

picture. We gotta get rid of some of the dogs. Maybe the survivors will have enough to eat.

6. Seek sales desk accountability. This is a most lofty idea, but how do you do it?

7. Last but not least, set production limits.

Can you see what effect is desired by all of the above? Concentrate the power of the industry in fewer hands and reduce the supply. All solutions lead down that path. You should have seen us out there, 1200 growers, enjoying each other's company trying to act against our nature. Be non-competitive, cooperative. Tough times make for strange bedfellows.

There is finally enough pain in this industry for all of us to try some things we have never thought of before.

While I think it is very healthy for our industry to go through this process, I firmly believe it will be actions by individuals that will lead us out of this situation.

Individuals who understand the law of supply and demand.

Price follows demand.

Reduce supply, increase price.

So take out your losers and don't plant.

Individuals who can't compete will go out of business.

Their costs are out of line.

You want to survive, better enjoy the siege.

The weak of heart will not make it, this is not made for TV.

Individuals who understand marketing will survive.

You might not like to hear it, but I don't think the average consumer cares where his/her food comes from in this country.

People who understand marketing know their customer.

If you can't run with the big dogs, find a niche and then, for God's sake, don't tell anyone.

Individuals who aren't afraid to leave and go get a job.

Remember to escape is to survive.

There is life after farming.

Individuals will make better decisions if they understand the problem.

You will read such books as *The End of Agriculture in the American Portfolio* and *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* and my current favorite, *Who Moved My Cheese?*

You will then realize your survival solution is as unique as you are.

There is no silver bullet.

Individuals who know that working with their competitors will make them stronger.

Find a way to reduce the number of sellers by joining forces. Your independence is killing most of you.

Individuals who understand the industry will survive without you.

Humility is a powerful human trait.

While you believe, wrongly, that this industry is important to your survival, not one of us is important to this industry for its survival.

It will be the random acts of 10,000 apple growers acting in their own self-interests that will make this industry survive. No one is in charge. There is no one driving the bus. If you try to call one single place for advice, you will get a recording. It will give you many options but the only key that works is "press 9 and the pound key to listen to this menu again."

Have you ever been to Los Angeles International Airport? Thousands of people individually trying to get their baggage and find transportation to leave. Observe how people act in this situation. Some are happy, some get mad, some scurry around, some give up, but without anyone in charge it is everyone's motivation that finally gets them out of there. How can a system this complex operate without direction, control or welfare? The same way this industry will survive: the actions of you, individuals, acting in your own self-interest.

# Apple Growers' Survival Strategy



## Mitch Lynd

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Presented at the 44th Annual IDFTA Conference, February 17-21, 2001, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

### BULLDOZERS

**N**o two blocks of trees are equally profitable. Identify the worst performers and remove them. I'm better off, and collectively the industry is better off.

#### UNFILTERED FEEDBACK

Find out what the consumer really wants. What the consumer told the head produce clerk, who told the buyer's secretary, who told the buyer, who phoned the broker, who phoned the sales manager's secretary, who told the salesman, who called the packing house manager, who told the orchard manager, who told the owner, who called the tree salesman sets us up for *filtered feedback*. The biggest advantage direct marketers have over others—they talk directly to thousands of consumers—no filtered feedback. There are too many of the wrong kind of apples being grown and not nearly enough of the right ones.

#### CHANGE

The one sure thing about the future is change. Deal with it. We train our people in interpersonal relationship skills, conflict resolution, foundations of effective conversation and other personal skills that equip us to deal more effectively with change.

#### DIVERSIFICATION

Invest some of your money and profits outside of agriculture. Grow more than one kind of apple. Grow more crops besides apples. Sell in more than one targeted market.

#### DIRECT MARKETING IS IN

Wholesale is out for selected customers whose objective is to extract the last drop

of our blood through unreasonable price concessions. We still wholesale to customers who respect us as suppliers and see us as a vital link in developing an efficient supply chain from the field to the consumer. For those who view us as partners, we will continue to pursue their wholesale opportunity. For those who do not, we run the bulldozers. Direct marketing is fabulous for those within an hour's drive of a metro center.

#### CHANGE AND SOME QUOTES ABOUT IT

Compiled by Mitch Lynd for the Nova Scotia Apple Growers, January 22, 2001.

##### RECOGNIZING THE NEED FOR CHANGE

1. "Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored." Aldous Huxley
2. "Strangers are always coming and with different ways. There will be no future for those who do not change." Louis L'Amour

##### ATTITUDE AND VISIONING, THE POWER TO CHANGE

1. "When you blame others you give up your power to change." Anon.
2. "We get what we settle for." Anon.
3. "Be careful of your goals because you are likely to achieve them." H. L. Mencken
4. "I was going to buy a copy of *The Power of Positive Thinking* then I thought, what the hell good would that do?" Ronnie Shakes (comedian)
5. How many psychologists does it take to change a light bulb? (Answer: Only one, but the light bulb has to really want to change.)

*The biggest advantage direct marketers have over others—they talk directly to thousands of consumers—no filtered feedback.*

##### TAKING ACTION, RISK AND COMMITMENT

1. "Even if you're on the right track you'll get run over if you just sit there." Will Rogers
2. "Do or not do. There is no try." Yoda (*Return of the Jedi*)
3. "I've not failed in trying to create a light filament. I have discovered 1200 materials that do not work." Thomas Edison

4. "Everything that I did in life that was worthwhile I caught hell for." Earl Warren Chief Justice, U.S. Supreme Court
5. "We are building the bridge as we cross it." Bob Moser, Vice Pres, OSU and Dean of The College of Food, Agriculture and Environmental Science
6. "Money can't buy happiness, but it will pay the salaries of a huge research staff to study the problem." Billy Vaughn
7. "The biggest obstacle of discovery isn't ignorance, it's the illusion of knowledge." Daniel Boorstin
8. "You can't build a reputation on what you are going to do." Henry Ford
9. "Build it and they will come." (*Field of Dreams.*)
10. "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." Charles Parkerson

### CONCLUSIONS

1. "For a business to succeed it must have an unfair advantage." *Harvard Business Review*
2. "While the apple industry was prosperous, we were all comfortably numb." Ed Fackler, co-founder Midwest Apple Improvement Association
3. "I don't skate to the puck, I skate to where it's going to be." Wayne Gretsky
4. "Life is like a dog sled team. If you ain't the lead dog, the scenery never changes." Louis Grizzard
5. "Lord, when we're wrong, make us willing to change. And when we are right, make us easy to live with." Peter Marshall

## COMPACT FRUIT TREE

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