

The Importance of Planning

When it comes to planning, do you actually have a plan or are you planning to fail?

BY MARK RICHARDSON

Proper planning often determines whether or not you and your company will be successful. As the old adage goes, “If you fail to plan, then plan to fail!”

While this may be a catchy saying, and one I have addressed in previous columns, is it true? It might be, but it doesn’t need to be.

If it were true then many businesses would probably fail. One of the first things business coaches or advisors ask a business owner is “Do you have a business plan?”

Many times those owners are a little embarrassed. They say “No.” However, mysteriously most of those same businesses have managed to survive for more than 10 years.

MOTIVATING FACTORS

While my introductory quote may be too bold and not be totally true, I think there is a big upside to planning your business. Try to draw parallel to a world you understand (growing plants). This will not only help you to understand the benefit of investing some time in planning but also give you a simple process (like growing) that you are very familiar with. There are many simple business planning tools but the process should begin really drilling into some key questions.

Why am I in the plant business? Believe it not there are so many answers to this question. Your “why” is probably a blend of many elements. But for most growers the whys differ and the owners’ motivations vary.

How do I want to feel in three to five years? The key word here is “feel.” Many business advisors will ask, “Where do you want to be in three to five years?”

This is where the planning process comes off the track and gets paralyzed. Most cannot predict the future with any real confidence, but most can articulate how they want to feel. They may want more financial freedom or be spending more time on



creative and innovative endeavors. It is not very hard making a list of these feeling or a list of the flip side of how you “do not” want to feel.

What are some of the other things that are important for you to see in the future? Like with many of your customers you need to get buy in and alignment from everyone in the planning process. Your management team or key team members are important to the success of your business vision or plan. Make sure you spend the time to involve them in the process. This does not mean to heavily compromise your vision but it will make accomplishing the plan much easier if they are aligned with you.

THE RIGHT DIRECTION AT THE RIGHT SPEED

Once you have taken some time to reflect and discuss the many “what’s it all about questions,” then make sure your business trajectory is heading that direction and at the right pace.

This can be accomplished with a simple budget. Again ironically you would never commit to a contract with a client without knowing how much it is going to cost you and your company. However, when it come to the business this is not always true.

Try to develop a simple dashboard (like the one you have in your car) of the three to five key indicators (leads/sales/labor/inventory/client satisfaction) to monitor your progress. The profit will be there if the indicators are on track. But don’t be obsessed with these gauges and make a note to yourself to review them weekly. Then make adjustments in the actions and behaviors to stay on track.

You may not be failing as a result of not asking these questions or not using some simple budgeting tools. You are however probably not being as successful as you could be. You may lose some great team members because of their lack of confidence in where the business is heading and have a clear plan or map.

You may be experiencing additional personal stress that comes from just not knowing the future or not being able to control your destiny. If you just do what you advise your customers to do (plan) you cannot help but end up with a better outcome or product. ■

Mark Richardson is an author, columnist and business growth strategist. He authored the best-selling book, “How Fit is Your Business,” as well as his latest book, “Fit to Grow.” Both books are available at www.amazon.com.

EDITORIAL

Tim Hodson Editorial Director
616.520.2161 • thodson@greatamericanpublish.com

Jasmina Dolce Managing Editor
616.520.2162 • jdolce@greatamericanpublish.com

Abby Kleckler Retail Editor
616.520.2163 • akleckler@greatamericanpublish.com

Ana Olvera Assistant Editor
616.520.2171 • aolvera@greatamericanpublish.com

Greg Ryan Multimedia Designer
616.520.2145 • gryan@greatamericanpublish.com

ADVERTISING

Bob Bellew Vice President, Group Publisher
616.520.2164 • bbellew@greatamericanpublish.com

Amanda McAdam Brown Integrated Media Consultant
708.560.4046 • amcadam@greatamericanpublish.com

Kim Sammartino Integrated Media Consultant
630.901.4735 • ksammartino@greatamericanpublish.com

Samantha Orsi Production Assistant
616.520.2148 • sorsi@greatamericanpublish.com

STAFF

CORPORATE OFFICE 616.887.9008

Kim Meyers Classified Advertising Manager
616.520.2137 • kmeyers@greatamericanpublish.com

Becky Stovall Audience Development
616.520.2138 • bstovall@greatamericanpublish.com

Sally Ostman Business Manager
616.520.2136 • sostman@greatamericanpublish.com

Matt McCallum CEO
mmccallum@greatamericanpublish.com

AD INDEX

ADVERTISER	PAGE
Benary	C2
Berger Peat Moss	5
BioWorks Inc.	9
MasterTag	7
SBI Nursery Software	C3

GPN accepts no responsibility or liability for the validity of information supplied by contributors, vendors, advertisers or advertising agencies.