Key Success Factors in the Seed Business

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Business Management Module
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Financial Dictionary

Definition: **entrepreneur**

A risk-taker who has the skills and initiative to establish a business.
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*In our cases, a SEED business!*
No single element of running a seed company is extremely difficult.
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The difficult part is that you need to do so many things at the same time!
Do you know how to produce high quality, cost-effective seed?
Can you attract and keep customers?
Do you know how to keep score?
Three Key Capabilities

- Production
- Marketing
- Financing
Key Success Factors

In the seed business, key success factors relate to these three functions – production, marketing, and financing – and how to accomplish them.

Accomplishing them well involves your team, your ability to plan, and your ability to execute.
#1: High Quality Production

You have to produce something in order to sell it!

It has to be very good for people to believe in you.

Tool #2: The Enemies of Seed Quality
#2: Cost Effective Production

Anybody can spend a fortune to produce high quality seed – but not everyone can produce high quality seed cost-effectively.

**Tool #7: 10 Major Production Bleeders**
#3: Good Marketing

Customers must understand the benefits of your product in order to decide if it is worth buying (or, in the case of seed, investing in.)
Farmers buy seed two ways:

**Rational**
- Price
- Performance
- Convenience
- Packaging
- Data
- ‘Academic’ recommendation

**Emotional**
- Value
- Trust
- Person selling
- Visual appeal
- Choice of peers
- “How I’m treated as a customer”
Trust

• Doing what you say you are going to do
• Putting your customer first
Cannot over-emphasize trust in the seed industry
#4: Financial Resources

Profits / Retained Earnings

Investors

Good banking relationship

Why are these so important?
1. Access to capital for FS, equipment, other
2. Climactic conditions
3. Technical skills – each person has different skills
4. Marketing seeds given low buying culture
5. Balancing financial constraints with seed production requirements
6. High competition
7. Low availability of BS
8. Lack of modern equipment
9. Planning and coordination
10. Executing plans
11. Cash flow/staying afloat
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Know how to keep score!

Honesty before the numbers

Profit is like blood; without it you will die

Cash Flow
Feeders and Bleeders
#5: Good planning skills

Have a plan for your safari.

Then make a new plan.
#4: Good Planning Skills

- Foundation seed planning
- Outgrower recruitment and training
- Production planning
- Input acquisition
- Demos
- Agrodealer recruitment
- Distribution
- Processing "bottleneck"
- Packaging decisions
- On and on...!
WHEN PLANNING, CLEAR WRITING IS A SIGN OF CLEAR THINKING

Keep it Simple
#6: Execution

*Product execution*

*Business execution*
Product... The Simple Rule

It’s not good enough if you wouldn’t plant it on your own farm.
Business Execution...

Fortune magazine survey

Why CEOs Fail

Seed Enterprises Management Institute
University of Nairobi
Fortune magazine survey:

What is the primary reason American CEOs get fired?

a. Lack of strategy
b. Poor financial results
c. Incorrect vision
d. Poor team-building
e. Lack of execution
Why CEOs Fail

“It's rarely for lack of smarts or vision. Most unsuccessful CEOs stumble because of one simple, fatal shortcoming.”

Fortune magazine
Why CEOs Fail

“It's bad execution. As simple as that: not getting things done, being indecisive, not delivering on commitments.”

“So how do CEOs blow it? More than any other way, by failure to put the right people in the right jobs—and the related failure to fix people problems in time”
#6: Execution

How much time do you spend on it?

Distractions –

too much travel and entertainment,
too much ‘advocacy/PR work’,
too much ‘acting like a CEO’ instead of ‘being a CEO’

Keep it real. Stay grounded, stay focused.
“There are no shortcuts to anywhere worth going.”

Anonymous
#7: Ability to build and keep a good team

Simple truth: YOU CANNOT DO THIS ALONE!!!
Survey question:

What’s most important in a job?

People responded they wanted to:

1. Be on a good team
2. Have a voice in the decision-making
3. Know their efforts are appreciated
Hire slow, fire fast
In summary, you are an owner who must be able to implement these 7 Key Factors for Success.
What Do Owners Do?

⇒ Transcend functional boundaries
⇒ Don’t have the answers - find them
⇒ Deal in a 360° realm
⇒ Think long term
⇒ Know that their team drives success
⇒ Take personal risk
⇒ Are responsible for the “business score”
“Opportunities are usually disguised as hard work, so most people don’t recognize them.”

Ann Landers
Seed Nutrition Management Institute (SEMI)
“Some people regard private enterprise as if it were a predatory tiger to be shot. Others look upon it as a cow that they can milk. Only a handful see it for what it really is -- the strong horse that pulls the whole cart.”

Winston Churchill