

GROWERTALKS

Growers Talk Business

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Bursting at the Seams

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In the past year, we've seen our industry consolidate and some unexpected contraction. Some of the most recent activity is Color Point selling out to hemp operations, natural disasters such as hurricanes and tornados, and also bankruptcy. It makes you stop and think: What does it really take to be successful and profitable?

As our industry continues down its current path, it also makes you think: How big is too big? Is it worth squeezing everything to the point you're bursting at the seams? It also makes you consider the question: Is bigger profitable? Is our current business with big box retailers worth the effort?

Over the last several years, we've seen big box retailers continued to consolidate their sources for consistency of product and service. This gives them the ability to manage vendors, cost and retail outlets. As a vendor, we try to achieve the three Fs—fast, flexible and focused. This mentality is used for all of our customers. We try to do the best we can and service them at the highest level. But how much is too much?

With our current poinsettia crop, we're bursting at the seams. You ask yourself: How can this happen? Is it because our sales team is so amazing or is it because everyone around us has chosen a different business model and retailers are scrambling for space?

So where do we go from here? We look at it as you either grab a piece of the pie or someone else will. Even though we don't have the space on paper, we'll work as an effective company to double space and then re-space to make sure we meet our customer's quality needs.

Being effective is doing the right thing extremely well. It also means for one to be self-aware and really watch what's going on in your business. You have to be aware of the changing landscape and be ready to pounce on opportunity. Being effective also gives you the opportunity to see what's going on in your business and then have the ability to choose the path it takes to be successful.



It's funny ... we joke around the greenhouse about how some of our older employees will say, "That's not how Norwin would have done it" or "That's not how we've done it in the past." Change is hard and it's very hard for the many who've worked with us for years and have dealt with transitions from one generation to the next.

How do we stop the dated mentality? Let us ask ourselves: Are we focusing on the basics of our business? As a large grower, we can get caught forgetting the basics it takes to be successful. Our customers need us as much as we need them, so why do we have to make it so hard? Bottom line is they need value. They need something that sets them apart from everyone else, and if it's not from you, it'll be with someone else.

Pictured: Norwin and Shirley Heimos, 1951, with their new marriage, business and a lot of determination!

So what does it take to change this mindset and be successful? Core values—it's how my parents started their business in 1951 and it's what we as successors need to strive for. We pride ourselves on a strict set of values: customer service, quality, meeting deadlines, commitment to our employees and willingness to listen.

Ask yourself—do you and your teams understand the customer expectation? If you don't, then you've forgotten a critical part of your success story. Sometimes we all need to reboot and get back to basics, focus on the task in front of us and ask the question, "Is this good for the customer?" If not, then you should be finding a way to do something better.

Bottom line, quality will always sell. Big box retailers are going to expect and buy quality. But as we get bigger and squished in by too much product and not enough space, is our quality control being left behind? We have a real opportunity to separate our business from others by going back to our core values and produce a product that our parents would be proud of and our customers would be proud of buying.

This bring me back to the beginning—is it worth it to be bursting at the seams? Yes, it is, if you can stay focused on the business fundamentals and on the customer's expectations. Be ready to take advantage of the market's opportunities. Be effective in your leadership to your staff, and use your time and talents to guide your employees. Be flexible to change and the size of your company will be at an advantage in the future. **GT**

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