



RAVEN PERFORMANCE GROUP

2017 Around the Table Summary

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How do you define the products / services you sell?

- Our stores specialize in fresh-cut flowers, plants and gifts. We also deliver! We're not just a "come in and pick up a bundle of flowers" store, we want you to feel pampered and wonderful when you leave - with a beautiful package.
- We provide creative solutions matching companies needing good talent with people needing good jobs. We do it through a formalized process, looking creatively at every position in Central Minnesota.
- We design and install overhead rail systems for commercial laundries. We go into the customer's plant, evaluate their current poundage, consider their growth and provide a system that will improve their efficiency now and into the future.
- Our auto body collision repair service returns vehicles to pre-loss condition. When we work on specialty cars, we talk with the owners about how they envision their vehicle will look when restored. We work hard at making their dreams reality.
- By organizing space and services to be more productive, I help people find what they need when they need it to do what they need to do. It makes my customers more productive at work and assures greater peace of mind in their personal lives.
- We deliver personalized, on-time trucking services.

- We create and maintain unique solutions for outdoor landscapes and living spaces. We implement and manage all the products and details to create the perfect outdoor experience for our customers.
- Our facility provides the ideal setting for unique and memorable celebrations of life's special moments.
- We don't sell products. We design automation solutions. To win customers' trust, we focus on ideas, innovation and simplicity. Rarely do we talk to an end user who actually uses what we make. Our customers find value because we can make things happen quickly and hassle-free.
- We are a non-profit professional development and advocacy organization committed to those who care for and support children, youth, and the families they serve.
- We are the largest quilt shop in the Midwest. Our amazing customer service enables customers to purchase unique yarn, fabric, notions, books and wool. We even have our own custom designed fabric line.
- We are a fun, fresh, friendly, family-owned golf and event center. Our scenic 18-hole public golf course includes a pro-shop to satisfy all golfing needs. Our Event Center offers a memorable experience for up to 300 people.
- Associations are unsung heroes that help communities thrive. Our focus is helping associations be more effective in achieving their mission and serving their members. We utilize a proprietary software system that helps associations run every facet of their organization.

- I help people buy and sell companies using a research-based “pairing” method as opposed to a commission-driven method. Buy side or sell side, I never push a deal. My focus is my customer and all my deals work. My specialty is selling distressed companies.
- My life’s passion is at-risk children. I advocate for methods that demonstrate alternatives to the punishment model which is breaking schools, filling prisons and making communities unsafe and unhappy.
- We are a third-generation family farm specializing in manufacturing gourmet cheeses. We market our products locally and regionally.
- We’re a community newspaper with a weekly circulation of 1200 and a once-a-month circulation of 5000, saturating the whole area. We write the first draft of history.
- We manufacture quality kitchen and bath component parts, including hardwood molding and trim pieces.
- I empower business owners and their employees through education, training and resources, social communication and stories.
- We help business owners fix the kind of problems and challenges that keep them up at night. We help build better places to work and create more resilient organizations that focus on discipline and accountability. When we’re done people find they have more peace of mind, stronger companies and happier employees.

- I am proud to run a fourth-generation agricultural experiment. (Anything in agriculture is an experiment.) We operate a retail garden center, tree nursery, and landscape service.
- Our mission is to make a difference in our listener's lives and bring customers to our clients by spreading the good news of Jesus Christ through music and programming.
- We make your phones ring, your internet zing and save you some cha-ching! We are an independent broker of telecommunications for businesses. We specialize in local, long distance, internet and wireless services.
- We manufacture quality lawn mower and agricultural cutting blades.
- We provide turnkey services as a general contractor designing and building quality commercial, residential, agricultural and equestrian facilities.

How do you decide what price to charge for your products/services?

- We may only change our prices twice a year. We use a monthly publication, Harvard Market Report, which gives us lumber prices. We determine the highest lumber cost and mark it up 2%.
 - On the labor side, we track everything by board foot. We calculate the board feet, then add the overhead to determine our final cost.
 - The problem is garbage in, garbage out. If the employees don't track time or material accurately, or produce scrap, we will not be charging the correct price.
- We try to be very consistent in what we charge by using a pricing sheet we have developed.
- I analyze our costs for providing service, then add 25%, I belong to a group that provides us with pricing information from the previous 6 weeks for both contract and spot market rates, I look at the percentage of increase we would be taking. After evaluating all the issues, I take into consideration how that route affects other lanes we have and attempt a balanced price.
 - We have a lot of things to price!
- In golf, you can't overprice yourself and expect people to come and play. We raised our prices by \$25 for each golfing segment. We also offer a 10% discount for early payment. (No one complained about the increases.)

- On the bar and grill side, we look at the competition. We change our menu every season, renaming and redoing it. That gives us fewer complaints about increases. We rely on our managers to share their observations with us.
 - We also look at the cost of food and the minimum wage increase.
 - On the event side, we've implemented three changes in price. We also have a cancellation policy: within 6 months - 100% back, with less back as the cancelled date comes closer.
 - We customize our packages according to the needs of the person booking the event.
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- My telecommunications company doesn't charge customers for services. We are simply the agents who facilitate the contracts between carriers and our clients.

 - I have a base price per hour that I may adjust by a small percentage each year. When new clients come on, we start them out at next year's price so we're not increasing their price right away.

 - We have to stay competitive with the industry. We price check between vendors. We have two major vendors that we compare with others. We take our true costs and add labor rates.
 - On specialty jobs we have better margins.
 - We allow our salespeople some wiggle room, but we don't allow them to go too low on jobs.

- We look at what we pay and what we need for markup and compare the result with other stores in the community. We need to stay somewhat consistent with what others are charging in the area.
 - Service is something we struggle with. We look at what we need to make and what other competitors are getting in the area.
- Typically, we have a model that incorporates our cost of doing business and the margin we need to make a profit. We look at the market and industry as we have a number of competitors. Sometimes we get a feeling for what we should be charging from our clients. If we add additional services we charge for those (testing services, pre-screening candidates and/or HR services.) Volume can also impact the rates.
- There are only a couple competitors in our market, so it's hard to judge. When we quote a part, we take into consideration the material, labor and overhead (we call it contribution). It's like pulling numbers out of the air, but it works for us.
- We researched the competition and figured out what we'd have to charge to be in the market. After we compared what we offer and our unique facilities, we determined we could charge more. As we became more established we increased our prices.
- In the design and construction business, we must pay attention to competition. We give red-carpet service so customers know our prices are not the lowest. We figure out the product cost, recovery costs (overhead) for an equipment package, and a labor rate. More people today want to pay

- to have things done. It's essential to show value and have them see it.
- We have different pricing for maintenance as opposed to installation.
- Pricing is a combination of location and the market. I have two website products, one I charge out at \$50/month and with e-commerce its \$75. Those prices include a standard 10-page website. If I go to Minneapolis, people won't buy from me. Their perception of the market is much different; they expect a price for the website plus a monthly fee. It's almost a credibility issue. Once I tack on a design fee it makes sense.
 - When I bought the company, the previous owner had priced his jobs by marking up the cost for parts. With this method, your best customers always paid the highest prices. When a new buyer came on board they usually shopped around and that put the account at risk.
 - I have customers (in Australia) who buy my parts and resell them. I give them a reduced mark-up, so they can make something. I know that's built loyalty and their business stayed with us.
 - We bid jobs every day. Our competitors' pricing is basically the same as ours; everything we do is bid and we see how we compare.
 - We've just moved into a new building which complicates the issue of trying to make money.
 - When I bought the junk yard in 1979, I priced out a new part at \$800. I found a used part for \$735. I asked the dealer, *"How do you know what to charge?"* He responded: *"I look into your eyes, then I look into your wallet and put my finger*

in there and feel around to see what you got. Then I give you a price.”

