



Alton Steel has repeated as the overall leader among SBQ producers.

(Photo courtesy Alton Steel)

Communication Fosters Customer Satisfaction

Meeting customer needs increasingly includes reliable digital service.

Product quality has long been a basic requirement for meeting customer needs. Mills have difficulty retaining customers if their material quality is not reliable.

Communication with customers has also played an important role in satisfying customers. This role has historically been filled by outside sales representation and inside sales support. Advances in technology have enabled sales professionals to become more responsive while at the same time raising customer expectations for responsiveness.

In recent years, opportunities for mills to differentiate themselves have centered on communication technology in addition to production technology. We now see strong scores in overall customer satisfaction are very often accompanied by strong mill portal satisfaction scores.

Among the most notable trends in mill portal satisfaction are CMC with seven bar mills in the top 12 (the Jacobson Report covers 28 bar mills) and five Nucor sheet mills in the Top 11 (the Jacobson Report covers 27 sheet mills). Atlas Tube, Nucor Tubular and Hanna Steel have differentiated themselves atop the tube mill standings with strong mill portal satisfaction.

While the power and convenience of portals have become a differentiator for many mills, those at the top of the

satisfaction heap continue to be those with the people in both inside and outside sales who score high in satisfying customers. A common scenario for customer communication is portals for inventory and order status info; emails for discussing and placing orders; and phone calls to check in and confirm delivery details.

Post-COVID, some customers have shifted to more reliance on both portals and inside sales, with less reliance on outside sales representation. While product quality will always be the foundation of strong customer loyalty, communication will continue to increase in importance in fostering strong customer relationships.

Top performing mills are utilizing communication technology and practices to help distinguish themselves from their competitors.

Each year, the Jacobson Survey measures steel customer satisfaction, getting input from both service center and end-use customers. Mills are measured over 12 months from Oct. 1 through Sept. 30.

Looking at the overall results, four of last year's top finishers retained their position of prominence with service center and end-use customers. Perennial leader North Star BlueScope topped the competitive sheet field, while Alton

Thoughts on the Leaders... *(customer comments)*

Top Sheet Mills

- NSB is solid all around – if there is some other mill in the world that is better than NSB, they are gonna have to show it to me.
- It's easy to do business with North Star BlueScope – they have a good portal.
- NSB is engaged – their strengths are they are quick to respond with excellent communication skills and top notch customer service.
- North Star BlueScope is our major supplier – they offer support when we need it, an all-around good resource to us.
- North Star BlueScope is a top performer. Every area is a strength for NSB – they are always competitive and their delivery and e-comm are superior to others.
- SDI Heartland is our major supplier -- they are willing to try a lot of things that are different and are working on our professional relationship with us.
- SDI is reputable for on time delivery, very efficient. SDI's product quality is very trustworthy as well. We are working to transition our mill communication to mostly e-comm, but still need to call and email at times.
- Nucor Decatur has great people to work with – enjoy working with their staff, they are very helpful.
- Nucor Decatur has top availability -- very reliable, the best inventory over the years.
- The Techs is our primary supplier. The Techs have great quality and are consistent in fulfilling our demands.
- ArcelorMittal Calvert is consistent - we can count on their quality to be good, and they have also been fairly competitive.

Top Plate Mills

- Nucor Tuscaloosa is our most efficient supplier – their strength is delivery time, it's not perfect but definitely the most consistent.
- Nucor Tuscaloosa's strengths are customer service, on time delivery and quality. Tuscaloosa has jumped through some hoops to get us out of a jam.
- Nucor Tuscaloosa's strengths are their sales team and their ability to deliver on time. They just seem to have their act together right now.
- Nucor Tuscaloosa's strength would be really good lead times, they have quality material and they handle claims very quickly.
- Oregon Steel Mills are dependable -- they emphasize on-time delivery and they communicate well,

■ Oregon Steel Mills has good on-time delivery and supportive inside/outside sales.

