



Producing In a Pandemic

There's never a time where a producer's quality services is unappreciated by its customers. However, under the unprecedented conditions that faced the steel supply chain in 2020, working with a dependable source of material took on an entirely new meaning.

As mills idled capacity in response to the coronavirus pandemic, making material hard to come by, customers prized even more those mills who maintained higher service levels through the crisis. In their comments to Jacobson & Associates, both end-users and service centers expressed their appreciation for those producers who rose to this most unusual of challenges.

Comments regarding mill performance during the pandemic indicate growing concerns with delivery and availability. Customers are also increasing their dependence on mill portals and other online tools for communication and information.

Service center operators were generally positive about the mills' performance during the pandemic. "Managing volatility is where mills need the most improvement, but I give them a lot of credit for them responding during all of this," one respondent said. "Mills have handled the COVID situation to the best of their abilities and they deserve credit," echoed another.

And several respondents noted the increasing importance of online ordering. "The more we can use mills' e-comm the better. Mills need to just keep up with customer needs during weird times," one service center respondent said.

For 28 years, Jacobson & Associates has conducted a continuous survey of more than 2,000 major steel customers in the United States and Canada, including service centers and

end-users. Jacobson measures overall customer satisfaction and customer satisfaction with quality, service, price, on-time delivery, inside sales, outside sales, and e-commerce.

Service centers singled out six mills as the top performers in terms of overall customer satisfaction for the 12 months ending September 30, 2020: Nucor Decatur among sheet producers, Nucor Longview in plate, Nucor Berkeley in beam; Nucor Jackson in bar/structurals, SDI Engineered Bar in SBQ and Searing Industries in tube. This is the first year tube producers have been included in the Jacobson Survey for *MCN*.

Nucor Berkeley is the only repeater from the 2019 list, though that's no surprise. The South Carolina mill has been the top choice for beam production every year since 2012.

In the highly competitive sheet field, Nucor Decatur unseated North Star BlueScope atop the rankings, the first time in five years the Ohio company has not been the preferred choice among the service center customers.

As is often the case, service centers and end-user rankings were different. Only Berkeley and Jackson were listed first by both groups. End users chose Nucor Crawfordsville in sheet, Nucor Tuscaloosa in plate, Nucor Memphis in SBQ and Atlas Tube in the newly added tube category.

As the survey is conducted on a continuous basis, Jacobson can also determine which mills are making the greatest leaps forward in terms of customer service. This year, the most improved producers were USS Gary in sheet, CMC Florida in bar/structurals, Gerdau Special – Fort Smith in SBQ, SDI Structurals in beams, Nucor Longview in plate and Bull Moose Tube in tube products.

The respondents are also queried on their level of loyalty to their mill suppliers, and that list has some different names

The Leaders ...

Customer Comments on What Makes Them Different

Sheet Producer

Nucor Decatur

- Nucor is reliable and consistent. Their inside sales is good, they take good care of us. Nucor pulls rabbits out of their hats to make stuff happen.
- Nucor Decatur is the most consistent. They have been the most reliable on delivery especially.
- Nucor Decatur is our major supplier. They are great to work with. Nucor Decatur's strengths are communication, quality material, on-time production, and claims process.

- Nucor Decatur has grown in their ability to supply us well, understand our business and be a constant help within our supply chain. They work well with us.
- Nucor Decatur is an awesome supplier. They have fair pricing, great availability and flexibility. Nucor is a very stable and consistent supplier; they are willing to work with us on most anything.
- Nucor Decatur is our No. 1 supplier. I have very few issues with this mill. My material is rarely late and is typically ready early. I have very few claims/rejections. When I do have those issues, they are taken care of quickly and fairly.

Plate Producer

Nucor Longview

- Nucor is a nimble supplier with good response time and customer service excellence.
- Nucor Steel, Longview, is all-around excellent. This mill is extremely easy to communicate with. They get me answers and are willing to work with me on anything that I need. I never have to worry about having a lot of issues.
- Nucor Longview Texas is easy to do business with; they are outstanding.

■ Nucor Longview has stepped it up; they have been supportive and are doing pretty well to be a reliable source.

■ Nucor Longview has shown continuous improvement. Surface quality has been an issue in the past with Nucor Longview, but the mill has made great improvement over the last few years to correct this problem. The strength for Nucor Longview is larger rolling capabilities.