- How do I determine what to charge? I Look at the project and compare it against previous projects. Is it easier or harder than the ones I’ve done? I make a determination and give them a price. I’m easy to work with and let them pay monthly or quarterly. Basically, it’s whatever the traffic will bear.
- When we look at an opportunity, we start by determining our costs. If it’s something we do on a normal basis, we try to maintain or increase our margins a bit. If it’s a new customer, we take that into account. Central to everything we do at our company, we try to know our costs.
 - If a project is high on the risk scale, our quoted prices are adjusted to reflect the risk.
 - Periodically, we’ll get a request for a quote that we know is just shopping. Occasionally I’ve made my price so low they just can’t say no. We’ve gotten the business a few times and discovered in the process they haven’t been very transparent with us. More often than not we end up with the project and at the margins we want.
- Once in a while we get involved in an on-line auction. Those can be sketchy. If you know the customer there’s less risk. But there have been times when we have dropped out.
- We bid on a lot of inquiries that don’t go anywhere. How you sort those out is a challenge. I hate to be rude to anyone.
 - Maybe the answer is a service offering.

- We use a formula that includes cost of goods, building and equipment expenses, and knowing what's going on in the retail and wholesale cheese industry.
- Throw a dart at a dart board.
- I think about it all the time. It depends on what I'm selling. A lot of what I'm selling is value added, so I double the price. For something I just sell, I add 20%.
 - Once I pick the plant, I add the price of a container.
 - I try to price myself in the upper tier of my competitors.
 - I look at the unique things I offer that my competitors don't.
 - I have psychological price points (\$9.99, \$10.99, etc.), I, unlike Walmart, know exactly what my margins are.
 - I lose at least 20% of my plants so I have to compensate for that.
 - My employee and I reviewed competitors and saw only one who was going head to head with Menards and Walmart.
 - I have to know what my costs are, but when I'm selling trees that were grown in my field it's tough to determine.
 - I've gotten rid of a lot of excess items on Craig's List and discovered I can price things higher than normal, because people are actually looking for that particular item.
- I have tried to stay a little under what my competitor is charging per hour. I also try to ferret out what group rates are as well as half- day and full- day rates for the workshops they present. It's hard to compete with courses where the instructors have received grants.

- I have to travel to train, sometimes clients pay mileage.
 - There are different rates between the Twin Cities and outstate.
 - I ask my clients to promote my company in their newsletter if they will.
 - I take the basic rate, double it and add on transportation.
 - I put on conferences and received some push-back on prices (Charged \$85 which included breakfast and lunch).
- In our Business, the prices are controlled by the Insurance industry. In some cases, we will quote a price, but the customer will want to negotiate. With services such as detailing, we look at the cost and figure out a fair margin. We add a fair margin to the products we sell (paint, undercoating, parts, etc.).
 - We also look at our competitors and try to know what they're doing. That's hard because prices in the industry aren't posted.
 - I took over the business 17 years ago; I didn't have to start from scratch. When the price of paper, postage and even gas goes up, we have to raise our rates.
 - Services - I don't charge nearly enough. Fortunately, I have people who beat me over the head when I talk about taking on another low-cost project.
 - What to charge is based on time of day the client wants their ad run, how many ads they want to run, how long they'd like to run and their budget. If a client is buying right off the rate card it's easy, otherwise there are many different variables.

- Fabric and yarn companies tell us what we must charge. We add on the margin. We're always comparing our prices to our competitors to ensure we're in line.
 - For classes, we consider the cost for the teacher and require that there are two or more students registered.
- When determining prices for the café, we multiply our costs by 4 or 5 times depending on the margin we want to make (due to the shelf-life of food products).
- My particular service is unique and interesting. When I first started as a professional organizer I went to association meetings and no one would talk about what they charged. They thought it was price fixing. I asked some friends and discovered that it comes down to whatever people will pay. I had an “ideal” price and a “reality” price for this area.
- I price based on the type of business I want to attract and the type of relationship I want to have. I'm not interested in working with huge companies. I discovered I have a niche and do well with businesses who have worked with ad agencies and had a bad experience. By charging less than what ad agencies charge I can have a longer relationship with ideal customers.
- When customers come into the nutrition club, our goal is to give people the opportunity to work with us and build relationships. We want to coach people on being healthy.
 - We occasionally offer Yoga classes, but my partner has a fitness center and we work together on that.

How do you make yourself known to potential customers?

- When we leave a business card, we personalize it - there's more of an opportunity to see the contact, and the card is less likely to be thrown away.
- Once our list of 'potentials' has been established, we search for connections and commonalities that may already exist to help open doors. Networking is a big part of becoming 'known'. We work our trade associations and industry organizations; we use their members' lists for contacting potential customers via email blasts, direct mailings, etc. If there is a networked connection, a direct phone call is made. Online presence is important to making ourselves known. We are currently working on revamping our website and polishing our digital presence. We share information on industry trends, which helps make us 'notable' and worthy of further investigation.
- Referrals from existing customers.
 - Occasionally a driver offers a suggestion from someone they've talked to.
 - We're constantly picking up and delivering at potential customers. I make phone calls and we pay them a visit.
- Our website brings in people.
- We advertise in church bulletins, I don't think we've gotten any work from that, but it makes us feel all warm and friendly.

- Advertise in magazines (wedding), and the News Leader. We do a lot of social media. (we had over 3500 people view our posts when we opened)
- Networking with Chambers of Commerce.
- Referrals from trusted business advisors, IT and equipment vendors.
- Networking with Biz to Biz and Raven Performance Group. (have gotten work from member referrals)
- Referrals from current clients.
- I haven't had time to do much marketing because this is the busy season for accountants.
- We ask for testimonials from satisfied customers.
- Marketing through social media.
- A lot of repeat presence in front of prospects - just staying in touch frequently with current clients.
- It takes 7 to 10 touches to get a client.
 - Sometimes it's the "cutsie stuff" a series of 4 cards or small gifts (We call it "4 in the door" marketing) - and by the 4th one we usually get an appointment.
 - We do 12 days of Christmas of Promotion. We make up 12 sets of simple things and by the 12th day we usually get results.
 - The company has spent time branding us nationally: Billboards, commercials, Putting America to work

(campaign to put a million people to work) as well as trade magazines. (ASA, SHERM)

