



CUSTOMER SERVICE WITH A STRATEGY

With its “Dealer of Tomorrow” strategy, John Deere is supporting its dealer organisation to prepare for upcoming challenges. Its top priority: to further enhance customer service.

Text and photos: Steven Roller



Haig Hamilton does not take long to answer when asked why he is happy with his John Deere dealer: “They’re nearby, they’re technically qualified, and whenever I need them, they are there.”

Having the entire range of services constantly and reliably available is no mean feat. “To be able to do this, a dealership has to be of a certain size otherwise it can be hard to have the specialist capacity, and expertise available,” stresses Owen Lister, John Deere dealer development manager responsible for the UK and Ireland.

Another priority of the “Dealer of Tomorrow” strategy is to bring highly qualified staff close to the customer by having an extensive network of outlets, whilst being able, to centralise administration and other joint work to control overhead costs. “Farms are growing, are being managed more and more efficiently, and are increasingly using technically sophisticated machinery and systems,” explains David Ehlis, department head at John Deere

for dealer development in Europe, CIS, North Africa and near Middle East. “As a result of this development, we have seen a significant increase in demand from customers to us and our dealer organisation. Using this strategy, we want to support dealers to keep on offering first-class service.”

200 YEARS OF EXPERTISE

For Thomas Sherriff & Co. Ltd, looking after its customers’ needs goes back a long time. Sales Director Colin Weatherhead says: “We’ve been in the agricultural equipment business since 1816 and with our six branches we currently look after about 1,600 customers in the East Lothian and Borders region and in Northumberland.” Across this customer base, the sizes of operations range from 70 to 7,000 acres with the average farm size being about 700 acres.

The John Deere dealership covers an area of about 2,300 square miles with 223,000 acres of cultivated land. Their staff of 72 peo-



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- 1 If needed, William Hutchison (right) from the John Deere dealership Thomas Sherriff, is quick to give a hand to his customer Haig Hamilton.
- 2 Thomas Sherriff covers an area of 2,300 sq. miles with six branches in the Scottish East Lothian region.
- 3 The dealership holds most types of John Deere machinery available for test drives, demonstrations and shows.
- 4 Turf equipment for both professional and residential customers complement the agriculture machinery product range.



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ple generated total sales of £24.5 million in 2012, a 24 percent increase since 2009. "In recent years we have developed our services for our customers in many areas. For example, we already have three specially trained people on board for product and aftermarket support and for all questions concerning Deere's Agricultural Management Solutions (AMS), and will soon add a fourth specialist to the team," says Colin.

This high degree of customer support is one of many reasons why Owen Lister says that Thomas Sherriff are an excellent



» We can only be successful in the long term if our customers are satisfied.«

Colin Weatherhead

example of how agricultural equipment dealers are positioning themselves for the future." Their staff and organisational structure are set up professionally with the result that they can meet the ever increasing customer needs, whether in the new or used machinery business, for service or advice."

THE CUSTOMER BASE

Haig Hamilton, who manages the family business J. Haig Hamilton & Sons together with his parents and his two brothers, has been a customer of the Thomas Sherriff dealership for twelve years now. With a green and yellow fleet of six tractors he particularly values the competent advice and support from William Hutchison, Thomas Sherriff's AMS specialist. "I'm constantly exchanging ideas about machines and technology with William. Specialised staff such as William make all the difference in today's world of high-tech agricultural machinery."



above: The livestock side of the Wolfstar family farm is a beef cattle operation, breeding and finishing 180 cattle per year.
right: Wolfstar farmer Alex King appreciates the technical expertise of Thomas Sherriff's engineering staff.



Haig Hamilton farms 2200 acres of arable land, mostly wheat, barley and potatoes in the East Lothian region, south of Edinburgh. The family business also provides contracting services for all types of farming work; they own a paper recycling facility and are currently investing in a wind energy project.

For Alex King, it is the engineering knowledge of Thomas Sherriff's staff that always impressed him. A John Deere customer for 30 years now, he manages the fifth generation family farm together with his wife and son. Their Wolfstar farm, also located in East Lothian, comprises of a beef cattle operation of 400 to 500 head, breeding and finishing about 180 cattle per year, 700 acres

» Thomas Sherriff's strategy to invest in specialised staff is certainly a good one.« *Alex King*

of arable land (malting barley, wheat, and peas) plus 200 acres of permanent grass. They own a John Deere machinery fleet of four 6 series tractors, a T560i combine harvester, a 592 round baler and a mower conditioner. "Their engineers know their machines inside out and they're really competent in everything concerning



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above: Haig Hamilton operates a John Deere fleet of six tractors.
left: Farmer Haig Hamilton (right) with William Hutchison: "Specialised staff such as he make all the difference in the high-tech world of agricultural machinery."

precision agriculture technology. Thomas Sherriff's strategy to invest in specialised staff certainly is a good one," says Alex King. Always looking for ways to work more efficiently, he started to use John Deere's Mobile RTK system in order to benefit from a maximum of guidance accuracy. "I'm very satisfied with the system, it is like night and day compared to the land based signal I used before."

IT IS THE WHOLE PACKAGE THAT COUNTS

Just like their customers, the Thomas Sherriff business is always exploring ways to become more efficient and further improve

their services. "You have to be able to react quickly to your customers' requests, so we increased the number of service technicians and service vehicles. We strive to maintain a high level of professional qualification, so all our technicians take part in the Land based Technician Accreditation (LTA) scheme," says Colin Weatherhead. The company also holds most types of John Deere machines that are available for test drives, demonstrations and shows, but also have short-notice replacement machines, if necessary. Throw in the good geographical coverage with branches, fast and reliable parts availability and you have all the necessary ingredients to be a John Deere Dealer of Tomorrow. ■



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