

GROWERTALKS

Growers Talk Business

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Another Decade

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As we've now entered 2020, it's time to look forward to the next decade. If you think back to 2010, we were in a recession, the iPad was just released, the stock market was at 11,000 and unemployment was at 9.6%! Wow, things have changed dramatically in 10 years and today we sit in an economic expansion, the stock market is at 28,000, unemployment is at 3.8% and the iPad is OLD.

So, as we look to 2030, where's our industry going, what are the new trends going to be and what will we look like in the future? Our team has spent the last six months asking ourselves those same questions, along with our normal annual planning and forecasting.

Looking at how we handled this last decade can give us some view in how we can handle an unpredictable future that could turn either way. The good

thing the last 20 years has shown us is that our product has proven to be relatively recession-proof compared to other higher-end luxury goods. We had good years in the early 2000s, good years from 2008 to today. How did this happen with so many economic swings?

This comes from a general consumer sentiment that says, "In an upturn, gardening is a great hobby and I can invest disposable income into it." And in a downturn, consumers cut out higher end things like golf, travel and eating out that allows them "disposable time" where a low-dollar investment, high time-investment hobby like gardening still thrives. Yes, we have to change our mix to more basic items in a downturn, and we can push the higher end in the upturn, but from a hobby standpoint, gardening tends to stay solid through any economic cycle.

With that as a backdrop, the core message is that we have to control what we can control.

- **Mission.** As a starting point, you need to come up with a one- to two-sentence mission statement of the values and aims of your company or organization. A huge company like Walmart has as their mission: "Save people money so they can live better," which is a transformation off of their original mission of: "The lowest prices anytime, anywhere."

You can see the subtle change of what they stand for in the new mission statement and how their work impacts their consumers' lives verses the singular price focus of the past. This is something any company of any size can do and that's what each of us need to do as we head in this new decade to help guide us.

- **Values.** A company should always have a set of values they stand for. Things like people, innovation, integrity, safety and quality are all good values, but we each have to do the work of seeing what fits for our companies and how we want to share them with our teams.

For example, Amazon's core values are: 1) customer obsession; 2) frugality; 3) bias for action; 4) ownership; and 5) high bar for talent. You can see those values come out every day in the way Amazon introduces product and markets itself to consumers.

Again, similar to your mission statement, you have to know what your company stands for (or ask your company you work for what they stand for) to be able to quickly articulate to your teams what your values are as a company. If you don't have a set of core values, ask your team to brainstorm and see what they think your company values are.

- **Strategy.** You have to talk about what your strategies are, the goals to put numbers/dates behind those strategies and then measures to assure you're tracking towards achieving those goals. Are you a growth company or a stagnant company? Are you going to grow organically or via acquisition? Are you cutting costs as a percentage of sales or do you feel good about your cost levels and need to drive more revenue? Do you have a strategy for your employees when it comes to training and retention? Are you pursuing a 100% online strategy or are you reinvesting in drawing the consumer to your place of business? (Or is it both?)

The year 2020 can be a great year and 2020-2029 can be a great decade, but what's your plan of action to navigate through the decade? **GT**

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