



By Dave Edenfield

Spring 2014 Starts Today

If you want to be successful in 2014, you need to start your strategic planning today!

Spring — we plan for it, we forecast for it, we buy for it, we hire for it, we train for it, we pray for good weather, and we even take vacation before the Spring season starts.

I don't know about you but each year I cannot wait to see the first trucks of products loaded and being delivered to retailers across the country. Most of all I like walking the retail locations and seeing consumers with shopping carts filled with green goods and headed for the cash register and then going out the door.

Start Today

You may think that we made a mistake with the headline of this article but we haven't. I recently had a client ask me a question: How do I fundamentally change my business in order to take the next big step toward being not just a good company but to be a truly great company?

The answer starts today (Spring 2013) to really make the changes for Spring 2014.

We are always thinking about next season and the list of items that we will change to make the next season even better than the one we are in right now. Whether you are an owner or a key manager

in a greenhouse or nursery business, we have a tendency this time of the year to be heads down and completely focused on what has to be done today or this week.

While that is obviously important I would suggest that to take the next big step in Spring 2014 we have to take a hard look at our business today — Spring 2013.

"Dave, that is easier said than done. I have to make sure that everything is getting taken care of today!" While I agree and can relate to that thought and comment, the only way to make a big business change is to start by thinking differently.

Here are a few suggestions for you to consider this spring:

- Have a clear vision and set of aspirations for the future. The next step is to take that vision and aspiration and create a strategy. Roger Martin (Dean of Rotman School of Management) suggests that the heart of developing a strategy is defining where you are going to play and how you are going to win. A lot of companies don't consciously choose who or where not to play. It is imperative to decide where and who we will not sell our products to in order to be both successful and profitable.

- Ask yourself the question: How can our company meet customers' needs like nobody else so they will pay a premium price?

- Consider doing a little less of the day-to-day activities this spring and really let your team step up to the challenge. Leadership is a team sport. We need to develop and build leadership by empowering employees to independently make good decisions.

- Create a culture of innovation. We all know that doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results will not move our company forward. It is imperative that we have a clear vision for the future and that we have communicated that vision to everyone on our team. So what is the secret to creating and maintaining a culture of innovation? It all starts with your team. Develop openness to new ideas (as silly as they may or may not sound). Challenge your team to bring at least one new idea each week to the group for consideration. Take time to look outside of our industry for examples of innovation. You will find that there are a lot of ideas that can be implemented in your business. To make true innovation work, your company must have a clear strategy for the future. It's hard to create a culture of innovation

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because most of us are caught up in the executing and implementing the management of our businesses. What creates real change in a business is innovation.

- I like the old term, “Managing by walking around.” It suggests that good owners and key managers manage their business by spending time on the floor or in the greenhouse watching and directing staffs. I also would suggest that same philosophy will work as you consider the next big business move. I would like you to consider a little bit different spin — “Learning and watching by walking around” with your customers in their businesses and with companies that you enjoy buying items or services from. With open eyes be prepared to identify why you like to do business with those companies and what you can apply to improve and make your

company better in 2014 and beyond.

- Be willing to take a risk with new ideas. I recently read an article from Arianna Huffington (editor in chief of the *Huffington Post*) regarding risk and failure. “Very often success stops people because they are afraid of taking a step that leads to failure.”

My mother used to call failure a stepping stone to success. When you frame failure that way, it changes what you’re willing to do, how you are willing to invent and the risks you are willing to take.”

It’s Never Too Late to Start

To make a major change in your company takes guts, innovation, creativity, and the desire to be better than anyone else at what you do for your customers. It also takes a clear vision for where you want to go and what your company will be known

for — a strategy for the future.

John Mackey (co-founder and co-CEO of Whole Foods) made a couple of observations about creating and making ongoing business decisions. “At Whole Foods whenever we make a decision, we want it to work for all our stakeholders — employees, customers, investors, suppliers, the community and the environment. If it doesn’t, we go back to the drawing board.”

Good thoughts. I hope you have an incredible spring and you are able to take time now to start planning for Spring 2014 and how it will be even better for you, your business and your customers. ■

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INSIDE THE BOX

BIG
GROWER