

Disrupt Your Small Business for Success

The world we live in is not a static place.

This is true in every aspect of life, including small business. For small-business owners, things are changing, and those changes are happening at an ever-increasing pace.

“Doing business tomorrow will be different than doing business today,” says (Insert name and title) of (Insert county). “And doing business next week might be something we can’t even imagine today.”

Disruption is another term people use when discussing the changing environment in which we live. When disruption occurs, you are forced to respond in some manner. No longer can you continue to do business as you have in the past.

“While small-business owners may not know exactly what the next disruption coming down the road will be, they know it’s coming,” says Glenn Muske, the North Dakota State University Extension Service’s rural and agribusiness enterprise development specialist. “Knowing it’s coming means the owner has a chance to determine his or her response.”

Owners can respond in one of two ways:

- One choice is to do nothing. Let the disruption come and then respond.
- The other choice is to be proactive and to disrupt the business themselves. The event no longer happens at a random, and perhaps a bad, time.

Taking a proactive stance gives the owner several advantages.

For one thing, bad timing is taken out of the equation somewhat. The disruption occurs on the owner’s time schedule.

Second, being proactive means that the owner is not forced into playing catch-up but instead has done at least a little preparation in terms of possible responses. Even if the decision is to do nothing, the owner has made that decision and has not let circumstances make the decision for him or her.

By disrupting your own business, you also can get a jump on your competitors. Not only might you get a step ahead, but you put them into the position of being behind and responding to the external environment.

Being proactive changes the mindset you are working under. No longer are changes in the environment a threat. Instead, they become opportunities. You take control.

The bottom line: Disrupt your business before others decide to disrupt it for you.

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.