

Earth Fare

Related Professionals

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Practices

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Earth Fare, an Asheville-based natural foods grocer, says “Our mission is to feed and inspire the healthy person inside you!”

The benefits of buying from a grocer stocking only foods that are as close as possible from farm-to-table are easy for a consumer to see.

Coming up with the appropriate vendor agreements that both hold vendors to those high standards and are commercially viable is more difficult.

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Mark Knight, the Corporate Practice Group Leader at Nexsen Pruet, has worked with Earth Fare executives for almost a decade. Originally he handled corporate work for the growing grocery, and was praised for his responsiveness and cost-effective service. As a result, the firm’s relationship with Earth Fare expanded in recent years, and Nexsen Pruet has been able to provide services in intellectual property, employment law, construction law, software licensing, real estate leasing, and warehousing agreements.

One of Mark’s most interesting projects for Earth Fare was developing its private label vendor warranty agreements. Mark understood that this warranty was “really important to the company culture and brand position,” so it was of keen importance to him. The warranty requires the vendors to meaningfully share Earth Fare’s commitment to avoid less healthy ingredients such as high-fructose corn syrup; artificial fats, trans fats, colors, flavors, preservatives, or sweeteners; antibiotics or synthetic growth hormones in fresh meat or dairy; and bleached or bromated flour in any of the Earth Fare branded products.

Earth Fare relies on both in-house controls and a “police force” of thousands of loyal customers to identify ingredients from the Earth Fare “Boot List” that might make their way into foods sold at the store. Customers are asked to be on “Boot Patrol” by notifying the company of

any products sold with ingredients from the Boot List. If such products are found, Earth Fare will remove that item from the shelves. Earth Fare is so committed to offering fresh, healthy products that "Boot Patrollers" who find the banned ingredients in Earth Fare foods are rewarded with a \$50 gift card to the store. Under the private label warranty agreement that Mark developed, Earth Fare's vendors also shoulder this commitment.

Holding vendors accountable for their source ingredients is a key value for Earth Fare, and Nexsen Pruet is proud to assist "the healthy supermarket" in ensuring healthy products.