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Best Practice Within Australian Food Service, a Case Study:

Development of quality partnerships for strategic alliances of red meat products

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Abstract

The Australian Food Service Industry is emerging as a major provider of food to consumers as Australians follow a global trend of increasingly "eating-out". Australian consumers spent approximately $24 billion a year on food service meals or approximately $1,300 per person per year in 2002 (BIS Shrapnel 2003). Additionally, consumers are becoming more discerning and demanding with regard to matters such as sensory needs, food safety, quality assurance and health issues. The lack of consistent beef products sourced by the food service industry within Australia is a major concern resulting in dissatisfied customers and a drop in demand for red meat meals.

This paper presents a case study of a major food service company within Australia that found itself faced with the above circumstances. A best practice program was developed to address the problem of increasing consumer complaints regarding beef meals. An audit of their wholesale suppliers demonstrated that, despite the provision of product specifications, 41.5% of all the beef audited did not adhere to the product specifications. The Company identified that collaboration with their suppliers was a key initiative to meet their consumers' requirements.

Collaboration occurred through the development of Quality Partnerships with strategic alliance partners resulting in committed suppliers providing guaranteed quality product. The Quality Partnerships were instrumental in reducing customer complaints by 96% and improving customer satisfaction by 34% for the beef meals served by the Food Service Company. This case study contains an overview of the problem and outlines the wholesale beef audit and the consequential Quality Partnerships developed, before providing a discussion of the results. Finally, important implications from this case study have been identified and provide a checklist for other food service companies wishing to adopt Quality Partnerships with their suppliers.

Introduction

Food consumption patterns are changing both within Australia and globally. Although restaurants and fast food outlets were rare 50 years ago, they are now the main source of food consumption for many Australians. Australian consumers spend approximately $24 billion a year on food service meals. Of this $3 billion is spent on meat, fish and poultry dishes. Consumers ate out 1.6 times per week on average and spent more than $25 per household a week or $1,300 per year in 2002, this could grow to $2,000 a year over the next decade. It is estimated that the number of food service outlets has grown to 78,000 outlets in 2002 (BIS Shrapnel 2003).

The Australian Food Service Industry supplies customers with a very diverse range of red meat products ranging from the highest quality cuts used in fine dining restaurants to beef trimmings for hamburger enterprises. Despite this, consumer demand for red meat is on the decline. Reasons for this include inconsistency in supply and its unreliable eating quality (Hayes et al. 2003).

Three-quarters of food service companies generally source their beef supplies from wholesale businesses. The majority of these food service companies has an informal relationship with their wholesaler and just relies on an “understanding” of their requirements.

Meat quality attributes of meat colour, marbling and texture/firmness are usually included in specifications due to their relationship to the eating quality of the meat (Ausmeat 1990). The pH measurement is also included as an important yardstick to maintain quality (University of New England 1997).

The lack of consistent product and product substitution are major concerns to many food service industry stakeholders both in Australia and internationally (National Cattlemen’s Association 1992; NSW Agriculture 1995; MRC 1991; MRC 1996).

Non-compliance to quality specifications is costly (Allerton 1999). For example, variance from the Meat Colour specification can result in an opportunity loss of up to 42% of the value of the carcass (Foote 2003). The problem with out-of-specification product is exacerbated in the Food Service Industry as often it is “too late” to source alternative product.

At the other end of the supply chain, consumers are becoming more astute, particularly in regard to sensory needs, health concerns, convenience issues and food safety (Reid 2003). Consumers are demanding better "quality".

Many companies, endeavouring to remain competitive by continually responding to their consumers, have adopted best practice management procedures. An integral part of this approach is the development of strategic alliances with suppliers.

This paper reports on how the development of a Quality Partnership improved beef quality and consistency and enhanced supplier relations. An overview is provided of current research related to strategic alliances and food chain management. A preceding paper titled "Best Practice within Australian Food Service, a case study: Customer Satisfaction of Red Meat Products" presented the implementation of the best practice strategy. This paper focuses on the Quality Partnerships developed between the Company and its suppliers as part of this best practice approach.

Overview

The food chain is increasingly coming under the spotlight. Food safety, quality assurance, health issues, genetic modification and lifestyle changes are just some of the issues challenging the agri-food industry throughout the world (Fearne, *et al.*, 2001).

Traditionally fresh food industries have lagged behind other consumer goods in their approach to marketing and integration. Today it is argued that success for an agribusiness, including those within the fresh food industry, depends on the co-operation and relationships it can build with others in the marketplace (Hogarth-Scott 1999).

