

The NEW GAME of Business



Business is changing. Do you have the right game plan to be successful in the future?

BY MARK RICHARDSON

It has often been said that “business is a game ... the greatest game in the world.” Whether you agree with this is not important, but when you begin to think about games you really understand then try to relate it to the business you do (producing and selling plants) you might be able to understand your business better and make better decisions.

Your biggest competitor in business today is not the other growers, it might just be you. Are you living in the past? Are your business leadership skills up to date and still relevant in the game or are you still playing in the past?

GAME CHANGERS

There are so many examples in sports of how the playing field has changed the game and then strategies to play those games changed — the three-point shot in basketball; the designated hitter rule in baseball; the passing West Coast offense in professional football, or even now when college football players can jump from team to team.

Well, the business game is changing, too.

In a recent panel discussion that I participated in, one of the speakers described sales and production in the past as being like a relay race, where sales would do their thing out in the field then solidly pass the baton to production to run the next lap.

That connection was ideally clean and, while sales would cheer production on, they were not really on the track while production was doing their thing in the greenhouse. Industry veterans would dogmatically tell you this was the only way to do it in a healthy way and see success and consistency.

Today, however, as the speaker highlighted, is more like a soccer game where you had all the players on the field together. Today, you have sales leveraging the help of production as a sales tool to differentiate the business.

Today, production and sales would move down the field in each other’s zones to try to support and play a role in each other’s world. When you see the type of game changing you begin to play it differently.

ARE YOU READY FOR THE GAME?

This dynamic I am describing has existed in some small companies in the past; the more you begin to change the paradigm, the more successful (and less frustrated) you will be.

So, here are a few tips and thoughts that I recommend:

- 1. Think** — spend more time thinking about your business and how things are changing, not just doing the projects.

Try to carve out 30 minutes every day and concentrate on thinking about your business.

- 2. Discuss** — Have some fun with this topic in your meetings. Have the team pick a sport and articulate how it relates to the horticulture industry and your business of the past and the future.

- 3. Change** — I know it is hard to change, but if you do not, in six months you might regret it. Years ago, a friend said, “Change or become irrelevant!” Being irrelevant is not only the kiss of death, but it is also the great insult.

So, in closing ask yourself, what is your sport? What can you learn from how it has evolved and changed? While this game of business might be frustrating, “it is the greatest game there is.” ■

Mark Richardson is an author, speaker, columnist and business growth strategist. He has written several books on business management, including “How Fit Is Your Business?” and “Fit to Grow.” His latest book is “Control Your Day Before It Controls You: The 7 Steps to Mastering Your Time.” All of his books are available on amazon.com. He can be reached at mrichardson@mrichardson.com.

EDITORIAL

Editor Jasmina Dolce
616.520.2162 • jdolce@greatamericanpublish.com

Retail Editor Teresa McPherson
616.520.2163 • tmcperson@greatamericanpublish.com

Hemp & Cannabis Editor Ana Olvera
616.520.2171 • aolvera@greatamericanpublish.com

Editorial Director Tim Hodson
616.520.2161 • thodson@greatamericanpublish.com

ADVERTISING SALES

Integrated Media Consultant - West Coast Kim Sammartino
616.520.2173 • ksammartino@greatamericanpublish.com

Integrated Media Consultant - East Coast Tiffany O’Kelley
616.520.2172 • tokelley@greatamericanpublish.com

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

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

PRODUCTION

Client Success Representative Jolan Godfrey
616.520.2148 • jgodfrey@greatamericanpublish.com

Multimedia Designer Amanda Mackey
616.520.2157 • amackey@greatamericanpublish.com

Creative Director Kristina Howell
616.520.2168 • khowell@greatamericanpublish.com

CIRCULATION

Audience Development Becky Stovall
616.520.2138 • bstovall@greatamericanpublish.com

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CORPORATE — Corporate Office 616.887.9008

CFO & Director of Human Resources Deb Carnes
616.520.2169 • dcarnes@greatamericanpublish.com

COO & Chief Marketing Officer Kimberly Baker
616.520.2135 • kbaker@greatamericanpublish.com

CEO Matt McCallum
mmccallum@greatamericanpublish.com

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