- We also keep collateral fresh.
- In the Market we serve, we generally know most of the potential customers. We try to reach out to them via LinkedIn, email, blogs, and website. We do additional follow up phone calls. We also try to catch up with them at major conferences. There are markets we don't currently serve (but could), we struggle at identifying those markets and the potential customers.
- Social media boosted posts (paid is the biggest), internal marketing at all our events, talking to people.
- We “mug” the neighbors (we leave a coffee mug) whenever we do a project in the neighborhood -with a note “we’re going to be in the neighborhood, pardon our dust and the inconvenience”.
- Mount a sign with our contact information and the project we are working on.
- I promote what I do at any opportunity where it feels appropriate. (shameless promotion)
- Key relationships with people I do business with.
- Always have a business card.
- Trade shows
 - Have a booth that looks attractive and is appealing to our audience
 - We buy balloons
 - Branded well
 - Make sure your people know what to do at a trade show - plan and practice

- We run a contest (how many jelly beans in the jar)
 - We assign one person to work the floor (we call it meeting new friends)
 - We teach people to qualify attendees with three questions:
 - What's your role in the company
 - What kind of _____
 - A personal question
 - We have a real showy display (go big or go home)
 - We figure out our cost per lead
 - We put up something unique to make us stand out
 - Networking with other exhibitors
 - Talk with our current customers (keep them from straying)
 - We put a screen in the middle of the booth to show attendees exactly what we do.
 - We prepped all the audio sales material for the event (if the people working the booth don't have the right material they won't sell.)
 - Today trade shows have a lot less printed material.
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- We've been around for so long, you assume people know who you are. The problem is they don't.
 - Updated brochures to specific groups of customers.
 - We purchased a list of small public companies and use direct mail and phone calls to the companies.
 - Social media.
 - Word of mouth.
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- I have found people who are interested in doing business with our company, they've already formulated in their minds what they want us to do. Sometimes it's way off-base.

- Instead of focusing on just the immediate need, I try to broaden the subject in order to give other options. Those conversations stick in their mind.
- Especially working for the government, buyers don't always consider what they're trying to accomplish overall, they just look at the job at hand.
- Subscriptions to Thomas Net
- Food shows
- Person to person in conversations with people.
- Social media - for the retail side. (Facebook)
- Send out catalogs to customers in late summer.
- Newspaper ads for the retail.
- Don't do yellow page ads any more.
- A Billboard along Highway 35 - always struggle with what to put on it.
- We must be aware of how much we want to spend.
- We do mailings to current customers.
- We're not doing emailing very well.
- We have a wholesale mailing list and have done a mailing.
- We're always donating to community functions.
- Being visible in the community.
- Do some advertising on the radio, for example as a sports booster.
- I get the list of licensed child care professionals and send out copies of our newsletters. We used to do Facebook, but it's been hacked.
- Bring newsletters wherever I go and distribute them.
- Share articles on Facebook that other people have written.

- We do an annual conference. (Clients find out about it through our newsletter)
- When I go to conferences, I distribute my newsletters and business cards.
- I barter with other organizations for ad space in our newsletter.
- I have a storefront - keep it clean.
- Make sure my signage is clean and up to date.

How do you decide who is a good potential client?

- They've been in business a while.
- They have employees.
- They're doing well.
- They want to know how they're doing and want to do things right.
- I have start-ups who want to make sure they're doing things correctly from the get-go.
- My customers use payroll and financial statements as well as QuickBooks consulting.
- We start with our Vision Traction Organizer, on the first page it defines our target market.
 - In the kitchen and bath industry, demographic - \$500 to \$100,000,000
 - There are more competitors East of the Mississippi, so we look West of the Mississippi first. But I must admit that desperation has made us look at work all over the country.
 - The Value match is hard - until you have a sit down and talk, you don't know if your values match or if they're just looking for pennies in savings.
- We're looking for a long-term relationship.
- We look for customers that are not too big.
- Someone who has been around long enough to be financially stable.
- We're not looking for people who only look for price, they believe you are only a commodity.
- Each one of you is a potential customer!
- If you're a student, we want you.
- If you're a nonprofit, you're a customer.

- People who are in love and want to seal it with a wedding.
- People who want to celebrate are a target.
- One day in seven is a Saturday so Saturdays are at a premium. we do set minimum prices for the best days of the season.
- We only do business with businesses, so any business.
- Size doesn't matter.
- We look for someone who shares information openly.
- Someone who listens to our suggestions.
- Someone who trusts and whom we can trust.
- When we first started we looked at if they could breathe and would entertain doing business with us - they were a prospect!
- As we have grown, we've discovered our best clients appreciate what we have to offer, rather than just seeking the cheapest deal.
- Someone who trusts that when they open their checkbook (finances) to us, it won't go any further.
- Taking the time to communicate, verbally rather than electronically, making sure we're a cultural fit.
- If they don't have the time and patience to understand what we do, they won't be a good fit.
- We ask questions and listen to their answers.
- We look for client viability. Everyone we work with gets a new client form and agreements. If they don't sign the agreement, we're not interested in working with them.
- We have a specific niche market and understand who the good potential customers are.

- Even though they're a potential customer, it doesn't mean they'll be a GOOD customer.
- We try to understand the gap between what a customer is expecting to get and what they're currently getting. That's where we add value.
- If someone is just looking for pricing, we're not a good fit.
- We have a very specific sales process that starts out with completing a form on our website.
- We have canned emails via social media that assist us in determining potential business.
- We look at how they respond.
- Do they follow the process?
- Can a potential customer afford to pay me?
- Do they see value in what I offer?
- Can we communicate well, even during the sales process?
- I give a quick webinar - once they go through it, some participants ask questions and the others are grab-and-run people.
- Open-minded privately held companies.
- Small, struggling public companies. (keeping up with federally mandated regulations)
- When I started the company, it was people with big checkbooks and big egos.

- We want to know our clients well before we do business, what they're trying to accomplish, and what else they do other than what they're asking us to do.
- I don't think you can have too much information about a company before doing business with them.
- If they drive up in an Audi, they're a good prospect. (Just kidding!)
- Someone who is not wrapped up too tight. Someone you can joke with and have fun working with.
- Someone who is interested in the types of plants that will do best in their location. They want the "right plant in the right place."
- In terms of an individual, one who is invested in their education and attends three to four events a year with us.
- A larger chain of child care centers that would hire me to train their employees once or twice a year.
- An organization that is state-affiliated, whose responsibility it is to provide professional development for child care businesses.
- We try to help everyone who comes in the door and be flexible in caring for their needs.
 - Unless it's a classic or collector car, their vehicle must be less than ten years old.

- Does their insurance include car rental? Do they have a referral from their insurance company and is the repair between \$2,200 - \$5,000?
- We have two groups of clients: subscribers and advertisers.
 - Readers - anyone who wants to know what's going on in the area.
 - Anyone who has a business can be a potential advertiser.
 - People who prefer to get their news from the newspaper not TV.
 - People enjoy seeing pictures and articles about their children.
 - We seek the type of businesses we want to promote. (We don't take bars and gambling.)
- Anyone who purchases our products: we have learned not to judge people by how they look because you never know.
- This is such an interesting question, because it's tricky when you provide a service. You sign up for LinkedIn and go to networking events with the idea there are good clients everywhere.
- People who want to talk to me, who are willing to explore and are intrigued and desperate for my service.
- They need to appear to be affluent and willing and able to pay.

Do you have job descriptions? How did you create them and how did you come up with job titles?

- We didn't know what we were doing in the beginning. We surfed the internet and found fancy names and job descriptions that sounded wonderful and discovered that was a bunch of bull. No one used them.
- A consultant came in and helped us clean up our job descriptions. We had too many tasks listed in each one - we just needed the details.
- Traction came in and we looked at the accountability chart denoting areas of responsibility. There are 5 core issues we work at.
- When we are looking at people, we use commonly accepted titles, so people know what we're looking for.
- We spend more time on office positions and details.
- Job titles match the accountability sheet.
- Our new salesman set us straight about sales titles. Titles can be too big or too small. For him, Vice President of Sales was perfect. If you send someone with too big a title to do sales, you can look desperate.
- We were given job descriptions when we took over. We've refined them over the years, and each one includes a lot more responsibility than they used to.

- Golf Pro, Executive Chef, Director of Sales & Marketing, Grounds Superintendent. The titles fit the duties.
- We have one person who is very concerned about his title. He's had executive positions all his life and it's important to him to maintain that status.
- I created my first job description by taking everything I did during the day and separating the tasks by my strengths. All other tasks are assigned to the Operations Manager.
- We looked at the Operations Manager's strengths and some of the things the Sales person was doing and moved all the processing kinds of things into the Customer Service Coordinator.
- We asked employees what they wanted as a job title!
- It's just me! I have all the titles and I do everything.
- I introduce myself as President & Co-owner
- Accounting specialist works for me. It clearly defines what we do.
- How job descriptions were originally created I don't know. But a couple of management companies have come in over the years and looked at our needs and wants.
- Job titles are self-explanatory. Production Manager, crew member, foreman, purchasing.
- My world is very driven by job descriptions. Some of our clients have them and some don't. We try to drive them toward job descriptions. Performance profiles are becoming more common.

- In my offer letter, I write about our culture. I talk about our philosophy, mission and even the non-negotiables (work longer hours, fair competitive wage for the position and that we hope you don't accept our offer and continue to look for work.) It's been well received. We even ask prospective employees if they anticipate big life changes (move, go back to school, etc.).
- We do have job descriptions for all our employees. We "steal" them, we go online and research what a typical person in this role would do and then revise. We find like-titles and descriptions and match them to our needs.
- We do have job descriptions. Every quarter we do a 360 review of the team members and ask, "is this really what you do?"
- The titles are straightforward. We have Customer Service Level 1 to 10 and each one has more responsibilities and a higher commission.
- Regarding the interview process, we bring a group of employees to the interview, and they do the hiring.
- One question we ask is "What don't you like about the job you do?"
- Because I don't know what to ask for, I've recently started working with a marketing expert.
- I'm looking for a volunteer coordinator.

- I have had some conflicts in the business. It's been hit and miss. I recently retained a lawyer and informed her that her that her job description is to "keep me out of trouble".
- I'm confrontational, every job description for every position should read, "You have to work with an ass". I'm A.D.D., very busy and way behind.
- Of the 29 people who worked for me when I owned a junk yard, 28 stole from me and the other one sold cocaine.
- I'm glad you picked that subject. I looked at our job descriptions and saw they were last updated in 2010.
- I looked at the different positions and was gratified to see that they were complete and accurate. Some of them were in the voice of the people who do the work.
- Don't have actual descriptions, we give employees areas they're responsible for (The Deli, the Retail Store, etc.).
- We have categories: Office, Packaging Area etc. but we are very clear when people are hired they must do other tasks.
- When I had the greenhouse, I had one employee who was responsible for the greenhouse.
- The people who work for me do everything, they fill in wherever needed and we haven't had any issues. If I hire you, you'll do whatever we're doing that day. I don't like to pigeonhole people. We're unique because we're seasonal. It's stressful much of the year when things are busy, but we can relax during the off-season.

What does your company do to keep morale up & people motivated?

- We shared our purpose and vision: it gave employees a sense of direction.
- Our sales VP brings back compliments from the customers: that means a lot.
- We try to do the personal one-on-one compliments.
- We encourage our managers to take a week of vacation in the summer during our busiest season, so they don't get burned out.
- We do birthdays, we always have a cake. It's hard to know what to do for guys.
- We encourage employees to go to their children's functions.
- Action! Action! Action! We do lunches, bring in treats, allow for flexible hours if people need to take off. We have a lot of fun.
- Food - flex hours and fun! (The three F's)
- I'm a self-motivator, however allowing for flexibility worked well when we had a lot of people. I also do flowers and candy occasionally.
- In my world, with consultants, it's 4 or 5 stars. We hire consultants through a service, when they do good work, they

want 4 or 5 stars. It matters to them and I try to be mindful of that.

- I have a sales-driven environment.
- One-on-one meetings with each of my team to find out what's working to motivate employees and to give high-fives.
- There's a book out called "Thank God it's Monday!" When you make work fun, people want to work for you. We created a Hoopla Team. That team identifies 2 things every week that create fun.
- We created a Company Bingo card that people "play". I have a box of little prizes, which includes slips for time off, for people to draw from when they get BINGO.
- The Best trophy: employees nominate someone on the team, the winner gets the traveling trophy on their desk plus a gift (box of candy). We make it a big deal. People roll off the team every few months.
- People applaud with clappers at their desk (hands on a stick) when people do something that goes well. It lifts morale.
- Don't have anything structured right now. We provide a good work environment, build good relationships with individuals and add a personal touch to their day.
- I engage with employees one-on-one. We discuss improvements and work on the good things.

- We have bi-monthly employee meetings which focus on safety. We tie in some fun facts to keep it interesting. We make a point of sharing positive feedback in front of the group.
- Stars! 5-stars. My staff tends to be people who I've hired online, and they need that kind of feedback.
- Get to know the person - for one woman a Coach Purse gift card was the BEST ever!
- Try to remember names - give a Google Review and share the person's name.

How do you motivate men?

- Sporting event tickets
 - Time off - leave early Friday afternoons
 - Cabela's gift cards
 - Football pools
 - At lunch time we sit around an oval table, there's a lot of engagement and talking about sports
 - Starbucks and Best Buy gift cards
 - Amazon gift cards
 - Paying a compliment goes a long way
- Call the owners of a business and share the name of the employee who has made you happy.
 - This is a good question because I want the answer! We're a small company and I feel like morale is okay, but keeping employees motivated is a challenge.

