



The Produce News

Frontera Produce's Jarrod Snider looks at the industry from many angles

by Terry Sokol

Jarrod Snider, the national account manager for Frontera Produce in Dallas, has multiple perspectives on the produce industry.

As a cattle rancher, the 30-year-old runs a business, Progressive Genetics, in Waxahachie, TX, with his father, Charles Snider. The father-and-son operation raises and promotes purebred cattle through exhibitions, annual production sales and the incorporation of such technologies as embryo transfer and artificial insemination.

The livestock deal was his first real job, Mr. Snider said. "I've been doing that from the time I was 14 or so. I think that's where I learned my work ethic -- getting up every morning at 5:30 to take care of livestock before going to school. It's a 24/7 deal. It doesn't matter if it's a holiday or if it's snowing or sleeting.

"Growing up doing these things from the very start, my grassroots involvement was in production agriculture," Mr. Snider continued. "I was meeting people and networking and learning how to communicate."

Also as a young man, Mr. Snider worked in local grocery stores, beginning at age 16 at a Tom Thumb. He soon became involved on the produce side as a clerk.

"I was fascinated by all the different commodities and the different ways the department can merchandise them to stimulate sales," he said.

He ended up putting himself through college working at grocery stores, adding stints with Albertson's and H.E. Butt Grocery Co. to his tenure at Tom Thumb -- "three big Texas retailers," he said. He even spent some of that time as a produce manager.

Being involved with three different chains exposed him to three competitors. Now on the supply side at a leading grower-shipper, "my job is to figure out ways we can, as a company, capitalize on the different strategies of these companies," Mr. Snider said.

His retail experiences gave him a "broad understanding of what they expect from their suppliers," he said. "I truly feel that I started at the base foundation of the business, and that gives me an understanding of what we as an industry are facing - it gives myself and my employer an edge."

Mr. Snider graduated from Texas A&M University in College Station, TX, in 2000 with a degree in agricultural economics, with a focus on food and fiber marketing.

"When I was at A&M, I always said I think the produce industry is such a great dynamic industry because of the leadership opportunities," he said.

Relationships are one of the great things about the industry, he said, noting that he "utilized the Aggie network" to land a position as a business analyst with Standard Fruit from 2000 through



2003. When Del Monte Fresh acquired Standard Fruit in 2002, he was promoted to business analyst and profitability manager.

"At that point, I was able to put together a team of individuals that was strategically involved in managing one of our largest corporate accounts," Mr. Snider said. "I learned the ins and outs of national account initiatives there."

Mr. Snider has been with Frontera for over two years, having started as an account executive before being promoted in November 2006 to national accounts manager.

"My primary role is very involved in developing the strategic analytical framework of our company," he said. "I've been put in a role to help create and manage a progressive business model that will help service our key national customers while leading one of our leading corporate accounts."

He manages a team of eight and is very involved with value-based selling - "trying to come up with new, innovative ways to add value or to sell Frontera's programs based on value rather than traditional transactional business," he said.

Mr. Snider is aware that his age can be a factor in his chosen career. "On the positive side, being relatively young in the industry, I've been able to be a sponge," he said. "The industry is changing right now -- there are a lot of dynamic, good things happening."

On the sales side, he acknowledged that age could be an initial barrier to some relationships with senior buyers. "A lot of times young people are looked at as not having the credibility, but by execution and work ethic and integrity," the younger generation finds acceptance, he said.

The job has its challenges and its rewards. "The most challenging thing is simply managing people," Mr. Snider said. "I manage eight individuals, all of whom have strong personalities and good ideas."

The greatest rewards, he said, come from mentoring individuals and seeing them succeed. To that end, Mr. Snider is involved in Texas A&M's Professor for a Day program, speaking to about 200 students about opportunities in the produce industry. Students are graded in part based on interaction with the speaker, so the question-and-answer sessions get pretty exciting, he said, ranging "from the most basic questions to the most nail-biting questions we as an industry are challenged with. They asked some questions that had me thinking. We had a lot of follow-up with students interested in the produce industry."

Mr. Snider is also actively involved with the United Fresh Produce Association, participating yearly in United's public policy conference held in Washington, DC. He is also a graduate of the 2005 Produce Industry Leadership Program.

Mr. Snider travels "quite a bit" for work, noting that one memorable trip was "with our United leadership class to Culiacan, Mexico. It was a lot of fun -- there were 12 of us total. I got to meet a lot of industry leaders, got to interact with them off-site. It was a learning experience in more ways than one."



Mr. Snider lives in Waxahachie, TX, with his wife, Ellen. "She's very supportive" and has even been to a few produce events, he said. The couple married in August 2003 and are the parents of a young son, Ethan, who was born May 21.

"We love the outdoors," he said. "We have a ranch in south Texas and we love to go down and spend time hunting and fishing.

"I love spending time with the family," he emphasized. "Finding that healthy work-life balance is more of a challenge now."