

Dover Expansion Good For Industry

CEO says his company's plans will help retailers.

Existing retailers have nothing to fear from a plan by Dover Saddlery to open 50 new English stores across the United States in the next five years.

Speaking in an interview during the Denver Market, Dover CEO Stephen Day said he believes the new stores will actually boost sales for existing stores.

"It has the effect of igniting the marketplace," Day said. "Competitors get a little sharper and suddenly their business goes up rather than down."

Day said truly marginal operators may have more difficulty surviving the challenge Dover's stores will present. "But if you have a good store to begin with, it will only get better," Day added.

The company recently selected the location for its first store, Loudon County, Virginia.

Stores of various sizes are planned, depending upon the size of the market in each location.

Day said he's also hoping his company can overcome the other great challenge retailers face today, that of hiring and retaining qualified customer service associates.


Dover will bring the same level of customer service to its stores that has been implemented for the catalog business, Day said.

The plan is to hire equestrians and people with riding experience.

"They come to work with such a passion and interest in learning," Day said. "We really have a leg up on the process of getting good sales people."

A key will be the hiring of well-qualified managers and assistant managers.

"We have an advantage in this industry in that the manufacturers and their reps are particularly helpful in training," Day said. "We will try to get as much interaction going between them and us."

Dover raised money for the foray out of the catalog world and into retail by going public and selling stock in the business. No firm date for the grand opening of the first store has been set. 



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