I’m pleased to report that 2012 is starting off to be very busy for us and the leather supply industry in general. We heard many positive comments at the Denver market about the state of people’s business and the outlook for the coming year.

Even though leather prices remain high, the market has softened up a bit and hide prices have come down from the high of last year. The bad news is that the chemicals tanneries use have experienced a steep increase, making them the second most expensive cost in the tanning process. As a result, prices are staying higher than normal for this time of year.

From the weather to the political climate, many things can have an impact on your business. For instance, I’ve been hearing reports that many businesses have seen increased sales resulting from the milder weather some areas of the country have experienced this winter. On the political front, election years have historically been good economically and we remain optimistic the same will be true this year.

Our annual auction is right around the corner on June 13 and 14. If you are a regular attendee, we look forward to seeing you again. On the other hand, if you’ve never been to one of these events, I welcome you and assure you will find bargains on leather, new and used equipment, and much more.

Even if you need nothing, the auction is a great place to spend a couple days away, see what is new, and catch up on the latest industry news and gossip. The visiting, eating and plain old industry bantering that go on at this event sometimes make it resemble more of a reunion than an auction.

Anyway, we would love to be your hosts for several days and promise to show you all a good time. We will feed you well and hopefully you’ll go home with some real goodies from the auction. And, if you find you don’t need everything you bought, you can always bring it back next year and sell it again. I’m convinced that some of this stuff resurfaces every third or fourth year. Hope to see you all there!

In this issue, we’ll talk about cutting leather for your specific job. It is always important, whether you’re cutting straps for belts, reins or other miscellaneous projects, to cut straps that are uniform, straight and precise. This can be done by hand with a draw gauge, but if you have any volume and do this on a production scale, a strap cutter is essential.

The higher your quantities, the more sophisticated and advanced your machine should be. To accommodate most everyone’s needs, we sell everything from draw gauges to hand operated strap cutters. You’ll find the machines not only save you time, but will also ensure consistent quality in every strap you cut.

The other form of leather cutting is die cutting. Die cutting is used when the shape of your leather is a pattern of shapes and not a straight strap. Die cutting is quick, efficient and precise. Your products will reflect the difference in quality and cost if they are die cut.

Aside from custom work where you may only cut one piece of a given shape or pattern, die cutting is nearly always worth the investment of dies and a clicker. We sell both here at Weaver Leather and have experts on hand to help you choose the right machine and design dies to meet your specifications.

If you have never used our dies, I ask you to give us a chance next time. We make the dies right here in our plant and our die makers are the best you’ll find anywhere. Not only will your pattern be perfect, it will be welded and finished by people who know what you expect as we not only make dies for our customers, but for our in-house use as well.
Brahma Webb® Tested to Ensure Real World Performance

We had a buggy harness made in January of 2009 for a local farmer with one side constructed of BioThane® and the other side with our original Brahma Webb® with white webbing center. We thought this would be a great way to test Brahma Webb® and get a comparison on how both materials perform under the same conditions. While a lot of testing was performed in a neutral lab with favorable results compared to the competition, we felt that an even better test would be a side-by-side actual use test out in the real world.

We are glad to report that after three years of use, averaging twice a week, there is no excessive wear, adhesion problems or breaks in any part of the harness. The wear looks the same on both sides. The Brahma Webb® side easily cleaned up to almost its original look with just soap and water while the BioThane® side faded just a little from its original color.

We are very confident that Brahma Webb® will perform every bit as well as any competitive material out there. We are so confident that we guarantee our product will perform to your satisfaction or we will replace it including any additional labor costs incurred to replace the product.

Since April 2011, all Brahma Webb® has a black polyester webbing center. This has received great feedback from customers who report that it punches cleaner and gives their finished product a better overall look.

Look for more widths coming soon! They should be ready to sell by this year’s auction on June 13 & 14.

Brahma Webb® is Available from Weaver Leather and the Following Distributors:

Fisher's Harness Shop  Countryside Manufacturing  Clinton Harness Shop
Ronks, PA      Milton, IA      Goshen, IN
717-687-6048  641-656-4339 VM  574-825-7018

The Leather Corner Cont.

The clicker can be as simple as our small hand operated clickers for smaller patterns or our hydraulic clickers that are perfect for cutting patterns for saddles and other projects. They can be found on pages 249 & 252 of our 2012 Supply Catalog.

Another advantage of die cutting is that it minimizes waste. The die and patterns can be turned and nested into each other in a way that cuts waste to a bare minimum. Even in our early years here at Weaver Leather, we used dies and clickers to increase productivity.

One of our main frustrations was that the dies were costly. They also took a long time to get which delayed the job. And, it was annoying to make the pattern and send it out only to receive dies that were wrong in shape or size. Sometimes when two dies were made, the right and left would not match.

These were some of the reasons we started to make our own, and why we began offering them to our customers. Our die service is explained in detail on pages 254 & 255 of our 2012 Supply Catalog and I invite you to give us a call for a quote the next time you need dies.

For even more cutting convenience, we offer a strap cutting service where we take the leather you’ve selected, cut it to your specified size and dimensions, and send you whatever is left over of the side. It is a great way to get leather cut to size without investing in any equipment. This is just another reason to buy leather from people who are experts in manufacturing, and not just distributors who have no experience cutting leather.

In the next issue, our experts will share information on leather waste and using the whole side for the right purpose. You won’t want to miss this informative article.
There is an old saying, “Competence will get you in the door, character will keep you there.” Character is an essential ingredient in every person’s leadership journey as well as in general business. Like almost every principle of leadership, the most important person to exhibit good character is you, the person who is leading the organization. We can never expect our people to be ambassadors of character if we are not.

