

State of Your Business — Growth or Decline

There's nothing more satisfying than running a successful business and seeing the results. What's more challenging is doing it year after year. Running any successful business takes teamwork; even a solo entrepreneur can't do it alone. Somewhere behind the scenes, they have help — we all do.

Now that the new business tax breaks are here, what is the current state of your business? Will the tax breaks help or do very little? Is your business growing with the help of your team or declining? You are now at a crossroad; what do you do with the windfall?

INVEST AND REINVEST

We know quite a few people in our industry who plan on retiring soon. So if that is the plan, would trying to grow the business make sense? Perhaps, if they plan on selling it off or if the next generation of the family is taking over. If the plan is to close down completely, then they are in a declining mode.

To grow a business, you have to invest in it and keep reinvesting — not only in the structure(s) but your employees as well. You need a good foundation to do business, and both the greenhouses and the employees need to be structurally sound. Investing in your employees is well worth doing and usually gives you a big ROI.

DO YOU HAVE A BUSINESS PLAN?

The state of your business really relies on several topics no matter the size. You should be following your business plan; you do have a business plan ... right? This is your roadmap, and you can change it as you go, reaching goals and milestones. If you do not have a plan, you end up scrambling to handle problems as they arise. If you do not have a plan, you can become lost in day-to-day details. If you do not have a plan, you cannot really handle outright success.

It seems counter-intuitive to have to plan for success but you do need one. Success can be as traumatic to your business as failure if you do not plan ahead. While you are planning for success, don't forget to plan to reward key employees — which boils down to everyone in the business. This will build a stronger team since they are recognized for their contributions and see the benefits. What are you going to do with the success? Improve your business as a whole — reinvestment, buy more structures, upgrade them, hire a quality control manager, invest in better equipment/technology? Or just put it into your own pocket?

EMPLOYEE SUPPORT AND EDUCATION

Are you and your employees attending some of the trade shows or educational conferences to stay up on the latest technology, equipment, products and trends in the consumer market etc. Over the past 15 years, a lot of trade shows have closed up in our industry but at the same time there are still quite a few out there. Some of them are even growing and thriving as they meet the needs of our industry today and help form our future. Pick and choose which ones work best for you whether it is the time of year, location or focus of a specific show. Success relies on constant new input of ideas and awareness of new challenges as they develop.

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With the new tax break for businesses, many are reinvesting in their company by automating (purchasing new equipment), paying off huge loans on existing equipment and some even giving raises to employees. Think about paying for employee education when someone has an interest in going to a junior college or in taking online courses. Even paying a percentage or maybe covering costs of books/supplies helps an employee; this says a lot about your commitment to them and means a lot. This will help the business grow.

I remember talking to an interiorscape business owner quite a few years ago, and he told me that, "I will never invest in these people, they are here today and gone tomorrow." I bet 15 years later that company is either still struggling or no longer in business. What a bad attitude. No wonder people left as soon as they could; he didn't give them any reason to stay.

Owners should always be asking themselves, "How can I (we) grow the business, what do we need to do? What can we eliminate, and what do we need to improve?" Look at your overall efficiency; it's not all about the bottom line every day. Money is not always the answer either. Some things cost little or nothing but greatly improve the business atmosphere or efficiency.

Any company that has a solid foundation with a good business plan, that reinvests in that business, promotes employee participation and generously supplies benefits can pretty much weather any economic storm. [gpn](#)



Chase Agricultural Consulting, LLC was formed in 2011 by Ann (A.R.) Chase and Mike Zemke. Ann has more than 35 years experience in research, diagnostics and practical consulting in plant pathology. She has been retired from the University of Florida since 1994 but remains on staff as a Professor Emeritus. Mike holds an Associate of Applied Science in manufacturing drafting and started his education in horticulture when he and Ann were married in 1995. He specializes in communications of all sorts within the industry.