Haakansson & Johanson (1990) cited in (Schary & Skjott-Larsen 2001) distinguish between co-operation as either formal or informal. The distinction is relevant to the management of the supply chain. With formal co-operation, the vision and ideals come first and the actual cooperation does not begin until trust has been developed, whereas in an informal relationship, business commences and then the ideals and vision come later.

A strategic alliance is a formal or informal agreement amongst two or more businesses, within a supply chain, allowing the parties to work together to achieve a desired outcome (Hayes et al. 2003). It should be an "amicable" relationship in every sense of the word. That is, both parties are able to choose to join the partnership, maintain independence, collaborate with each other and will suffer if the partnership is broken (Holmund & Fulton 1999).

The degree of actual collaboration between parties varies with the environment in which they operate, the structure established and the people factors involved. While many of those in manufacturing industry believe there is a new wave of collaboration between trading partners, the food industry is a different scenario (Lewis 1998). Through discussion with many US managing directors, Lewis found varying degrees of consensus in regard to the amount of industry collaboration, especially in the food business where "*price is a powerful and all consuming mistress*" (Lewis 1998, p.29). Similarly Al Carey, the senior vice president of PepsiCo Inc, (Lewis 1998) conceded that, at times, adversarial relationships are inevitable. Carey believes most food retailers still use gross profit as a primary measure of success, an attitude in conflict with that of many manufacturers. Dave Donnan, vice president of AT Kearney (Lewis 1998), believes cooperation takes more time to get going in the traditional grocery industry where there has been a history of tough negotiations between manufacturers and retailers.

" *In the past they wouldn't even talk about service levels…….. It was just price, price, price*"

The literature reviewed showed that while the main success factors of an alliance relationship varied, there were some common factors. In the United Kingdom, Fearne & Hughes (1999) chose to emphasise people power and the power of market information as the success factors for fresh food supply chain integration. Although Folkerts & Koehorst (1998) found structural and process issues to be key, they did maintain that people issues were one of the main reasons for failures of relationships. Similarly, Whipple & Frankel (2000) found the greatest cost and hindrance to alliance development was in the "people" costs that arise from companies changing their traditional habits and beliefs and adopting new ways.

Strategic alliances are a form of "vertical co-ordination" (Saxowsky & Duncan 1998). It does not involve the entire supply chain, as is the case with vertical integration. Advantages of strategic alliances include increased competitiveness, reduced risks, improved product traceability, quality assurance, improved market information and interdependence (Hayes et al. 2003).

Shared information is a fundamental reason for competitive advantages gained by strategic alliances (Fearne 1998; Hayes et al. 2003). An extensive study of supply chain management within companies throughout North America, South America and Europe discovered there was a reluctance to share key information among partners (Speckman, Kamauff & Myhr 1998). Thus it is noted that trust and commitment are crucial to the success of the alliances (Holmund & Fulton 1999). This finding accords with a limited study of food retailers undertaken in the United Kingdom by Shaw & Gibbs (1995), where it was found that the levels of trust, commitment and information-sharing need to be maximised to gain a collaborative relationship.

Disadvantages of strategic alliances within the red meat industry include possibilities of power exploitation, increased concentration, elimination of traditional markets and price determination (Hayes et al. 2003). The fundamental reason behind these problems can be traced back to the issue of power.

Power is, arguably, equally efficient at controlling relationships and more resistant to breakdowns than is trust (Bachmann 2001). Some authors believe that power is actually more important to the development of supply-chain success than trust is. For example, Cox (2001a, p. 10) states: "*Power is at the heart of all business to business relationships*".

So important is the power regime, Cox (2001b) argues, that most failures in integrated supply chain management do not come from a lack of enthusiasm on behalf of the players, but rather from a lack of understanding of the appropriate power regime in place for the relationship to work.

Hayes et al. (2003) concludes that within the red meat industry in Australia, the rewards gained from strategic alliances outweigh the disadvantages. Organisational relationships while a benefit to many can be difficult to maintain. Whipple and Frankel (1999) found that while interest in strategic alliances was significant, the success rate was low. In fact, research undertaken by Day (1995) found that in the USA in 1995, alliances were growing at a rate of 25% annually, yet 75% of these ventures failed to meet partner expectations or were terminated.