Top Bar Mills

- Nucor Birmingham has great product quality, great service and they are quick to deliver.
- Nucor Birmingham is my major supplier due to their superb quality of material, price competitiveness, excellent service, great reputation and good outside/inside sales.
- Our major suppliers are Nucor Florida and Birmingham. Florida and Birmingham team up to fill many of our orders -- they 'ham and egg' it for us beautifully.
- Nucor Birmingham is my primary supplier -- we have a really good relationship with Birmingham and we have for a long time.
- Nucor Jackson's strengths would be good lead times and good stock.
- CMC Tennessee is my primary supplier -- they are our bread and butter, a huge strength is their quality and availability.
- CMC Tennessee is our major supplier because they have available product and their sales force treats me like family.
- CMC Florida is our major supplier -- they are customer friendly. CMC's strengths would be communication, reaction to the market, and product availability.
- Our major supplier is Nucor Nebraska since they are real close and they are very good to work with. Nucor's strengths are their product availability and customer service.

Top SBQ Mills

- Alton's strength is that you can order in smaller quantities. The Alton Steel portal is really easy -- it's quick, fast, simple and gives you all the paperwork you need.
- Alton Steel is our major supplier based on their price and effort. Alton Steel is our best option -- they actually put in the effort to serve us and they aren't unreasonable with prices.
- Alton is our major supplier, they tend to work with us the best and are willing to make changes when needed so we support them with our business.
- Alton is excellent all around, they go the extra mile to compete and take care of us customer service wise.
- SDI's strength is their delivery. SDI's portal is outstanding -- information is readily available and it's accurate, if they have a roll date you can count on it.
- SDI Pittsboro is our major supplier because they're able to produce any grade, diameter,

turned or hot rolled material - so they're pretty versatile and can meet our needs.

■ Our major supplier is SDI Engineered Bar -- they have the best pricing and customer service.

Top Beam Mills

- Nucor Berkeley Beams' strength is their inventory and sales reps -- really great people.
- Our major supplier is Nucor Berkeley -- they are the best option for beams, top inventory and line of product sizes.
- Our major supplier is Nucor Berkeley Beams -- they are very capable and competitive.
- Nucor Berkeley Beams is our major supplier because of their communication -- when I reach out to them, they're pretty speedy with a response to our emails.
- Nucor Yamato is very flexible -- they are the largest beam location for us, they are more flexible for product variety.
- Nucor Yamato is our primary supplier because of their full-scale product availability. Nucor Yamato's strength would be product innovation -- new products and changes to make things better and easier.
- Nucor Yamato is our major supplier due to the range of products they offer.

Top Tube Mills

- Hanna Steel has a good portal and inside sales.
- Hanna's strength is that they are very fast on the customer service side -- if you send an order in you get confirmation right back; they usually have stock.
- Atlas Tube and Hanna Steel are both major suppliers -- they are dependable.
- Our major supplier is Hanna Steel -- they are the best tube supplier. Hanna Steel is excellent -- they do great work, best in tube class.
- Searing Industries has been leading on prices and they have been on time, so they've gotten the most orders from us, pretty simple.
- A lot of our customers ask for domestic material and I find Searing Industries have the largest stock of domestic materials. Searing's strength is their product availability. Between their California and Wyoming locations, I can find what I need.
- Atlas Tube is easy to work. Their e-comm is very efficient.
- Our major supplier is Atlas Tube based on their quality, delivery and e-comm.

Steel (SBQ), Nucor Berkeley (beam) and Hanna Steel (tube) were also repeat winners.

Two Nucor mills jumped into the top spot this year, Nucor Tuscaloosa in plate and Nucor Birmingham heading the field among bar producers.

While North Star Blue Scope, Nucor Tuscaloosa and Nucor Berkeley were the mill of choice for both service centers and end users, there were split votes for the other three products.

In the structural steel category, Nucor Sedalia was No. 1 in customer satisfaction among service centers while Nucor Sedalia topped the end-user list. Gerdau Special Steel was the choice among service centers in the SBQ space, while SDI Engineered Bar led among end users. And among tube producers, Hanna Steel was tops among service center respondents, while Atlas Tube was preferred by end users.

If a producer can't ascend to the top of the overall rankings, progress on that front is the next best thing.

The most improved sheet producer was Stelco, followed by ArcelorMittal Calvert and Big River Steel. Nucor Connecticut was the most improved bar/structural producer, Gerdau Cartersville was the most improved beam maker and Gerdau Special Steel improved the most among SBQ producers. And among tube makers, Wheatland Steel was deemed the most improved.

Nucor Tuscaloosa, which finished first overall in plate, was also the most improved in that category. ■

The Jacobson Survey has been measuring steel customer satisfaction for the past 33 years. He may be reached at (847) 735-7250 or via e-mail at jej@jacobsonsteel.com.