Nearly 15 years ago, we embarked on a program here at Weaver Leather called Character First®. It is a training program based on 49 different character traits. One character trait is covered each month with a bulletin-type lesson describing the trait, its importance and how to develop the trait. Each month we have a company-wide meeting where we watch an eight-minute video describing the trait. We then discuss the trait in more detail and recognize employees who have been nominated by a manager, supervisor or co-worker for exemplifying that trait. We also recognize first year anniversaries for employees at these meetings. When a supervisor has an employee celebrating a first anniversary, he or she will review all the Character First® traits and select the one that best describes that employee. I cannot tell you what this has done for our company over the course of 15 years. Our employees know that character is important and when they are recognized for it, it is hugely important.

It is not an immediate fix to all character-related issues, but over time it is a catalyst for positive change as has been evident in our workforce. Good character is one thing that sets companies apart from the rest. When good character is valued and encouraged, it becomes apparent to your team as well as your customers that there is something very special about your business because the people who work there treat each other, customers and vendors with integrity and respect.

This program is currently being used by hundreds of businesses, schools, churches, prisons and other institutions across the country and around the world. It doesn’t matter if you have one employee or 100, it will have a profound effect on both you and your employees. I have had many competent people on our team who are no longer here because of a lack of character. If we as employers are willing to take the time and spend the money to instill these values, it will transform our businesses and have long-reaching effects on the families and communities we live in.

We believe character is so paramount to people’s development and success that we introduced this program to our local schools. Every classroom’s teacher has access to and uses Character First® materials. It may be the only formal character training these children will ever hear. These children are the ones who will grow up and be our future workforce, so this becomes an investment in our future as well as providing huge benefits today. I encourage you to check out this program at www.characterfirst.com or call us for more information.

“The 49 Traits of Character First®

- Alertness
- Attentiveness
- Availability
- Benevolence
- Boldness
- Cautiousness
- Compassion
- Contentment
- Creativity
- Decisiveness
- Deference
- Dependability
- Determination
- Diligence
- Discernment
- Discretion
- Endurance

- Enthusiasm
- Faith
- Flexibility
- Forgiveness
- Generosity
- Gentleness
- Gracefulness
- Honor
- Hospitality
- Humility
- Initiative
- Joyfulness
- Justice
- Loyalty
- Meekness
- Obedience
- Orderliness
- Patience
- Persuasiveness
- Punctuality
- Resourcefulness
- Responsibility
- Security
- Self-Control
- Sensitivity
- Sincerity
- Thoroughness
- Thriftiness
- Tolerance
- Truthfulness
- Virtue
- Wisdom
If name branding and marketing your product is the first ingredient in the Marketing Crock Pot and customer service is the second, then capturing the names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of everyone who buys from you has to be the third ingredient. Developing a mailing list of past customers is vital to Marketing 101. The easiest people you can sell to are your past and current customers. Mailers and promotions are found to be the most successful when going to past customers. It is probably the single most important list you possess, and it should not be shared with anyone, period. As much as you might like your neighbor or friendly competitor, do not sell them your customer list. This list is invaluable and through the years it will grow and you’ll be able to use it again and again to reach your most responsive customers.

Building your list is as easy as asking your customer for his or her full address and keeping it on file. Whether you are a manufacturer, retailer or wholesaler, sending your customers mailers periodically will keep them in touch with you. If you retail the products you make, running specials and sales on designated products will drive people into your store. Many times you’ll find your bread and butter items are the ones that draw the most people. Instead of simply cutting your margins, you might ask your supplier to help with the discount for a specified time. The more consumable items you carry, the easier it is to get customers in your store. Some examples of consumable items include animal feed, animal health products, show-type liquids and aerosols or anything that complements your product line that customers use regularly.

If you wholesale your products or at least a portion of your line, be sure to maintain a healthy margin between your retail price and wholesale price. There is no better way to lose a wholesale customer than to have a consumer say the price is too high and it can be purchased directly from you, the supplier, at cost. There is a fine line between wholesale and retail and most businesses are not very successful attempting to do both.

That’s it for now. If you have specific questions, please don’t hesitate to contact us using the options listed to the right.

Question: I purchase your 100% Neatsfoot Oil to finish all my leather projects. Due to the volume I purchase, I store it in my unheated workshop. When dipping my products in the oil, they come out with a thin white film on top of the leather. I rub the item with a soft cloth, and the film is gone. How do I get rid of the film so that it doesn’t come back?

Submitted by Marvin Shipley of Westminster, Maryland

Answer: This is a great question Marvin! The 100% pure neatsfoot will actually solidify if the temperature drops much below freezing. This in itself does not harm the oil, but before using the oil to dip or swab your leather product, it should be heated to 90° to 98°F. This is close to your body temperature and will not harm the leather. This is always a good rule of thumb to go by. Anything that is too hot to touch, is also too hot for your leather. Your body temperature is 98.6°F so a good guideline is not to exceed 100°F. After all, leather is skin just like your hand.

The warm oil will then penetrate the leather and lubricate the fibers to repel moisture while preventing the leather from drying out. I recommend putting a top coat on your leather to help seal it and keep any oil from migrating to the top. The product we’ve found to be best suited for this is RTC Sheridan Resist and Finish found on page 195 of the 2012 Supply Catalog.

Thanks for the question. We invite all your questions and comments. Remember, they help not only you, but others will benefit from the knowledge as well.

If you are interested in submitting questions for possible publication in future issues of Threads ‘N Stitches, please use one of the following options.

Email: askpaul@weaverleather.com

Mail to:
Attn: Ask Paul
Weaver Leather LLC
PO Box 68
Mt. Hope, OH 44660-0068

Call:
800-932-8371 x240 to speak with Corporate Administrative Assistant Lisa Rosenberry