■ Nucor Longview has a tremendous product range for thick plate that is melted and manufactured in the U.S.

Bar/Structurals Producer

Nucor Jackson

- Nucor is our major supplier based on relationships, price, service, and quality. It's a partnership with them. Nucor is easy to do business with.
- Nucor is our major supplier based on product range and stock availability. Nucor has good, stable pricing.
- Nucor Jackson is our major supplier; they are an excellent provider. Nucor Jackson is very dependable with very good products.
- Nucor Jackson is our major supplier. They have good products and good delivery. Nucor Jackson can still be better on their prices and their outside rep involvement.

Beam Producer

Nucor Berkeley Beams

- Nucor Berkeley is an excellent supplier with good stock availability and excellent staff in all departments.
- Nucor Berkeley Beams has excellent management support, good inside sales force, very market competitive, and very willing to trade ideas and understand the market they work in.

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■ Nucor Berkeley is a reliable supplier with good products and delivery, but their price adjustments are behind others.

■ Nucor Steel Berkeley is excellent. Their strength is shipping and adhering to roll schedules.

■ Nucor is our major supplier based on their overall package. Nucor is thorough and detail-oriented. Overall, Nucor has the best customer service.

SBQ Producer

SDI Engineered Bar

- Steel Dynamics, Pittsboro, Ind., is outstanding. They go above and beyond to accommodate your needs. In most cases, you can change orders with SDI that are due within two weeks, which is not common with the other suppliers.
- SDI Pittsboro is our major supplier; they are the best overall. SDI Pittsboro is mostly on-time, competitive, with high end products and they are responsive.
- Strengths for Steel Dynamics, Pittsboro, are broad selection of sizes and grades, competitive price, and they are close so low freight costs.
- Steel Dynamics, Pittsboro, is like dealing with family. SDI's strengths are communication, service, and resolving problems quickly and painlessly. SDI is an important source of information on various steel grades and options.

Tube Producer

Searing Industries

- We have no troubles with Searing Industries. Searing has a very good outside rep and they also do better on prices than the other mills.
- Searing is our major supplier. They have excellent quality and superb service. Searing is priced well for a domestic mill.
- It is easy to do business with Searing Industries; easy to schedule picks and roll dates are accurate.
- Searing Industries is our major supplier based on location, service and product availability.

The Leaders

Top-ranked producers in six steel categories

Sheet Producer	Nucor Decatur
Plate Producer	Nucor Longview
Bar/Structurals	Nucor Jackson
SBQ Producer	SDI Engineered Bar
Beam Producer	Nucor Berkeley
Tube Producer	Searing Industries

Source: Jacobson & Associates Data is for the 12 months ending Sept. 30, 2020.

at the top, including CMC Arizona in bar/structurals, Gerdau Midlothian in SBQ and Welded Tube of Canada heading up the tube list. North Star BlueScope, Berkeley and Jackson were also atop their respective loyalty lists.

Looking at the comments relating to top-rated mills, several themes emerge as qualities customers are looking for: ease of doing business, communication, responsiveness, consistency and availability. ■

Most Improved Suppliers

Most Improved Suppliers in Overall Customer Satisfaction by Product Category

Sheet Producers

1. USS Gary
2. USS Granite City
3. Nucor Decatur
4. AK Steel
5. Stelco
6. Nucor Arkansas
7. Algoma
8. Big River Steel
9. Nucor Crawfordsville

Tube Producers

1. Bull Moose Tube
2. Maruichi
3. Nucor Tubular Products
4. Atlas Tube

SBQ Producers

1. Gerdau Special – Fort Smith
2. Nucor Memphis
3. SDI Engineered Bar
4. Alton Steel

Bar/Structural Producers

1. CMC Florida
2. CMC Tennessee
3. Gerdau Whitby
4. CMC New Jersey
5. CMC California
6. Nucor Birmingham
7. Nucor Jackson
8. Nucor Kankakee

Plate Producers

1. Nucor Longview
2. Evraz Portland
3. ArcelorMittal Burns Harbor

Beam Producers

1. SDI Structurals
2. Nucor Yamato
3. Gerdau Midlothian

The most improved mills are those with the highest percentage increase in overall customer satisfaction scores for the 12 months ending Sept. 30, 2020. Companies are listed in order from highest to lowest in percentage improvement.