Many authors suggest that the highly competitive retail sector have identified factors behind the development of supply chain partnerships (Fearne 1998, Plunkett and Kingwell 2001). Many of these factors are in response to consumer's requirements for quality, consistency, supply reliability and safety of product. Additionally, the perishability of red meat also plays an important role with regard to the development of supplier relationships (Hayes et al. 2003).

One important aspect of supermarket/food service supplier relationships is precise product specifications. "Product Specifications" are a type of contract to guarantee quality characteristics of the product (Boehlje & Lin 1995). If suppliers are involved in development of product specifications, it can give suppliers an incentive to raise their sights above cost to improve product design and performance and identify opportunities for innovation (AMC 1994a; AMC 1994b).

Non-compliance with product specifications can be costly to food service companies as it affects customers' satisfaction, labour costs and profitability. For example, if meat colour does not conform to specification, the opportunity loss from an average carcass value of $800 can range from $241 to $336 (Foote 2003).

With the shift in food consumption patterns towards "more eating out", it is clear that the food service industry also needs to take a more strategic approach in the 21st century (Reid 2003). Successful companies will need to place greater emphasis on relationships with their suppliers to ensure they consistently deliver quality product to their increasingly fickle customers.

Food service case study

As already mentioned, this paper reports on the strategic alliances that were cultivated by a food service company in Australia. The Company referred to the strategic alliances developed with their suppliers as "Quality Partnerships". These Quality Partnerships were a crucial part of a Best Practice Meat Quality Program that was successfully implemented between the Company and alliance partners. The implementation of the best practice program, including its development, are detailed in the preceding paper titled "Best Practice within Australian Food Service, a case study: Customer Satisfaction of Red Meat Products."

The Company, studied in this paper is one of the largest food service companies in the Southern Hemisphere with numerous national facilities. It supplies approximately 38,000 meals per day with an annual beef usage of 450 tonnes.

As a result of the increasing consumer complaints relating to their beef meals, a Best Practice Meat Quality Program was embarked upon. At the time, the Company was one of 43 companies nationally involved with best practice programs coordinated by the Department of Industrial Relations.

The Company prided itself on being a quality supplier of meals to their customers. Quality perceptions of the customers kept changing. The Company recognized the need to improve on a continuous basis. The principle objective was to provide customers with products and services in accordance with their highest expectations, thus ensuring quality perceptions in their eyes were constantly superior to competitors. This objective could not be achieved in isolation and the Company acknowledged that they were dependent on their suppliers to help fulfil or exceed expectations of customers.

The Challenge

Inconsistency of Product

At the initial stages of the Best Practice Meat Quality Program, the Company put product specifications in place and suppliers were required to tender for the supply contract. In the short term, improvements were made with regard to the quality and consistency of beef supplied to the Company. Hindsight showed that some of these improvements were due to suppliers initially putting forward high quality product to win the supply tenders. Unfortunately, many suppliers were "product-driven" and focused on filling their contracts with price as the prevailing issue. Additionally many suppliers were not conscious of the end consumers requirements or the impact that substituting "out-of-specification" product had on customer satisfaction.

An audit was carried out to assess the extent of the variation in objectively and subjectively measured traits of beef products supplied to the Company. The audit was conducted at a wholesale business which was a major supplier to the Company and also responsible for supplying five-star hotels/restaurants, mid-level bistros/restaurants, professional catering firms, hotels, clubs and institutional establishments situated on the east coast of Australia.

Product included in this audit was sourced from normal commercial production supplied to the Company and other sectors of the food service industry. The methodology used in this audit project focused on the commercial wholesale throughput of beef fillet steaks. It was used to assess the initial compliance to specifications in place. Details of the product specifications are provided in Appendix 1.

The sampling method involved random selection of cartons of beef tenderloins identified for pre-portion preparation on the day of normal commercial production. Over an audit period of 15 months, cartons were sourced evenly over a four-week period, at three monthly intervals from 36 different processor establishments. The pH, marbling percentage and meat colour of all the beef samples were objectively measured. Additionally, the subjective assessments of texture/firmness were recorded.

The main objective of the audit was to investigate the relationship between the quality and consistency of beef within the carton to the specifications of the Company. In response to the audit and as part of the Best Practice Meat Quality Program, Quality Partnerships between the Company and its suppliers were advocated. These Quality Partnerships were considered essential to ensure long-term relationships with suppliers committed to delivering guaranteed quality beef.