- We were getting ready for a big show and I ordered pizza for everyone. We also have a Christmas party/dinner.
- I'm terrible at it. Now that I have volunteers rather than employees, it's worse. I'm not a good manager; I'm a project-oriented person.
- We have fun and I've ordered fruit baskets. That works.
- I'm working with a Millennial to help me with volunteers and it's hard.
- The most important motivator at our company is making sure all employees know their expectations. My role is providing encouragement, feedback and recognition when they achieve those expectations.
- It's not uncommon for an employee to tell me they've had a bad day the day before and that they're hopeful they'll have a better day today. I always take time with them to understand their situation. People want to be heard.
- We do picnics and birthday lunches, but I don't think that's the motivator. When they do a good job, you've got to let them know.
- At the factory, we buy bags of candy and it keeps them going. We also buy lunch when it's an especially busy day.
- At the store, when we have a big event I'll give a gas card to the two waitresses who work really hard.

- Once a month, we celebrate all the staff birthdays in that month.
- We're kind of fortunate that our business is seasonal. Our people work really hard in the summer and can get burned out. Fortunately, my people are self-motivated. I try to compliment them, but I usually just give a blanket thank you. I need to be more conscientious about it.
- I need to do something to keep my own morale up.
- I occasionally buy lunch for my staff.
- The regional manager wrote personal thank you notes and mailed them. It was very specific praise - meeting a sales goal, showing kindness or something over and above. It was spontaneous.
- I'll just buy lunch and not have a formal meeting. We just talk with no pressure about what's going on at work.
- I always try to be appreciative when people do a nice job.
- I thank employees individually when they work hard.
- I don't yell at people when things go bad or we have mysteries going on.
- Buy a big bag of donuts.
- I'll give the guys a part for their car when we have one in stock. (Sometimes it feels better to give something to someone than to sell it.)

How do you decide how much to pay your employees?

- We had to come up with 3 wages: started with the county median pay rate and set our base salary to be competitive.
- Sales person earns a commission which was decided by negotiation.
- We have longevity and low turn-over.
- We have five full time employees. We use The National PGA scale to help determine salaries.
 - Chef and Super receive salary only.
 - The other 3 positions earn salary / bonus / commission.
 - Event coordinator - base salary is determined by service charges.
- We worked with an employment agency regarding industry standards. We have three employees, plans differ by package A, B or C - depends on duties and compensation per budget.
- Do not have benefits.
- At present, I have no employees. It's difficult to have any employees because of how my business is structured; a lot of my work is done at the client's location.
- Currently there are 27 employees. We inherited a pay structure based off of emotion - it was a mess.

- We broke down positions, but location is an issue because we are on the Stearns County line.
- Started everyone at \$11-\$13 per hour with a review in 30 days.
 - Administration is salary (industry standard) and Sales Rep is salary based on sales.
- Goal sharing - Low floor/High Ceiling.
- Everyone gets points for tenure to reward years of service - bonuses are paid out at the end of the year.
- Have profit sharing plan.
- I look at the experience and skills applicants bring to a position. I offer a salary plus incentive and I am really clear on what that means and what is required. I offer a compensation package. Just hired a sales person who wanted \$10,000 more than I was offering. I asked more questions, discovered he was asking for a lot more than what he had made in his previous position.
- Listen for the question that they don't ask you.
- I try to figure out how long it would take me to do a task, then I estimate how long it might take someone else. I also have to consider the budget available to pay for that position. 1099 employees are more project based. I ask around to see what others are paying. Also ask what an applicant made at their last job.

- I only have sub-contractors - I use a combination of how long it takes me to do the task and how long it will take them. I also consider their knowledge of the market and how well they communicate.
- This is a topic we've been talking about a lot lately.
- As we are midway between Minneapolis and St Cloud, we check on-line for wage information in both places.
- I recently hired an engineer who was a citizen of a foreign country; his work visa required he be compensated over a certain threshold in order to be considered "professional".
- My bookkeeper accepted a position with me even though she had earned a lot more in Iowa. She was willing to take less to have a better quality of life. It was a huge risk on both sides; but I have the best staff I've ever had, it's working.
- I decided to make my marketing person more of a partner and split revenues with him. He's worth it and doing more and more all the time. It was the right thing to do.
- I asked an employee to take a reduction in pay when their job was changed to one with less responsibility.
- We try to keep our wages in line with regional rates. I monitor what others are paying frequently.
- We do surveys of local employers "what do you pay for this job" - others do the same thing and I always respond to theirs.

- It's tough to decide the compensation for the more technical positions; the ones you can't afford to lose. You don't want to overpay either, because they will never be able to make that much anywhere else.
- We lost a couple of our production leads this summer. One in particular thought I'd step up to the plate and make him a better offer. I didn't. Instead I congratulated him and told him I thought it was a great opportunity.
- We draw our employees from a 15 - 20-mile radius.
- I have a variety of jobs, most are part-time. Some positions are as simple as putting labels on cheese. There are waitresses, cooks, clerks, cheese makers. All my jobs involve working with people, so I like to see how well they deal with the public.
- It's by position and by experience. I pay minimum wage until I see how good they are.
- I pay vacation and holidays.
- As little as possible. Seriously, I'm fortunate that I haven't had to hire any new employees for a few years. I start people who don't know anything at minimum wage. If they're really good I give them raises quickly.
- On landscape jobs I pay a 20% differential because it's harder work.
- I paid my bookkeepers whatever they charged, because they were contractors.

- I didn't pay my wife anything when she did the job. I don't take anything either.
- When I hire sub-contractors, I pay \$5.00 to \$10.00/hour more than the state pays.
 - In our industry, there's a standard rate plus commission. I try to pay better than what the prevailing rate is, so I can attract better people.
- When I hire entry level, inexperienced labor, I try to pay better than Burger King.
- It's hard to know what your competitors pay.
- Wage is based on what the individual is doing. I pay our graphic artist more than anyone else.
- I have to start formalizing a pay structure, because the bargain basement didn't work.
- We have access to a radio industry survey, and another for non-profits. I take 3 different positions each year and compare them to the surveys.
- For sales, we pay a salary and no commission. We changed it about 5 years ago. We have sales and sponsorships and donations; it was hard to get people to work on non-commission "sales". Sales people get the same 5% increase as all other people.
- For raises, the most we give is 2%.

- If the company hits all the numbers everyone receives a 5% increase. If we don't hit our goals, no one gets any increase. If we're really close, I make an exception; I want them to keep working hard.
- Everyone starts at minimum wage for the first 3 months. Then we give them an increase depending on how they're doing. If they keep improving, we will increase their salary. We give raises randomly.
- We have employees whose wages have plateaued for years because they've never increased their knowledge; they're just doing the minimum job.
- When I trained with Barbara Hemphill, she had a financial planner come in to talk about what people should take as a salary in the organizing profession.

**If the manager/supervisor isn't available, are employees still able to perform satisfactorily?
(Stated another way, how much direction do your employees need to do their jobs?)**

- It always comes back to Traction. It's all about having processes and allowing people to use the lean process. Sometimes changes are made that haven't made it into the process yet.
- Our weaknesses are in the upper areas (HR and scheduling). It's apparent we have to train at the top - we're most vulnerable there.
- It depends. We're changing staff all the time (during the season); every year we have the same problem. PT staff can always text the manager if they have questions.
- The managers of each department make their own decisions regarding staff and training people. (They train well in the spring and by the end of the year it lags a bit.)
- Yes! There are still those customers who want to get past the gatekeeper and talk to the owner, but the employees have the wherewithal to ask the right questions to get them talking.
- We've invested in technology and we use it.
- Part of the requirement of doing what we do is you have to work on your own and make decisions. In other companies,

you're fed information, we need to be the forward thinker and figure things out.

