customers during the off-season. Knowing what you’re buying—product, services or both—can go a long way to improve the retailer-farmer relationship.

EXPERTISE COSTS MONEY
“Our biggest challenge is getting more customers to recognize the entire value proposition that we sell,” says Magnuson. “The expertise our employees bring to the table has value. The timeliness and quality of service we provide have value. The convenience of having facilities and equipment ready to go when the farmer is ready has value.

“The value package is more than product price.”

Like many retailers, Magnuson has a two-tiered pricing structure. One is a cash-and-carry price. The farmer picks up the product; there are no returns. Farmers are not buying any agronomist’s time. “It’s an over-the-counter cash transaction, and we expect payment right away,” he explains.

The full-service price includes the agronomist’s time and some level of field scouting. If a producer sees something in the field that he doesn’t like, someone will come out and look at it and work with him to try to find a solution.

“We have win-win customers in both tiers,” says Magnuson. “They match their expectations for service with what they’re willing to pay.

“A few people want to buy a cash-and-carry product but also want us to come out and look at it if a problem turns up midseason. Every retailer has some of those customers,” he says. “They cause us heartburn. Fortunately, they are a very small minority.”

BETTER COMMUNICATION?
You can become a better customer—and perhaps get better deals in the process—by talking more with your retailer, Magnuson says.

“Many retailers, including ourselves, spend a lot of time and effort on newsletters, customer meetings and e-mails, providing information to producers that will be beneficial and profitable for them,” he says. “But that communication often only flows one direction. It needs to flow both ways.

“Frankly we appreciate feedback, positive or negative,” he adds. “Your critics are often your best friends because they will tell you things about your business that you really need to hear.

“We view customers as business partners, and we hope that they view us the same way. We need their help to understand their goals and how they see us helping them achieve those goals,” he explains.

Winner ... or whiner?
Customer quality checklist
Answer yes to these questions and ag retailers will likely go out of their way to help you.

1. Does my ag retailer understand my goals and objectives?
2. Do I understand my ag retailer’s goals and objectives?
3. Am I looking for a win-win situation?
4. Do I look at the relationship with my ag retailer as a long-term relationship?
5. Do I play by the rules? Are my expectations for service consistent with the prices I’m willing to pay?
6. When I have a problem, do I communicate the problem in a timely fashion and work with my ag retailer to find a reasonable solution?
7. Do I pay my bills on time?

Illinois Producer Wins Polaris RANGER
Gardner, Ill., farmer Frank Corsini is the winner of the 2005 Farm Progress Win a Polaris RANGER Drawing, the prize is a new Polaris RANGER™.

Corsini won the Polaris after entering the drawing at the 2005 Farm Progress Show in Decatur, Ill. Polaris Industries and Farm Progress Cos. sponsored the drawing entered by thousands of readers across the country and farmers attending Farm Progress’ farm shows: Farm Progress Show, Husker Harvest Days, Farm Progress Hay Expo and New York Farm Show.

The Polaris RANGER served as the 2005 Official Farm Progress Off-Road Vehicle. Polaris provided a fleet of RANGERS for staff use at Farm Progress’ shows. The RANGER’s power and rugged features provided the hard-working versatility needed to handle all the shows’ challenging field conditions. Polaris RANGER—the Hardest Working, Smoothest Riding Off-Road Utility Vehicle.