Supplier Guaranteed Performance

One of the main objectives of the Best Practice Meat Quality Program was to develop relationships with suppliers that enabled the delivery of consistent meat products to agreed specifications. Further details of this best practice program can be found in the preceding paper titled “Best Practice within Australian Food Service, a case study: Customer Satisfaction of Red Meat Products.”

The relationships that were developed between the Company and their suppliers were to be strategic alliances known by the acronym “Quality” Partnership:-

Q: Quality

U: Ultimate Customer

A: Added Value

L: Long Term Relationship

I: International Best Practice

T: Teamwork

Y:	qualitY

The Quality Partnership aimed to provide a basis for the Company and its suppliers to achieve mutual benefits through common objectives with an emphasis on quality. It also allowed for a mechanism to evaluate, acknowledge and recognise the degree of Company/Supplier performance in terms of quality, service, hygiene and value for money.

It was aimed at jointly establishing quality objectives and their achievement. Individual Company/Supplier performance goals were mutually agreed upon and an assessment of performance feedback provided. Quality expectations were communicated on a two-way basis between the Company and suppliers. Annual quality awards were presented to suppliers who achieved or exceeded their mutually agreed goals/objectives.

Results and Discussion

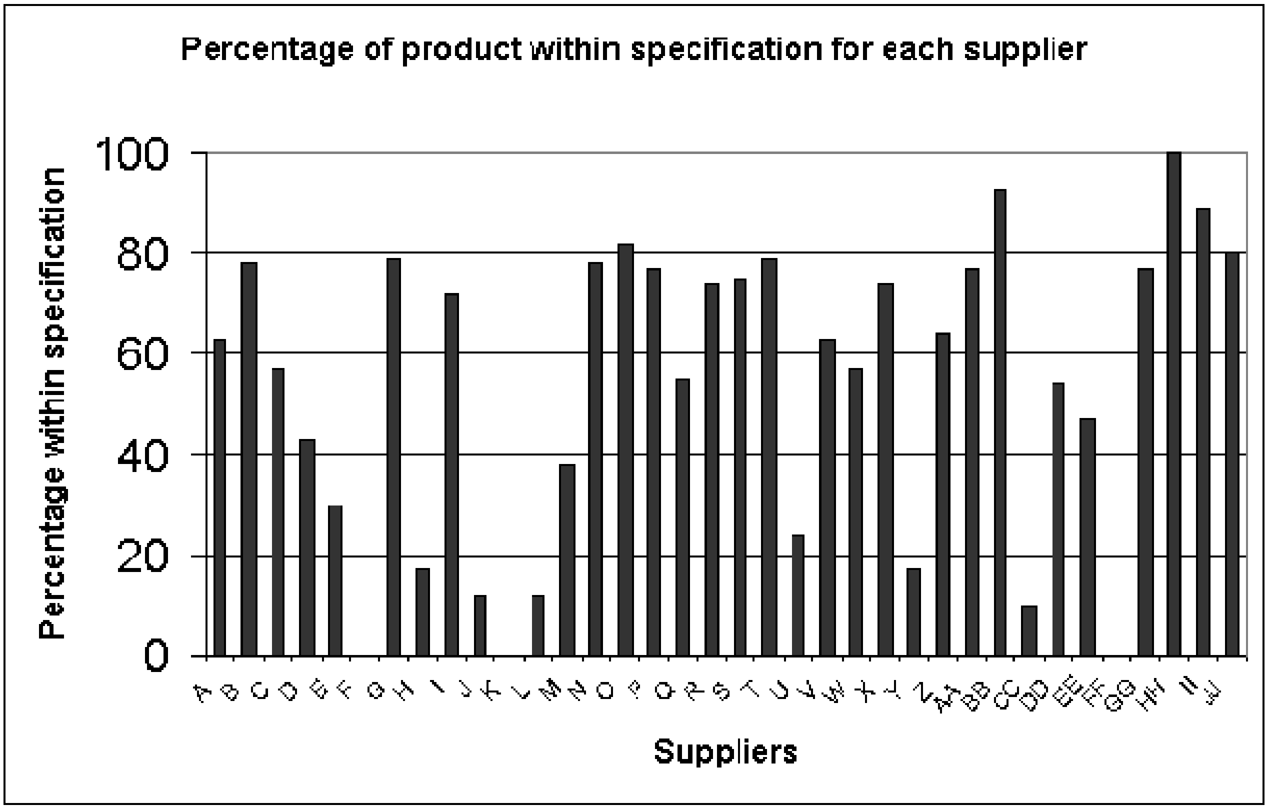
Specifications for the food service industry have not always been well defined. The majority of specifications related to portion size, weight, price and the ability of the wholesaler to source suitable product for the food service outlet. More recently there has been more emphasis on product specifications and their role in meeting consumers' satisfaction requirements (Allerton 1999; University of New England 1997).