- Yes, they can function if I'm gone for a few days. If I'm out for a month, it might be harder. Purchasing is unfamiliar to my staff. If the office manager is out, it would be hard to cover some of the things she's doing.
- If you asked me this question a couple years ago, we had a different management style in place - If you're not sure, don't do it. Today, it's a different culture. People have evolved, they feel more comfortable and know what they can do. I'm not involved in a big chunk of the day to day operations. When in doubt, people will reach out but basically they handle issues on their own. It was an evolution, and a tough one.
- We're ISO and our processes are automated.
- In the shop, if we don't have a foreman or supervisor available, we have operator leads. Overall, the operators would perform satisfactorily. They probably don't do as well, but they can get the job done.
- In the office, they don't need a lot of guidance. For the day to day stuff most can do well. I have no concerns.
- We work a lot with check lists. Everything is organized by the time of the day and the physical location. They work the urgent things first and move on. The challenge is when they get used to the jobs, they don't use the checklists and things get missed. I stress everyone use the checklists.

- I don't have employees. I like my contractor's smart, so I don't have to make checklists. We're either speaking a similar language or we're not.
- Some seem to need more guidance than others, but most of them are doing really well. The Engineer makes a list of questions and brings them to me. When the new bookkeeper has questions, she figures it out. I travel a lot, so I need people who can work on their own.
- Non-Profit - I'm terrible at managing people and in a non-profit organization managing volunteers is difficult. Nothing gets done unless I manage it.
- For profit - I'm so project oriented, I hire contractors and they run with the projects.
- My company runs just fine without me. We have written procedures and policies to guide our behavior.
 - Having said that, there are times where situations are unusual. Yesterday one of my employees had a truck at the dock that was loaded, and we didn't have a purchase order. When I questioned the employee, she called the company and got a verbal order. My employees normally know what they have to do. Our processes are very detailed.
- We don't have any written procedures; we're a group of loose cannons. Everyone has their projects and tasks. I'm gone a week every month to a customer and things seem to get done.

- Probably less than I think they need. I probably micromanage. If I walk away I feel like I'm not giving enough direction.
- What we do is subjective, because there's many ways to do a job right. I try to instill ownership and pride. I want the landscaping job done right and I want people to take pride in the work they do on the tractor or on anything.
- I always think at some point I'm going to get better at this. At least I'm aware of it. Control was an issue 25 years ago and it's still an issue for me.
- I'm thinking of things getting done around the big conference we have every year. I give my staff a list of what needs to get done and give them the authority to do it. It's rare when they have a question.
- I have one other staff person, she pretty much knows what to do, but chooses not to act on it at times. (It's my mother; she likes to have me around.)
- On most days when I'm gone, or the supervisor isn't available, the employees handle things. They handle it and let me know what's going on.
- Our organization is pretty flat, we have a program director who is over two staff people, but at one time or another everyone has to communicate and work with everyone.
- This question very well fits the last 24 hours. I feel like they always need someone to tell them what to do. Some want to do only what they want to do, which is not what needs to be done.

- There are some who need direction all the time.
- When I worked with the transportation company, this was one of the owner's biggest frustrations. He wasn't a crabby person, but people were afraid of making a mistake and just wouldn't act.

How much cash do you need on hand to feel comfortable?

- We just had this conversation. It started with our Traction scorecard. Every other week, payroll blows our cashflow.
- I use a spreadsheet I got from SCORE years ago to manage my cash.
- One of our employees said we should have at least three months of cash in reserve, but when you stop to look at what's in the float and what's available, it's not real money you can easily access.
- We have to make that a part of our future planning. It's a number we have to watch closely.
- On the personal side, we do have three months. It's comforting to know if the world came to an end we'd be okay for a while.
- Well, personally I need about \$200 in cash a month and a boyfriend. Rich and generous of course!
- We run three tills and have a big safe that fits underneath a desk. Each till needs to be set for each day and brings in about \$1000 cash daily. In the high season we run about \$2,000 in cash not counting the ATM (we own that too).
- How much can you manage and keep track of and still operate? My partner likes to run really close to the wire -she likes to pay bills with any excess cash.

- We're seasonal and we like to have a cushion of cash. In the beginning, we had a line of credit to pay off and not a lot of cash. It wasn't pretty.
- I believe in the 3-month adage - I feel most comfortable having three months cash on hand. I have a line of credit that's available. It's like a safety net.
- My money manager told me we had too much cash in savings and had us move some to a money market account. For some reason it made me feel really nervous.
- At present, we would be able to sustain up to 7 months, just because of what's going on with our biggest customer right now.
- We use the three-month rule of thumb in our business, for us every three months can be totally different. I took what the previous owner told me because he ran a tight ship. We tried to keep \$100,000 on hand. That first year the account went down to \$30,000 and it was scary. Our office manager is very conservative which is great. In the past couple years, I made the conscious decision to use a credit card (for points). It was hard for her to change.
- When we went to a bank for the move, the banker mentioned our credit rating was extremely good. We're just about ready to take a loan out for our move and it's scary because we had everything paid off.
- My husband is a saver and I'm a spender.

- Picking the right number is a challenge because we have so many fingers (investments). On the commercial real estate side, we want enough to operate the building for two years, even if it's only half full.
 - On the wood products side, we have a short lead time. If we don't get orders in, we'd be out of business next month. We have heavy fixed costs due to the startup of lean processes (it's heavy on the front end).
- We're trying to build for goal sharing plan. We like to have cash on hand, so we can take advantage of discounts. We know July will be bad, so we need to have a month and a half cash on hand. Its anywhere from a 40 to 70-day spin from the time we order product to when we get paid for product.
- My business partner is very conservative and makes sure we spend down at the end of the year.
- We try to keep one to two months of cash on hand, we consider that conservative.
- Our businesses have always been seasonal, so we've been careful with cash flow in order to weather the slow season.
- There's never enough. But if the pile gets too big we'd figure something out.
- We like a minimum of 2 months on hand, but in the landscape company we start selling projects early in the spring, so we get money down.
- When I have 1 to 1-1/2 months cash on hand I sleep better.

- After struggling for all those years. I have a different view. I'm a hoarder of cash because I know what it's like to rob Peter to pay Paul. If the checkbook falls below \$80,000 I start freaking out.
- We have big projects that require us to buy equipment and parts before the job.
- When I would sell just 2 or 3 companies a year, the commissions were large and would have to last.
- Managing a nonprofit, we don't have much and when we get low I do a lot of begging. It's like feeding a beast and I've got to get used to it.
- I always have enough cash, but it's not a very firm plan. For my business to have a lot of cash doesn't make any sense. It's not earning a lot of interest. When I do have excess cash, I try to invest it, at the same time being cognizant that I need some liquidity for a cushion. When I look at my broker's statement every month, there's a fair amount of cash but that's the plan in case I need some.
- I don't need a lot of cash in my business as long as I have nice receivables. I start to get nervous when my line of credit gets close to the end.
- In our personal life, I don't think we've ever had more than a month of cash in a savings account.
- Two months of business income is good because, we're entering our slow season. Winter months are bad. We push hard all summer at Farmer's Markets in order to build up our

stash. Christmas is busy, and that money goes into a special account to get us through February and March. By Easter, people start buying again.

