

Business

Health focus helps premium grocer grow

Convenience is its other selling point.

Service Foods, based in Norcross, 'actually expanded marketing.'

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While the recession has cut into sales at many high-end grocers and restaurants, Norcross-based Service Foods, a premium grocery delivery company, has added business.

Inc. magazine recently ranked the company 998 among fastest-growing U.S. private businesses. Revenue rose about 20 percent last year to \$33 million, said CEO Keith Kantor.

Service Foods has 30,000 customers — up from 20,000 two years ago — in Georgia, Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia, he said.

Started in 1981 as a “butcher on wheels,” the company specializes in providing meats and produce free of hormones, chemicals, preservatives, dyes

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Keith Kantor
CEO of Norcross-based Service Foods

and colorings.

It also delivers common household items such as detergent, garbage bags and toilet paper.

An aggressive marketing strategy started two years ago tries to establish a connection to customers based on helping them build a healthy lifestyle, Kantor said.

The company has a fitness expert, dietician, registered nurse and chef on staff and a visiting doctor each month, and it sends out monthly video recipes and health tips.

It has ramped up sponsorships of events for health or professionals such as doctors, chiropractors, dieticians and personal trainers.

“During the recession, you have to make a decision,” Kantor said. “You can either hunker down, retrench and wait for it [to pass]. Or you can say this is a great time to gain market share. What we did instead of retrenching, we actually expanded our marketing.”

Prices are slightly higher than at a typical grocery store, he said.

“I don’t think you can give people much higher-quality food, deliver it to them, pack it away for them, have all these experts available and be less than Bi-Lo,” Kantor said.

Health and convenience are the major draws, said Kristi DeBrincat, a customer in Woodstock. She and her husband, Mark, have two children. Much of the food comes vacuum-sealed in individual servings.

“It was always a challenge for me to decide ‘What am I going to cook for my family tonight?’” DeBrincat said. “Now, I just open up the freezer. It’s all there.”