Marbling, meat colour and texture/firmness are important visual attributes of meat that directly relate to eating quality (MRC 1995). Marbling contributes to the juiciness and flavour of the meat (Ausmeat 1990). Meat colour is one of the principal factors that affect consumers' choice in their meat purchase (Pearson & Dutson 1994). It provides a measure to eliminate dark coloured high pH meat (University of New England 1997). The measurement of pH has become an important objective measurement of meat and has a direct relationship with meat colour and tenderness (Watanabe et. al 1996). Food service companies should ensure that pH of meat is not higher than 5.7 for quality assurance (Cox et. al. 1995; Cox et. al. 1997; University of New England 1997; Gardner & Pethick 2003). Texture/firmness is an important visual characteristic, but it also affects the efficiency of cutting yields of pre-portion preparation of the product (MRC 1995).

Only 44% of the 36 different processors audited had at least 70% of their product in specification. Three processors had none of their product within the specifications stipulated and a further 10 processors had less than 50% as shown in Figure 1.

The most endorsed food service industry specification for beef is a maximum pH of 5.7 (Gardner & Pethick 2003). High pH beef impacts significantly on attained degree of doneness, results in reduced overall sensory score and thus on customer satisfaction (Cox *et al.*, 1995 & Cox *et. al.*, 1997). The mean pH of all beef supplied to the Company in this audit was pH 5.64 ranging from a minimum pH of 5.38 up to a maximum pH of 6.61.

Figure 1: Percentage of product within specification for each supplier

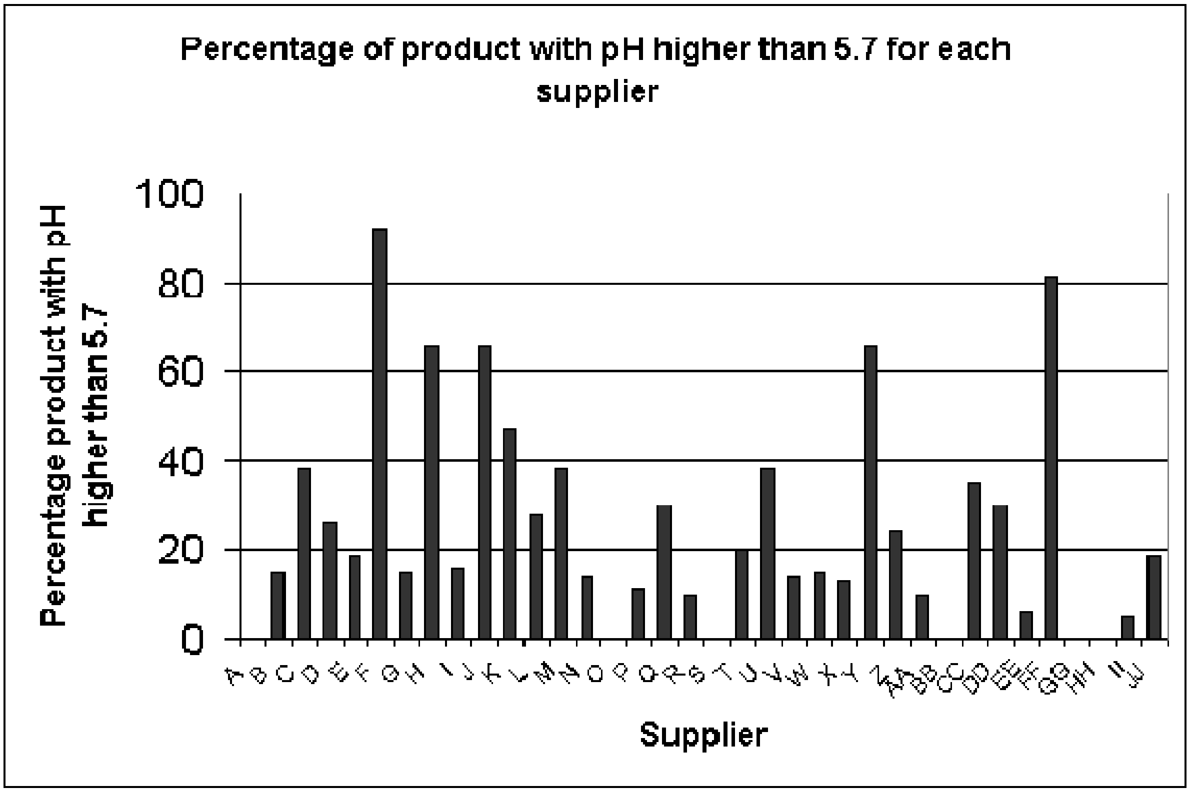


Overall, only 58.5% of all beef tenderloins assessed met all the specifications.

