stores?

____ yes ____ no

If yes, for which purposes? *Check all that apply.*

____ cooperative advertising/marketing

____ grocery distribution purposes

____ sharing concerns and/or ideas

____ to achieve minimum buying requirements

____ other _____

If no, would you be interested in doing this?

____ yes ____ no

Why or why not?

11. Do you feel that a statewide alliance of small, independently owned grocery store owners may have value?

____ yes ____ no

If yes, how could it help?

12. What marketing strategies have you used in your grocery stores that have been effective in drawing in customers?

Advertising

Newspapers _____

Radio _____

TV _____

Flyers/inserts _____

Internet/WWW _____

Promotions _____

Word of mouth _____

OTHER: Please identify _____

When running a grocery store, how important is it to you to offer each of the following? Rate the importance of each by circling the number that best fits your response.

	Not Very				Very
	<u>Important</u>				<u>Important</u>
1. Quality of food	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
2. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
3. Prices of items offered	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
4. Customer service	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
5. Business hours	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
6. Buying locally.	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					

Which of the above do you feel is the most significant for you and your store?

How does your store do at providing the following to customers? Rate your store by circling the number that best fits your response.

	Not Very				Very
	<u>Well</u>				<u>Well</u>
1. Quality of food	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
2. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
3. Prices of items offered	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
4. Customer service	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
5. Business hours	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					
6. Buying locally.	1	2	3	4	5
Comments:					

Which of the above do you feel is the most significant for you and your store?

How do you assess the buying needs of your customer?

Is your stocking of products responsive to customer requests?

What other concerns or comments do you have?

Tell us about your store:

How long have you been in the grocery business as an owner? _____

How long has there been a grocery store at your current location? _____

Do you have more than one location? _____ How many? _____

What are your hours of operation?

Mon _____ to _____

Tues _____ to _____

Wed _____ to _____

Thur _____ to _____

Fri _____ to _____

Sat _____ to _____

Sun _____ to _____

Are you open on the major holidays (Christmas, New Years, Thanksgiving, etc.)? _____

Are there other grocery outlets in your community?

_____ a 'quick shop'

_____ another full service grocery

How far is it to the nearest discount grocery (Wal-Mart, etc?) _____

How many employees do you have, not counting yourself?

_____ full-time (40 hrs/week minimum)

_____ part-time (less than 40hrs/week)

What are your average weekly gross sales?

_____ Less than \$5,000

_____ Between \$5,000 and \$10,000

_____ Between \$10,000 and \$20,000

_____ Greater than \$20,000