

GCLP Webinars

The Journey from Start-up to A Million Dollars

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Jenny Hardgrave

jenny@simplyflowersinc.com ☎ 770-480-2716

Things I've learned to improve success and profits:

- **Passionately love what you do!** (It shows, and it's contagious!)
- **Focus on your clients, not your profits.**
 - **When you help a client solve a problem, the profits will come.**
 - **Listen intently. Take notes on the conversation. Follow up the meeting with notes in writing. Make sure you and the customer agree.**
 - **Put yourself in the customer's shoes and you will ALWAYS make the right decisions**
 - **Understand your client's expectations for a job well done and execute! Sometimes we spin our wheels on details that are unimportant to the customer.**
 - **Realize that mistakes are often opportunities to show a customer just how good you really are. Sales recovery can sometimes have a greater impact on your reputation than just a nice job.**
 - **Suggested reading: Delivering Knock Your Socks Off Service by Performance Research Associates
Knock Your Socks Off Service Recovery by Ron Zemke and Chip R. Bell**
- Know your costs
 - Base your prices on your costs, not on your competition's numbers
 - Remember the overhead costs have to be covered! (Trucks, gas, lease, office personnel, insurance, electric bill, etc.)
 - Consider hiring a consultant to help you set this up.
 - UGA has resources for pricing landscape services. Check out this link:
<http://www.hort.uga.edu/extension/programs/CEJBW/index.html>
- You are valuable, too!
 - **Biggest mistake new owners make: undervaluing themselves**
 - Profits look great when you're an owner/operator. How will they look when field staff is added?
- No entrepreneur is an island
 - Get involved
 - Urban Ag Council, Georgia Green Industry Association, GCLP
 - Local Chambers
 - Webinars/Seminars/Trade Shows
 - Peer Groups
 - Community projects
 - Read! A good place to start: The E-Myth Revisited by Michael Gerber
 - You can't do it all – ask for help. Associate with experts in your areas of weakness.
 - CPAs, banks, bookkeeping, attorneys, paperwork/filing, proposal generation, sales, pricing, design, etc.
 - Consider subcontracting some elements of jobs that are time-consuming or beyond your expertise. If an industry professional were doing this job, how could you and your staff make money elsewhere?

- Remember opportunity costs. Spend your time where it will make you money.
- Develop a business plan
 - Include structure, budgets, sales plan, human resources, banking relationships, accountability, training, and systems
 - Don't fall in love with your plans
 - Goal setting is great, but be flexible. Be ready for the unexpected.
- Be honest
 - Can't always meet those 30-day terms? You're not alone. Talk to your vendors and give them a realistic repayment schedule. Answer the phone. Tell the truth. More likely than not, they'll work with you when you're up front with them.
 - Sell your expertise. Call in an expert when it's over your head. **Clients love honesty!**
 - Keep your promises. ALWAYS.
- Budget and follow it
 - Don't know how? Hire a consultant to help.
 - Gauge yourself against your budget regularly.
 - Understand how a budget works. If you haven't met your sales goal, you will need to adjust your expenses proportionately.
 - Reforecast as needed, even if it's mid-term
- Minimize Debts – don't let your acquisitions outpace your sales
- Contracts!
 - Hire an attorney to write your basic contract.
 - Get a contract signed for every job, every time.
- Stay in touch with colleagues
- Keep learning, keep improving