22% of beef tenderloins failed to reach a common food service pH standard and only 6 companies always achieved the pH specification over the time of the audit. Thus, it was realized that all product should be assessed before pre-portion preparation or departure from the processor.

The results of this quality audit illustrated the large variation of beef tenderloins being sourced for the Company and as reviewed by the food service industry in general (NSW Agriculture 1995; MRC 1991; MRC 1996). This is in line with an audit conducted in the USA in 1991 that showed the need to improve the quality and consistency beef in the wholesale/retail and food service sectors (National Cattlemen’s Association 1992).

Figure 2: Percentage of product with pH higher than 5.7 for each supplier



While it is acknowledged that a number of food service outlets place much emphasis on price as a factor for purchase, this audit illustrated that nearly the full spectrum of Ausmeat categories and product price ranges were sourced for this sector of the industry. This variation demonstrated the suppliers (in this case the processors) lack of understanding regarding the effect the measured traits have on consumers' satisfaction levels. It confirmed the need for the Quality Partnership initiatives identified in the preceding paper, "Best Practice within Australian Food Service, a case study: Customer Satisfaction of Red Meat Products". The Company confirmed as a result of the quality audit that their Best Practice Meat Quality Program did not solve its problems of declining customer satisfaction in isolation. Relationships needed to be developed with others within the marketplace (Hogarth-Scott 1999).

Quality Partnership

"Quality Partnership" was the title given to the strategic alliances that were developed between the Food Service Company and its wholesale suppliers. Suppliers were invited to participate in the program that focused on collaboration to deliver product that satisfied the ultimate consumer. The Quality Partnerships enabled the food service company to form better relationships with their suppliers. These relationships brought the suppliers closer to the food service companies' consumers and demonstrated the variation in eating quality and nature of consumer complaints received.

The Quality Partnership key objectives were:-

- Quality Standard
- Hygiene Standard
- Service Standard
- Pricing Structure

1. Quality Standard - The ultimate aim was to provide quality perceptions in the eyes of the final customer. The quality commitment involved the stipulation of appropriate product specifications by the Company and the provision of product consistently meeting specifications by the supplier. Due consideration was to be given to matters such as lead time, supply availability, freshness and presentation. Training programs were implemented and these encompassed the use of equipment to objectively measure product and the development of subjective assessments.
2. Hygiene Standard - The objective was to achieve the highest standard of hygiene. The Company made the commitment to provide advice and support in all aspects relating to hygiene. Likewise, the suppliers committed themselves to complying with all hygiene regulations imposed by law and the Company.
3. Service Standard - Services were to be provided within specified time constraints in accordance with purchase order/contract criteria such as description of services, quality, quantity and agreed prices. Service details were to be clearly and precisely specified by the Company. The suppliers were to be committed to providing such services and also to show initiative in offering alternative services when necessary. Communication was also included as an assessment criterion.
4. Pricing Structure - Value for money and price competitiveness was the goal for the pricing structure. The Company agreed to negotiate on price, taking into consideration product nature, product range and competitive position. The offering of fair and reasonable prices, with justification for price variations, was the undertaking of the supplier.

The team approach combining the food service company and their suppliers enabled new specifications to be written that accurately delivered what the consumer required. All specifications were written in terminology that was familiar to suppliers – Ausmeat Language. A more efficient purchasing procedure resulted. Giles & Sinclair (1994) discuss the need to use familiar language for greater collaboration.

The use of objective equipment and the development of subjective skills enabled suppliers to accurately supply beef to the specification requirements. As a result, variation within the supplier product lines was reduced at each catering centre.

