

Make Use of Small-business Feedback

As a small-business owner, you have heard about the importance of listening. But do you know what to do after you have finished listening?

“There are two steps you must take every time after you have listened to someone,” says (Insert name and title) of (Insert county). “You must thank the person and tell him or her how you plan on using the information.”

If the information is in regard to an issue the customer is having, your response will be different than if the information you receive is general in nature. The former requires your immediate response while the later might be something you file away. That information can be used in future planning.

“Filing information for future use is certainly valid,” says Glenn Muske, the North Dakota State University Extension Service’s rural and agribusiness enterprise development specialist. “Sometimes it takes hearing from several sources before a clear path of action presents itself.”

In terms of information filed for future use, when you do begin to take action, returning to the person or people who provided the information is a great idea. Let them know again that you appreciate their input and outline the changes you are making because of their thoughts, ideas and concerns. People will feel appreciated that you remembered and used their feedback.

You have no clear time when you need to do something with the information you have gathered and filed. As the business owner, you must analyze what impact the information you receive could have on the success of your business. Hearing certain information one time is too often. Your action must be immediate and swift. Other information requires a somewhat immediate response as well, but it may require you do some quick additional digging to confirm or evaluate your options.

Some of the information you receive can be gathered until you reach what might be considered a tipping point, or when the path you need to take seems to have been fairly well defined. You never will have perfect information. Probably one fault of many business owners is that they waited too long by trying to get more and/or better information.

So you listened. Now what? Thank and act as necessitated by the information you have. And let those who were part of the feedback system know what you are doing and why.

For help, contact your local Extension Service office at [insert phone number and email address]. Also visit NDSU’s small-business support website at www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusiness and sign up for the monthly newsletter. Or check out Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/NDSUextsmallbiz> or Twitter at @gmuske.

Other resources include <http://powerofbusiness.net> and www.eXtension.org/entrepreneurship. The Small Business Administration and its related organizations, such as the Small Business Development Centers and SCORE, also can be valuable resources.

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For more information, contact glenn.muske@ndsu.edu or call (701) 328-9718. You also can visit our website, www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusiness.