

GROWERTALKS

Growers Talk Business

1/1/2019

Rinse & Repeat—Great Instructions

Abe VanWingerden

I was preparing for our company year-end/year-beginning meetings with our teams, I was struck by how many of my notes/presentations from the year before were still very relevant. These things that we do every year to run our businesses really form a set of guiding principles that we can use to motivate our teams. Much of what our teams do is a repeat of the year before (sticking similar weeks, similar holiday event prep, etc.), but we need to find unique and more effective ways to make this a passion for people on our teams.

Everyone wants to be the one to come up with the “big idea,” but there are only so many of them, and our businesses only thrive when our teams embrace the benefit of the daily discipline task that really drive us. This daily discipline is followed by a culture and reputation of reliability that creates confidence both with your customer and within your teams that you’re a “get-things-done” kind of person or team. This is highly valued in the marketplace, but under-reported or under-valued by many of our teams. How many times do you catch yourself saying: “We did this last year—does anyone have that file/paper on that?” or “Just do what we did last year” and then your team scrambles to try to remember.

Four things we’re doing this upcoming year to encourage that culture, discipline and reliability within our team:

1) Have a tracking system of what you did the year before. In many cases, you should/can create a manual of what you do for specific events. It can be simple things like what to do to prepare for a meeting and that can also apply for big things like employee performance reviews. Another trick that many of my team uses is to go back one year in your email sent box and look at the emails you sent that week the year before, or put in Outlook calendar events that are recurring to remind yourself of the activity you need to repeat to drive the business. Either way, create a system that allows to track these moments so you created a process that allows you to drive that discipline.

2) The leader has to model the behavior you want to create. For example, if you agree to a daily crew leader meeting before each shift, assure it happens daily. Work ahead of time on agenda items and creative ways to deliver the information to assure each daily meeting is unique and valuable. Have themes that get people looking forward to the meeting. If your teams see you modeling this behavior in both your communication and actions, they’re significantly more likely to follow your lead.

3) Reward behavior that shows this discipline. Too many times, we reward the “new thing” even if the new thing hasn’t yet delivered any new business or cost savings. Results should matter and it’s vital that your teams know this. If you reward the result that your team was able to get all 52 weekly reports out on time with no errors, then it encourages other groups to do the same. This is vital in business, as we never know which one of the 52 reports

will be the one that delivers the next big idea or sale. But if your teams/customers know it's going to be there every week at the same time, it'll drive that reliability that leads to big ideas and sales. Advise and encourage your teams about the importance of daily/weekly discipline in all of their work, and if you call it out on a consistent basis, behavior will quickly change.

4) Don't reward chaos-management wins. For example, if you have deliveries that consistently run late, don't reward the driver who took an extra run to get it there "less late." Dig into the source of the issue and find solutions so trucks aren't consistently late. You'll never get out of a bad cycle of chaos management if you put your resources on rescuing the situation each time vs. spending money and time on developing root-cause analysis that fixes the issue. Calling out the person/team that only helps the situation right in front of you discourages others from finding root causes (a tougher thing to do) that create a new process and new behavior.

None of these ideas are unique or new, but instituting a culture where daily discipline to the work at hand is valued and rewarded can be a big win for your business. It will motivate your teams to be working on the right things, and it will probably free up time/energy to work on coming up with the next big idea since your teams will be engrained in their daily work so well. **GT**

Abe VanWingerden spent eight years working for Procter & Gamble in Sales and Marketing and is now part owner and President of Sales/Marketing at Metrolina Greenhouses, Huntersville, North Carolina.