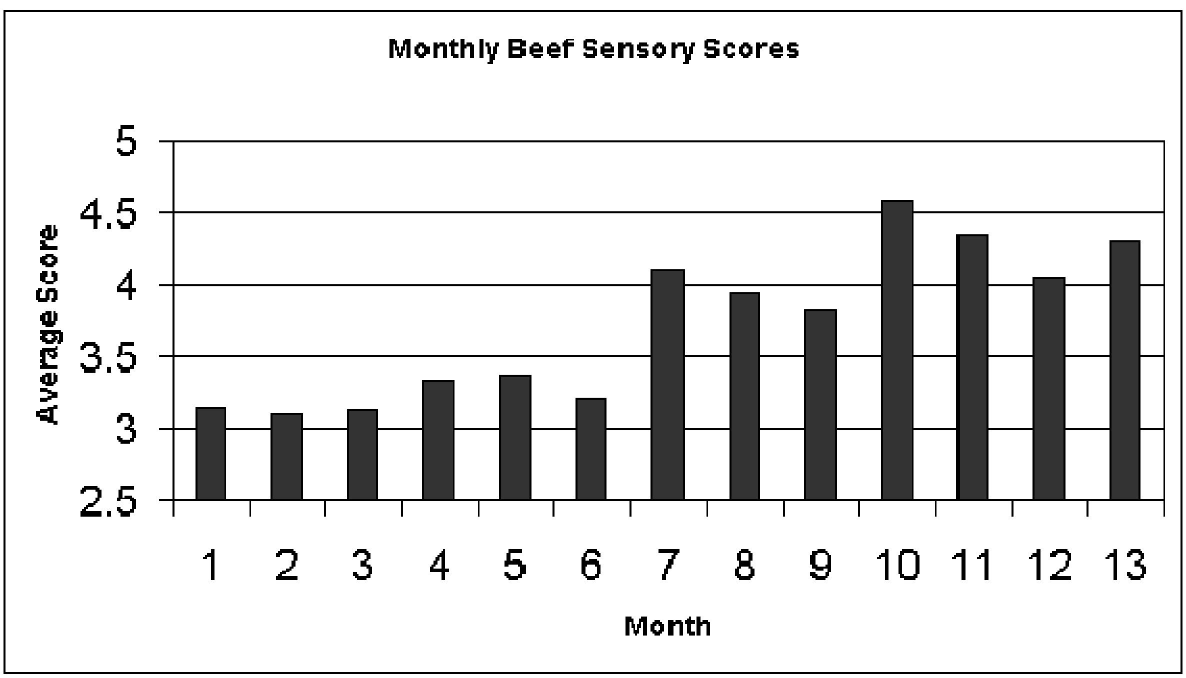
Monthly consumer surveys and product testing continued on an ongoing basis to assess any change in consumer needs. The food service company established meat teams that were responsible for monitoring quality, updating specifications and delivering beef products to, or in excess of, customers' requirements. These teams included a representative from the wholesale suppliers.

Feedback mechanisms and reporting structures were established to provide all alliance members with information on the level of consumer satisfaction with their product. All performance measures were analyzed on a regular basis and reports provided to all participants. Fearne (1998) and Hayes et al. (2003) discuss the rewards gained by the use of information sharing.

The identification of a few key suppliers who against major industry pressure believed and committed their businesses to Quality Partnerships was a significant factor in the success of the Best Practice Meat Quality Program.

Further results from the Best Practice Meat Quality Program can be found in the preceding paper already mentioned. Nevertheless, it is prudent to reiterate that consumer complaints were reduced by 96% and consumer satisfaction of beef was improved by 34%. Validation of the improved consistency in meeting consumer requirements was demonstrated by improvements in beef quality attributes over the duration of the case study, as displayed in Figure 3. The Quality Partnerships were instrumental in achieving these improvements in customer satisfaction.

Figure 3: Monthly beef sensory scores



Scale where 6=excellent; 5=very good; 4=good; 3=average; 2=poor; 1=very poor

In a study of 3554 beef consumers, Cox et. al.(1997) shows the positive effect that satisfying consumers' requirements also has on their perception of receiving value for money and repurchase intent.

Implications for other food service companies

Similar to traditional company/supplier relationships within the food service industry, dealings between the Company and its suppliers were originally price-driven. Additionally there were conflicting requirements between the various parties in the sequence from wholesalers to consumers. The wholesaler was generally juggling inconsistent product to satisfy a highly critical but changeable market. Whilst the Company chefs wanted the best quality at any price, the Company purchasers sourced the best price and if the product was wrong or not performing it was the chefs' problem. The consumer, as always, required the best quality and value for money. The combination of conflicting requirements and price-driven relationships caused the Company to suffer from an industry-wide problem of inconsistent product.

