GROWERTALKS

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When Opportunity Knocks, You've Got To Open the Door

Susie Raker



(Editor's note: I'm extremely excited to welcome Susie to our GrowerTalks *contributing staff, where she'll be sharing her experiences and clever insights into what running a greenhouse operation is all about.—JZ)*

So here we are. My inaugural article for *GrowerTalks*. When the opportunity to write articles for one of our prestigious industry publications presented itself, I jumped right on it with a resounding yes, as I do with many requests to be involved in various activities. And once again, after committed, I sat shaking my head asking myself, "Why did you do that?" Pretty typical of how I live my life and run a business. Jump right in, unafraid to take a risk, feel uncomfortable and then make it work.

I've spent countless hours racking my brain for article ideas and perusing the GrowerTalks archives reading past articles. While reviewing, I discovered multiple articles written by my Uncle Gerry. And down the rabbit hole of reading them all I went. What a gratifying way to spend several hours.

While reading, I reflected on many things. The first is how lucky I am to have him as a big influence in my professional career. I often ask myself, "What would Gerry do? But how would Susie do it?"

Secondly, although some of those articles he wrote are over 16 years old, they're still very relevant in today's business environment.

One article in particular spoke to me on the day as I, a member of the next generation of GrowerTalks contributors, began to write: "When Opportunity Knocks, Execute." The reason this article spoke to me is because I feel one of my main responsibilities to Raker-Roberta's is to find and develop opportunities.

I find myself spending much of my time thinking about opportunities. What opportunities are worth the risk? What are the ramifications of that opportunity going to be? What other opportunities will the current opportunity bring forward? Is this opportunity the right fit for our team at Raker-Roberta's Young Plants? Is the timing of the opportunity right for us as a company? Do we have the management bandwidth to execute effectively and efficiently? What do we want the outcome of this opportunity to be? Is this a true opportunity or is it just a distraction?

While our management team has learned many positive lessons from our history as C. Raker & Sons, we are no longer that company. We work very hard to use our history while not allowing it to dictate our future. We know who

we are, we know what we're good at. We're quick to act and execute. We strive to not overthink. We sit down as a team to discuss the details of the opportunity as we know it and determine if we can do the opportunity justice.

Opportunity in business most often comes from a gap in the market where there's the potential to do something different and create value. Some opportunities are presented and other opportunities must be sought. How does one know if an opportunity is worth it? For us at R2, it's all about short-, mid- and long-term potential. The first questions we ask are can we fill that short term need and can we execute it well?

The next question is what the potential for this opportunity is in the near future (one to three seasons out). Is it a one-season opportunity or is there an opportunity for development in the future?

The final question is, what might this opportunity morph into three to five to seven years from now? Due to the seasonality of our business, we often only get one opportunity a year to make something work. And that one season can make or break the future of that opportunity.

At the end of the day, one will never know if a business opportunity is worth it. But if you never take a risk, you'll never know. To quote "The Gambler" by Don Schlitz, "You got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away and know when to run." **GT**

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