The Leaders

Sheet Mills (27 mills)

1. North Star BlueScope
2. SDI Heartland
3. Nucor Decatur
4. The Techs
5. ArcelorMittal Calvert

Bar Mills (28 mills)

1. Nucor Birmingham
2. Nucor Jackson
3. CMC Tennessee
4. CMC Florida
5. Nucor Nebraska

Beam Mills (6 mills)

1. Nucor Berkeley
2. Nucor Yamato

Plate Mills (9 mills)

1. Nucor Tuscaloosa
2. Oregon Steel Mills

SBQ Mills (8 mills)

1. Alton Steel
2. SDI Engineered Bar

Tube Mills (9 mills)

1. Hanna Steel
2. Searing Industries
3. Atlas Tube

Source: Jacobson & Associates data is for the 12 months ending Sept. 30, 2025.

Most Improved in Overall Satisfaction by Product Category

Sheet Producers

1. Stelco
2. ArcelorMittal Calvert
3. Big River Steel
4. Algoma
5. SDI Heartland
6. North Star BlueScope
7. Cliffs Indiana Harbort
8. USS Midwest
9. Cliffs Middletown
10. SDI Sinton

SBQ Producers

1. Gerdau Special Steel
2. Metallus

Plate Producers

1. Nucor Tuscaloosa
2. Algoma Steel
3. Nucor Hertford

Beam Producers

1. Gerdau Cartersville
2. SDI Structurals
3. Gerdau Virginia

Bar/Structurals Producers

1. Nucor Connecticut
2. Gerdau Whitby
3. CMC Florida

4. Gerdau Cambridge
5. Gerdau Jackson
6. CMC Alabama
7. Nucor Florida
8. CMC Tennessee
9. Nucor Birmingham
10. SDI Roanoke Bar

Tube Producers

1. Wheatland Tube
2. Welded Tube of Canada
3. Bull Moose Tube
4. Searing Industries
5. Atlas Tube

Source: Jacobson & Associates data is for the 12 months ending Sept. 30, 2025.

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Customer Satisfaction Leaders

As Rated by End-Use Customers

Top Sheet Producers

1. North Star BlueScope
2. SDI Heartland
3. The Techs
4. Nucor Decatur
5. SDI Columbus
6. SDI Sinton
7. ArcelorMittal Calvert
8. Cliffs Cleveland
9. Nucor Arkansas
10. Big River Steel
11. SDI Butler
12. Cliffs Indiana Harbor

Top Plate Producers

1. Nucor Tuscaloosa
2. Nucor Hertford
3. SSAB Plate
4. Nucor Brandenburg

Top Bar/Structurals

1. Nucor Birmingham
2. Nucor Jackson
3. Nucor Seattle
4. CMC Tennessee
5. Nucor Utah
6. Nucor Nebraska
7. CMC Florida
8. CMC Texas
9. Nucor Auburn
10. CMC Alabama
11. Gerdau Jackson
12. CMC Arizona
13. CNucor Connecticut
14. Nucor Sedalia

Top Beam Mills

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

Top SBQ Producers

1. SDI Engineered Bar
2. Alton Steel

Top Tube Producers

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

As Rated by Service Center Customers

Top Sheet Producers

1. North Star BlueScope
2. SDI Heartland
3. Nucor Decatur
4. Nucor Berkeley
5. ArcelorMittal Dofasco
6. SDI Butler
7. The Techs
8. ArcelorMittal Calvert
9. Stelco
10. SDI Columbus
11. Big River Steel
12. Nucor Crawfordsville

Top Plate Producers

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

Top Bar/Structurals

1. Nucor Sedalia
2. CMC Florida
3. Nucor Birmingham
4. CMC Tennessee
5. CMC South Carolina
6. Nucor Jackson
7. Nucor Kankakee
8. CMC Texas
9. CMC Alabama
10. Nucor Nebraska
11. CMC New Jersey
12. Nucor Texas
13. Nucor Utah
14. Nucor Seattle

Top Beam Mills

1. Nucor Berkeley
2. Gerdau Cartersville
3. Nucor Yamato

Top SBQ Producers

1. Gerdau Special Steel
2. Nucor Memphis

Top Tube Producers

1. Hanna Steel
2. Searing Industries
3. Atlas Tube