- \$100? Apparently as much as I have now because I feel pretty good. The only time it really matters is when we are going into our zero income months. Three solid months of zero income. I've never had enough before this year and this year I feel pretty good. I have controlled my expenses very well, but next year will be very different. I have \$15,000 on hand right now and that will get me through.
- To be comfortable, I need 6 to 8 months income in the bank. I'd have a cushion to pay the bills if something happened. It keeps me not so stressed.
- Define comfortable. I've operated so many years with zero cash, robbing from Peter to pay Paul. In the past year, we've seen an increase in business and we've started building. My business is not so seasonal, if you need more money, you just work harder.
- I've built my business on doing things people didn't want to do. I didn't know any different!
- If I have over \$2,400 in the bank, I feel comfortable. When it goes below that, I start to get a twinge. Who do I need to call to get money in?
- We have many different funds and most of the money is kept in a savings account to be transferred into an account where it's needed.

- I like to keep at least \$100,000 on hand. I know when my down times are and build up my reserves to tide us over.

How do you manage your finances?

- On the personal side, I just do it. I do it “old school” by hand. We balance out every month to the penny.
- I sometimes think I’m not very good at managing our finances. We do have a line of credit and this year we tapped it for the second time in 20 years.
- We use QuickBooks and love it because you can see everything. You can track all expenses. We do our inventory through QuickBooks too. It tells us if we’re winning or losing.
- We do set a budget every year and compare variances. It’s a key piece in setting the overhead number. It’s crucial that we stay close to that number. We watch our ups and downs.
- Our Traction Team goes over the variances.
- On the personal side, when Veryl was here we each had our own checkbook and a joint checkbook. (When he went to heaven, I changed the name of our joint checkbook from joint to joy - and I just used it for things that made me happy.) The bank helped me set up online payments. One night I was shopping late, and my purse was stolen from the cart. There was quite a bit of cash and nothing was returned. It could have been a huge, awful mess, but nothing went sideways with the cards. I closed my personal checking account; I use my Joy account for everything now.
- On the business side we do have a line of credit which we haven’t tapped for two years, which feels good. It’s hard.

- We used to juggle two banks with operating funds in one and loans in the other. Now they're combined and we're paying close attention to numbers.
- We do a budget every year and QuickBooks has been a lifesaver. We have learned to use the information and not be overwhelmed by the numbers. We review our numbers at the end of every month in a staff meeting with all our managers. We compare to the year before. Our managers give us the budget numbers for their departments; it didn't happen overnight, we had to work on it, but they're getting better. It took a while to build trust, it costs a lot of money to run a business, but they've stepped up.
- For the business we use QuickBooks. Every month we reconcile our account and look at the P&L and the Balance Sheet and compare it to last year.
- The only real budget we set is for our marketing/advertising, but we do review the other areas to see where we can reduce costs and if all the expenses are necessary.
- On the personal side, we use Quicken and reconcile monthly. We do not have a budget (we tried and even went through Dave Ramsey Financial Peace course). We usually put all expenses on one credit card each month and pay it off monthly.
- For larger expenses, both business and personal, we discuss them as a couple before purchasing.

- Our personal finances are entertaining! When we first married, we each had our own checking accounts, so we opened a joint checking account. My husband sees the bills, but I do a bulk of the work. In January, my husband is going to be in charge of the joint checkbook and see where the money goes. It will be an eye-opener for him.
- For business, my partner takes care of the checkbook and pays the bills. We do a budget each year and we have a planning meeting every month and look at the numbers to see where we're going. We came from zero (no one knew our name, and we had no money). We have no inventory, only our time.
- We use QuickBooks. Our controller (my husband's business and I share one) integrates the reports into QuickBooks. We use the online version.
- My son helped me set up an Excel financial analysis.
- We have an accounting team of three to handle the day to day transactions.
- We utilize a "sweep account" that pays to the line of credit.
- Pretty conservative - both in business and on the personal side. (I get that from my dad who never liked to have debt). I pay ahead on loans and I do it automatically, so it just happens. We just set up a sweep account.
- We use QuickBooks and will transition to online.
- I use Mint for my personal accounting.
- I manage everything - I manage cashflow on a daily basis. We have budgets. I watch how much we owe.
- We use Great Plains software.
- We don't have a line of credit. (Bremer)

- Typically, everyone has a budget for their business. We used to, but years ago there was no need to have one because there was no money. We've worked out of that phase and now I have a bookkeeper who is doing that. We watch our budget and we watch the profitability on each project. She keeps me on task. It's as close to managing I can get, it's a roller coaster ride.
- As a business broker I tried to do 10 or 20 deals at a time and that didn't work. So, I focused on 1 or 2 deals a year and I've learned to live on that. My wife doesn't like it, but she married me after I was doing this. I have a nonprofit which will carry me into the future.
- I have a great banker and our line of credit has saved me from bankruptcy.
- I have an accountant who keeps me out of jail.
- We have a budget each year, we close our financials monthly and measure our performance based on the whole year. The key to managing our business is cash flow. Our cash flow system isn't elaborate, but my controller and I monitor it every day. We receive a lot of electronic payments. When an invoice doesn't get paid, we call right away.
- We offer our customers a 2% discount if paid in 20 days, our net is 60 days. That's common in our industry.
- We didn't always have a good forward view of cash flow, so we had to develop one in order to be prepared for the unexpected.

- I know I need a certain amount of money to keep the doors open. I focus on the orders coming in to ensure all the bills are paid. We've done some work for big companies and they're slow.
- In 25 years, we've never had a customer who didn't pay. Thought we were going to have one this year, but they came through.
- When it comes to paying the bills, it's employees first, then vendors, and I get everything that's left over.
- Our situation is unique we're a service business. We have 50 employees, and everything is tracked.
- For my stuff, it's different. I pay myself first.
- The construction company is a startup, I hired a CPA for \$250 a month, to do the books (I used to do them myself and I hated it), he does a great job and I seem to have more money.
- I do a budget each year to see where I am and what I have to do to make my goals.
- I have an apartment side and an HOA side. On the HOA side we work for a board of directors. You try to build a relationship with each board member. Last year we had 5 buildings that were awful, they were hard to work for and the people were turds. We lost a little money and I made up my mind we aren't going to work for people we don't like again.
 - If there is a member of a board that doesn't like you, they can fire you. That doesn't happen very often, we usually fire them first.

