

# Is Your Grower Involved in Your New Greenhouse Build?

**All too often**, when you're halfway through building a new greenhouse, change orders begin to come through. The owner wants to add booms, but it requires larger bottom chords on trusses or larger bar joists, or a secondary light deprivation system to prevent light pollution to the neighboring residents requires a taller greenhouse to accommodate.

Costs start to increase for design changes and material sizing, time frames move past the original date and frustrations mount on both sides. So, what causes this? Primarily, design changes occur due to the grower being left out of the initial conversation on a new greenhouse design and build.

At Nexus and RBI, besides the typical project managers and designers, we have horticulturists on staff to help growers along the way. We specialize in floriculture crops, nursery crops, cannabis/hemp/hops, and vegetables. In this case, when our outside sales team starts a conversation about a prospective greenhouse build, the sales team can work out several scenarios with the help of our horticulturists to help ease the owner's mind about what they can get for their budget. Up front, owners will know what is needed so that the crop will be ready on time, and the greenhouse is designed to their budget and to their grower's preference.

## GROWER CONSULT IS CRUCIAL

When design discussions first start, it is important to bring in your grower for a brainstorming session. Ask for the What's, How's, and Why's. What do you have in your greenhouse you currently like/dislike? How will (insert technology) allow you to increase productivity, plant timing and yield? Why will this help grow or be more efficient?

A seasoned grower will know your greenhouse inside and out. They know where microclimates happen, what and where irrigation systems, heating and ventilation systems work best, and where workers find it is easier to move throughout the greenhouse.

I have seen new companies start up with no grower hired and owners running in head first to get the greenhouse built and up and running. Once a grower is potentially hired and construction is about to begin, the grower wants changes to reflect what they

know how to use, and preference for the crop they are growing. This leads to a multitude of problems and ends up causing frustration between owners and growers, often resulting in them parting ways before the first crop is grown. Mitigating potential issues early on will make the construction process easier.

As a former grower, I use the phrase, "The person at the end of your hose can make or break your business." This might sound dated with boom and irrigation systems, but it can apply to your new greenhouse as well. In the last year, I've walked

into a recently built greenhouse and noted in the far corner that their petunia crop was out of control compared to its siblings a walkway over.

The grower told me that they did not have the ability to get growth regulators to that corner of the greenhouse because of the way the aisles were designed/installed. By talking up front and planning for this, they could have added enough space for an additional walkway, gantry or greenhouse extension to get

to that corner. How much money is now being lost to space maximization and seasonal crops not getting what they need?

Keeping the grower informed during construction will help. Most operations tend to begin growing right away to start paying off the new greenhouse. Make sure all key personnel are available for punch list items, and any trainings set up to operate vents, computer control systems and fertigation systems. As with any technology, greenhouses are constantly evolving and changing. Make sure to include space for mechanical rooms if needed. Inching out extra space for propagation or greenhouse space could severely impact required space for these rooms, causing major headaches later.

## WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

Finally, keep in mind future expansions. If you have plans to expand the greenhouse, discuss with the company and growers how to future proof. This could be as simple as setting posts, or adding additional electrical, irrigation, and gas lines ready to go and connect to a new house. Any setback can be eliminated early in the design phase, and unexpected costs are kept to a minimum. By having our in-house horticulturists, we know where you as an owner and grower are coming from and you know what to expect out of your next greenhouse build. [gpn](#)



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