

Western Lifestyle

You're being tested for 2016 in this current down cycle

BY KEVIN SPAFFORD



DOWN cycles represent a multitude of opportunities for those who are prepared to act. It's the "preparing to act" that seems to stymie most. Ask any professionals

engaged in farming, ranching or agribusiness about their business plan, and you may get a blank stare with a half-interested shrug of the shoulders. However, planning is important, and preparing for opportunity is smart business.

There are a few basic avenues for business development and growth. You may consider growing the operation in size (i.e., add more acres), but that's a difficult suggestion given today's land values and rent costs. On the other hand, you may devise a niche product or specialization. Many farmers are tapping into the local food movement and developing a branded product to sell directly to consumers. Through specialized skills and/or equipment, you may consider offering custom farming services to neighboring farmers and other producers.

Whether your objective is to grow the operation, develop the business or capture an opportunity, you should start with a complete written business plan. The act of creating a plan helps you decide which direction to take, the actions necessary for success, the investment required, a timeline for achievement and an expected bottom-line result. A business plan is comprised of 10 basic parts, including:

1. Have a vision. Define in writing the



ideal the farm is striving to achieve as it serves the end customer. What does the operation look like, how is it perceived in the community, who works there and how do they feel about the work environment, etc.?

2. Know company history and guiding values. Describe the founder's ideals, express what motivates the desire for achievement, define the work ethic, list the character traits associated with the personnel and comment on methods used to manage the operation.

3. Analyze the strengths of the operation. What are the distinct and difficult-to-replicate strategic advantages of this particular operation? Analyze people, resources, materials, intellectual capital, experience, operational advantages and anything else that may give this operation an edge in the marketplace.

4. Analyze the weaknesses of the operation. Focusing on weaknesses allows you to see the operation unemotionally — not as you wish it to be, but as it really is. Some things that limit growth cannot be overcome, and we shouldn't spend a lot of time or money trying.

5. Analyze the opportunities for the operation. Examining the strengths of the operation may give us an idea of what is possible. Looking deeper, we can see what is most profitable and if we can create a pathway to the market. There may be a multitude of unexplored opportunities that, until now, were hidden or well-disguised.

6. Analyze the competition in the current and prospective market. The possi-

bilities are as endless as your imagination, but a keen eye on the competition and trends in the market will determine best actions and profitable positions.

7. Define specific goals and objectives. Goals are the steppingstones of achievement. Nothing is achieved without them, and everything is possible with them. Business objectives must be specific, measurable and timed.

8. Have an action plan to accompany each goal. Each goal is supported with a complete set of action steps to accomplish the goal. Some objectives can be overwhelming, but a complete set of action steps will help you to focus on the actions necessary for achievement.

9. Set a budget. Change isn't cheap. Growth is an investment to manage judiciously. What is the cost, what time period will it cover and where will the money for a business investment come from?

10. Have a review schedule. Regular reviews with constant refinements may be the key to consistent growth and long-term success. A scheduled follow-up and a fresh look will cause all decision-makers to respond to opportunities and remain accountable for results.

In 1854, Dr. Louis Pasteur said, "Fortune favors the prepared." For farmers, ranchers and agribusiness owners, the prepared are those who have written a plan, know where they're going, and are able to discern between an opportunity and a distraction.

Spafford and his firm Legacy by Design (legacy-by-design.com) offer succession planning for farmers, ranchers and agribusiness owners. Email kevin@legacybydesign.com or phone 877-523-7411.



Sweet-tart salad brightens meal

CITRUS dominates the winter fruit produce selection across the country. While very few fruits are growing in the United States during the coldest months, oranges and their citrus relatives abound everywhere.

Orange Citrus Salad wakes up the senses muted by hard ground and gray skies. Slightly tart dried cranberries, bright, sweetly scented oranges and tangy red onion are tossed with crunchy romaine lettuce and Dijon mustard-flavored vinaigrette dressing. The salad also provides a good helping of vitamin C. If you can't find dried cranberries near the raisins in your supermarket, try fresh red grapes sliced in half instead.

This recipe is adapted from *floridastatural.com*, which suggests serving it with a sizzling steak. Add baked potatoes and a steamed green vegetable for an easy, healthy weeknight meal. There are dozens more citrus recipes available at the website.

Orange Citrus Salad

Salad:

- head romaine lettuce, rinsed and dried, end cut off and leaves torn or cut into bite-sized pieces
- 3 oranges, peeled and cut into sections
- 1 red onion, thinly sliced
- ½ cup dried cranberries

Dressing:

- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon grated orange zest
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ½ teaspoon salt
- Freshly ground pepper

Instructions

1. In a serving bowl, toss salad ingredients.
 2. In a small bowl, whisk together the orange juice and vinegar.
 3. Gradually whisk in orange zest and olive oil; season with mustard, salt and pepper to taste.
 4. Dress salad.
- Makes eight servings.

Quilts From the Past

Turning to a strip for elegant look

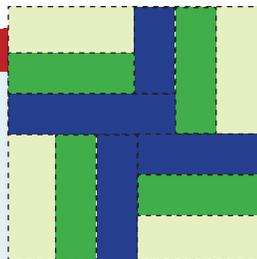
THIS month's pattern, called 4-Part Strip Block, builds from four smaller blocks, each made with three oblong strips with the same color sequence. When the individual blocks are brought together, the final quilt will have an intricate look from a simple start. This pattern is also known as Interlocked Squares.

You can get a redrafted block pattern for 4-Part Strip Block by sending a \$5 check or money order, made

out to Penton Agriculture, to: 4-Part Strip Block, #263, 6200 Aurora Ave., 203E Urbandale, IA 50322.

Pattern catalog

We've compiled more than 200 historic quilt patterns in our Quilts From the Past catalog. These are patterns made popular throughout the early 20th century in *The Farmer-Stockman* magazine in Oklahoma and Texas, and *The Kansas*



City Star newspaper. The catalog has illustrations of the quilt blocks and ordering information for each.

For your copy, send a \$10 check or money order made out to Penton Agriculture, to: Quilt Catalog, 6200 Aurora Ave. 203E, Urbandale, IA 50322.

Editor's note: We thank Karen Bogadi, Goodyear, Ariz., for her work in redrafting these historic quilt patterns for our use in these pages.