- Each manager is responsible for their own budget and for managing the finances in their department.
- My daughter, who works for me (she knows everything about life) pointed out the other day that we're still in the same place we were last year. We add more buildings and then lose one. It's hard to gain ground.
- We have two different businesses, so we started in Peach Tree, but that was too elaborate. We use QuickBooks now.
- We have to look ahead because we have a slow time starting in January. We have two checkbooks and a line of credit.
- At the store, we have two banks - one to handle our credit card sales. Every day I take a percentage of each day's sales to cover sales tax, fixed expenses, etc.
- At the factory, things get really lean around March, so we put money aside each week to cover the slow time. We make more from the factory (wholesale sales). We have a lot of gifts at this time of year.
- They manage me!
- I have finances to manage for the first time in my life - the ups and downs have been interesting. The first year we owned our business was 2009 and that was a great year.
- I use a net worth graph on QuickBooks. It's been fun watching it go up the past 7 months - the longest stretch in many years. It's been very useful for me to assess where I've been.

- I actually have money in the bank and I think I'm going to stick it somewhere to earn interest. It's fun to have that problem. I can use that money instead of maxing out a line of credit.
- We use QuickBooks and we have a line of credit at our bank (Ag Star, which is a cooperative).
- This is a loaded question. On the personal side, my wife handles all that and doesn't always keep me in the loop. On the business side, I have lots of tools. I have a part-time bookkeeper who provides me with QuickBooks reports every week. Do I use them all? No, but I have the tools.
- Knowing what's in the checkbook helps me manage by my gut. My money management expertise amounts to coin books as a kid.
- We had QuickBooks, it was set up according to an industry expert. One day it stopped working. Now we use Account Edge which does the same thing. All information is available for each account, so I can track all my costs. I do all the bookkeeping in the company, enter the payments, pay the bills. I have a bookkeeper come in every two months to make sure all the numbers balance.
- Now that I have an ad person, the sales are going to increase, and things are going to get better at work.
- We don't have a system for home, but I pay for the big things using Owner's Draw.

- We have an account at TCF which, is how we transfer funds internationally to my husband's family (overseas).
- My mother watches the finances in the shop. I've had the highest dollar amount in the bank (of the last three managers). I don't see the numbers every month, but that would be a good idea.
- We have an accountant, but I figure out our profitability before sending it out. I like to see what's going on.
- For personal finances, I pay the bills and my husband watches our investments and where the money goes. We use one bank for everything. It works because neither one of us likes to spend money.
- I do all our personal finances. I don't use a program for that. It's simple and it works.
- My husband has a side business in addition to his job. He has his own account and handles the accounting for that.
- I have a line of credit for my business and that's been a lifesaver. I have my business on QuickBooks.

What makes you decide that it's time to upgrade technology systems in your office?

- Breakdowns!
- We recently switched from an annual to a monthly fee program that keeps up all the ransomware and virus protection. He's trying to get us on a system where every computer is replaced every 3 years. That will spread the expenditures over time.
- We still have a server on site and I'm reluctant to go totally to the cloud.
- It comes into focus when something goes down. It would be nice to be proactive and have a plan, but it's survival. Experience-wise it was like this in education too. They had a big plan, but it didn't happen because something else needed funding.
- You do need a plan, so you can replace technology in a timely fashion. The POS system is huge for us, we can't afford that to go down.
- We have our golf course maintenance system and that's critical now.
- In house we have Apple people and PC systems. If you try to move computers, users are reluctant to use something else.
- Truth is there is no plan and we wait until something breaks before replacing it.

- If it's new, I want it! I believe in being on the cutting edge. I'm an early adapter - we have to be for our clients.
- We have embraced VOIP and IOS apps on our pads. We use Salesforce which is cloud based; we try to integrate that on our phone.
- When you own a franchise, THEY decide for you.
- I know my computers will not handle the upgrade to Windows 10; I know next year I will have all new computers.
- We try to base our up-grades on need. Our customers are billion-dollar businesses, so we need to have the same technology they have. We're upgrading our EDI software and our CRM software.
- We're using an iAuditor software on the floor. It's easy to use and our foremen use it all the time. We take pictures with it and email them to the appropriate departments in a timely manner: safety, engineering, and quality.
- For me, it's the printer that decides. When the printer won't work anymore, we upgrade.
- We're pushing everything to the cloud. I look for things that aren't subscription based.
- I'm attracted to anything shiny, so whenever anything new comes on the market, I want it. For me, technology makes sense. I upgrade when it's useful and I try to avoid anything with subscriptions.

- My laptops get upgraded every year because I'm really hard on them.
- My husband is completely cloud based; when his computer died, I just grabbed another computer and he was up and running in no time.
- Our technology is defined by the market we're in. We have two full time designers who use Solid Works. Our subscription service keeps us current. Last year it cost us \$12,000 to keep up to date.
- As a rule, I realize other people upgrade their technology more often than I do. As I look at what others do, I think I have to be a moron if I don't get that!
- I'm not an early adapter.
- We're getting a new server at the beginning of the year. Our new system is plugged into our three-phase power source. Our current server is circa 2008; our 2018 Solid Works won't work with the old server.
- That's a good question because it's pertinent. We try to make everything work as long as it will. Usually it's about necessity. I try to pay for improvements without borrowing money or if I can get a zero-interest loan.
- For the little I use technology, it's better to use it until it breaks.
- A friend of mine had a tax issue and needed to spend a bunch of money. He purchased technology he didn't really need. Growth is over-rated.

- Does it work anymore? Can I afford it? Will the return be worth the investment? What's the downside if I don't do it? What's the learning curve?
- Sometimes you do buy, and you realize you've made a mistake. Now what? Do you keep going or do you plug a hole?
- Most of the time you don't have a decision to make, you HAVE to upgrade.
- In the early days, I tried to stay up with the newest technology, I've kind of slowed down now, doing only what I have to do.
- I used to be one of those early adapters but now if there's something I have to have I get it. I also resist subscription software and putting everything in the cloud.
- Staffing is a consideration too, if you don't have people who are willing and able to upgrade, it's another stumbling block.
- I upgraded my Adobe which wouldn't run on my computer, so I needed a new computer.
- There has to be some specific task that I absolutely need to handle before I buy anything new.
- It depends on what I'm going to get out of the new software. If it will improve efficiency and the number of things we can accomplish, we consider it. It has to be a lot better than what we currently have.

- Every three years we try to replace our oldest computer. I just purchased 3 Microsoft surface Pros because our sales people are so mobile.
- When the business was bought out we went to a new POS system, but the employees hated it (tears, frustration and angst). We had not done any research. We sought input on the new system and it's better. (I have another system on the back burner just in case)
- Our website is very, very outdated, but it's a huge process to update everything.
- Because I'm a homebased office, I can fudge and get by sticking with the old stuff for a while. I use Microsoft Office, I make every upgrade they provide.
- When I'm forced to, I do it. My computer died but luckily, I had backed up my data, so I didn't have a problem. I purchased a laptop.
- I'm in a unique position, my customers expect me to have the latest and greatest, so I upgrade frequently. I am leaning toward software as a service; the industry is moving that way, so I have to.
- My reporting software and the laptop that I use for clients are updated every year. My old equipment gets passed on to my employees.
- The transition to the solution (new software or hardware) is a pain.