Customer satisfaction is paramount to the success of any company – particularly a food service company. The establishment of a "quality partnership" between the Company and its wholesale suppliers provided significant benefits to the levels of consumer satisfaction for the Company's beef meals.

The following success factors can be derived from this case study and could be used as a basis for other food service companies to consider in the development of strategic alliances with their own wholesale suppliers:

- If a food service company/ wholesale supplier relationship is to be developed it cannot be on a "token basis", otherwise the more dominant company has the opportunity to take power and control. Both parties must trust each other.
- The "quality partnership" in this case study was of a formal nature. Formal co-operation usually starts at the strategic management level. There must be written agreements, using simple language, which clearly outlines the expectations and outcomes for both parties. The food service and wholesale companies must be mutually involved in the development of documentation to ensure that a "partnership" agreement results as opposed to a "business contract".
- The people involved are the key to successful partnerships. This must start with strong, motivated leadership and include involved, committed staff that are prepared to cooperate within the partnership.
- Once a partnership has been established, both companies need to develop and implement joint training programs so that all staff involved fully understand their own goals and the expectations of all parties. As demonstrated in this case study, it is also important to view the goals and expectations from the perspective of others within the partnership.
- Consumers' requirements need to be accurately identified. The concept of value for money must be taken into account to ensure that there are not excessive cost

and/or quality changes . The concept of identifying consumer requirements will also bring the wholesale companies closer to the food service industry customers.
- Both the food service and wholesale companies should revise all standards (quality, price, hygiene, service, etc) jointly so that the alliance is a total package with full commitment from both parties.
- Product specifications developed need ownership from both the food service and wholesale companies. Both companies need to be innovative, proactive and flexible to develop specifications that aim to deliver the highest possible standards to the consumer. Cooperation is essential in the development of specifications as both parties have a different area of expertise.
- Common terminology needs to be used in the documentation of specifications. Additionally appropriate training on the terminology, together with the objective and subjective assessment of the product, needs to be provided to all staff. Audit procedures need to be put in place to identify the arrival of product outside the agreed specifications.
- Accurate commercial timelines need to be established which consider the logistics and lead times in sourcing product for purchase orders. Wholesale suppliers will need to assess their own suppliers and communicate back their accurate requirements to ensure acceptable product is sourced.
- As food safety/traceability is now paramount, a trace back mechanism must be established from the consumer to the wholesale supplier. This must involve quality assurance officers and inspection reports.

Conclusion

The variation in product sourced for the food service industry illustrates where a large proportion of consumer dissatisfaction may originate. All sectors of the beef supply chain must be aware of the detrimental effects that poor quality and inconsistent products have on consumers' level of satisfaction.

The Food Service Company featured in this case study addressed the problem of increasing consumer complaints by developing Quality Partnerships with their suppliers. The crux of the Quality Partnerships was embraced by the word "quality". Quality was an acronym of its main goals that encompassed **Q**uality; **U**ltimate customer; **A**dded Value; **L**ong-term relationship; **I**nternational Best Practice; **T**eamwork and qualit**Y.** The ultimate aim of the Food Service Company was to deliver product that satisfied their consumers. This was achieved by mutually establishing with their suppliers objectives, performance goals and assessments for quality, hygiene, service and pricing issues.

The Quality Partnership outlined in this paper has delivered the common goals of product consistency and consumer satisfaction in the short term. Its dedication to the factors of trust, commitment, sharing of information, common goals and people skills will determine its long-term future.

Appendix 1

The following beef tenderloin specification was used in the audit within the Best Practice Meat Quality Program. The specification is in line with those used by many of the major food service and retail companies:-

pH	5.35 - 5.7
Meat Colour	1A - 3
Marbling Score	1 - 3
Texture/Firmness	4 - 6

Source: Foote 2003

Meat Colour is an Ausmeat Quality Standard. It is a progressive scale from light to dark which ranges from 1A, 1B, 1C and then integrally up to 7.

Marbling Score is an Ausmeat Quality Standard that refers to the intramuscular fat on a progressive scale from 0 to 7.

Texture/Firmness is a subjective assessment using a 1 to 6 scoring system, whereby a score of 6 coincided with a firm very fine texture, 5 = firm fine texture, 4 = medium/fine texture and medium firmness, 3 = medium/coarse texture with medium firmness, 2 = coarse texture and soft firmness and 1 = very coarse texture and soft firmness.

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