Loyalty Index Ranking

Highest Ranked Mills in Customer Loyalty by Product Category

Sheet Producers

1. North Star BlueScope
2. Nucor Gallatin
3. The Techs
4. Nucor Crawfordsville
5. ArcelorMittal Dofasco
6. SDI Heartland
7. Nucor Decatur
8. Stelco
9. SDI Butler
10. Nucor Arkansas
11. ArcelorMittal Cleveland
12. Big River Steel
13. NLMK PA
14. AK Steel

Beam Producers

1. Nucor Berkeley
2. Nucor Yamato
3. SDI Structurals

Plate Producers

1. Nucor Longview
2. EVRAZ Portland
3. Nucor Tuscaloosa
4. Nucor Hertford

SBQ Producers

1. Gerdau Midlothian SBQ
2. SDI Engineered Bar
3. Alton Steel
4. Timken
5. Nucor Memphis

Tube Producers

1. Welded Tube of Canada
2. Searing Industries
3. EXLTUBE
4. Atlas Tube

Bar/Structurals Producers

1. CMC Arizona
2. Nucor Utah
3. CMC California
4. CMC Oklahoma
5. Nucor Nebraska
6. Nucor Jackson
7. Birmingham
8. Nucor South Carolina
9. CMC Texas
10. Cascade Steel
11. Gerdau Whitby
12. Nucor Marion
13. Nucor Auburn

Companies rated the best in customer loyalty are listed in order from the highest ranked in each product category.

Source: Jacobson & Associates. Data is for 12 months ending Sept. 30, 2020.

Customer Satisfaction Leaders

By Product Category, End-Users and Service Centers

Top Sheet Producers

As Rated by End-Use Customers

1. Nucor Crawfordsville
2. Nucor Decatur
3. SDI Butler
4. ArcelorMittal Cleveland
5. The Techs
6. AK Steel
7. SDI Columbus
8. Nucor Arkansas
9. ArcelorMittal Dofasco
10. USS-POSCO Industries

Top Plate Producers

As Rated by End-Use Customers

1. Nucor Tuscaloosa
2. Evraz Portland
3. Algoma Plate
4. Nucor Hertford

Top Beam Producers

As Rated by End-Use Customers

1. Nucor Berkeley
2. Nucor Yamato
3. SDI Structurals

Top Bar/Structural Producers

As Rated by End-Use Customers

1. Nucor Jackson
2. CMC California
3. Nucor Birmingham
4. CMC Texas
5. CMC Arizona
6. CMC Alabama
7. Nucor Nebraska
8. CMC Tennessee
9. Nucor Utah

Top SBQ Producers

As Rated by End-Use Customers

1. Nucor Memphis
2. Nucor Nebraska
3. SDI Engineered Bar

Top Tube Producers

As Rated by End-Use Customers

1. Atlas Tube
2. Nucor Tubular Products
3. Bull Moose Tube

Top Sheet Producers

As Rated by Service Center Customers

1. Nucor Decatur
2. North Star BlueScope
3. Nucor Berkeley
4. The Techs
5. Nucor Arkansas
6. Nucor Gallatin
7. SDI Heartland
8. SDI Columbus
9. SDI Butler
10. Nucor Crawfordsville

Top Plate Producers

As Rated by Service Center Customers

1. Nucor Longview
2. SSAB Plate
3. Nucor Tuscaloosa
4. Evraz Portland

Top Beam Producers

As Rated by Service Center Customers

1. Nucor Berkeley
2. SDI Structurals
3. Nucor Yamato

Top Bar/Structural Producers

As Rated by Service Center Customers

1. Nucor Jackson
2. CMC Texas
3. Nucor South Carolina
4. Cascade Steel
5. CMC Alabama
6. CMC Arizona
7. Nucor Utah
8. CMC South Carolina
9. SDI Roanoke

Top SBQ Producers

As Rated by Service Center Customers

1. SDI Engineered Bar
2. Nucor Memphis
3. Nucor Nebraska

Top Tube Producers

As Rated by Service Center Customers

1. Searing Industries
2. EXLTUBE
3. Hanna Steel

Source: Jacobson & Associates. Data is for 12 months ending Sept. 30, 2020.