



## Green Thumb Business Operations Interview Notes

Interviewee: Business Owner Kim

### Understanding the Business

Questions	Business Owner Answers
Tell us a little bit about your business. What does your business do?	We are a small nursery that sells a variety of indoor and outdoor plants, flowers, and shrubs. We specialize in bonsai trees and carry a variety of types and sizes. Our facility grows plants both inside and outside.
How long have you been in business?	We are a fairly new business and have been open for just shy of one year.
How many employees do you have?	We currently employ three workers. Two of the employees care for the plants while the other manages the cash register and processes customer transactions. The two owners, husband and wife, also work in the store. Some of their tasks include ordering products and supplies, tracking inventory, managing finances, and preparing and submitting state and federal reports.
What are your hours/days of operation?	We are open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

### Understanding the Processes and Priority

Questions	Business Owner Answers
Walk me through a normal day. What needs to happen every day for the business to run?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Each day the plants must be checked for moisture. If they are dry, they must be watered, but first the “feeding” schedule must be checked. Depending on the growth stage of the plant, specific nutrients will need to be added to the water.</li> <li>➤ The light bulbs in the indoor grow room must be changed every three to four months. Check the “Light Replacement” data table on the door to the grow room to be sure the bulbs do not need to be replaced.</li> <li>➤ Be sure all air conditioners and dehumidifiers are working properly in the grow rooms.</li> <li>➤ Log in to the POS system and take a quick scan of inventory to be sure everything is accurate. Be sure you have enough change and bills in the cash drawer.</li> <li>➤ At the end of the day, count the cash and be sure to leave \$300 in the drawer to complete sales transactions for the following day. Place the cash in the safe. Check all grow rooms to be sure the monitors are working properly, the temperature and moisture levels are good, and all of the bulbs are on.</li> </ul>



Questions	Business Owner Answers
What is the most important task you complete in a day? In a week?	<p><u>Daily Tasks:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Check plants for disease and be sure they are sufficiently watered.</li> <li>➤ The indoor plants need to be monitored for temperature and humidity. Be sure both are at acceptable levels.</li> <li>➤ Be sure the building is locked and any equipment is turned off before leaving at the end of the day.</li> </ul> <p><u>Weekly Tasks:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Run reports for sales and inventory. Be sure you are making a profit and you have enough stock on hand.</li> <li>➤ Look at possible items to mark down the sale price on. For example, if it is later in the season, you will want to mark down annuals. If it is holiday season, you will want to adjust your inventory to reflect products that represent the occasion.</li> <li>➤ Once per week the plants must be treated for mites and other pests or plant disease. We must have an employee that is certified for pesticide application and must take appropriate courses through a three-year period in order to maintain certification.</li> </ul>
What tasks take you the most time?	Watering the plants takes anywhere from three to four hours depending on how many people are watering at one time and how large the inventory is. Pesticide application can also be time-consuming.
What would bring your business to a halt if it were not available?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Our business cannot function without water. We have backup generators to run the lights in the grow rooms; however, in the case of draught when water is limited or nonexistent, we need to import jugs of water to keep the plants alive. This is both costly and laborious to have to carry jugs of water throughout the nursery instead of a hose.</li> <li>➤ Organic pesticide is also a necessary product for the success of our business. Certain plants are more susceptible to disease than others. It is important to develop a schedule and treat these plants on a regular basis to avoid a situation where the disease is beyond treatment and kills the plants or shrubs.</li> </ul>



### Understanding the Business Operations

Questions	Business Owner Answers
<b>Order Supplies</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Say that your ability to order supplies was interrupted; is there another way for you to order supplies? This interruption could be in the form of your supplier being out of stock or their website being down. Or, if you order your supplies online, your internet service could be interrupted. Do you have a backup to your normal process?</li> <li>2. How long could your business function if you could not order supplies?</li> <li>3. At what point would you know you needed to switch to an alternative solution to procure your supplies?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Nutrients are one of my highest-priority supplies that I order on a regular basis. I usually order my supplies online from Amazon. If I couldn't do that, I could alternatively order them online from The Growers Hut. Worst-case scenario, I think I could pick them up in person from our local farm and garden store.</li> <li>2. I order three months' worth of nutrients at a time, so when I see the nutrients are getting low, I place another order. I could function for three days without them, but my plants would begin to show stunted growth and a lack of luster and vibrancy on the fourth day.</li> <li>3. Shipping usually takes two business days. I would start to worry after a day if I couldn't order my supplies online as planned, since I wouldn't want to pay for expedited shipping and I certainly wouldn't want to lose any of my plants or damage my products due to lack of supplies.</li> </ol>
<b>Process Customer Transactions</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How are customer transactions processed? Is the internet needed to access the point-of-sale (POS) system?</li> <li>2. Typically stores use some form of technology to process customer transactions. At times technology may fail, such as a crashed hard drive or power outages. How would you process a customer's</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Customer sales are processed using a cloud-based POS system. We require that customers give us their first and last name, address, and a contact number or email address. We use our POS system to track information such as which products are most popular, what regions (city, town) our clients are from, and our general sales and profit.</li> <li>2. In the case of equipment failure or loss of power, we would document all sales on paper. The information would be entered into the POS system once the problem was rectified. We use a local IT company to repair our equipment. Depending on if parts are needed for the computer, it could take up to a week for the computer to be functioning again. For this reason, we keep a backup laptop to access the POS system.</li> </ol>



Questions	Business Owner Answers
transaction if the POS system could not be accessed?	
<b>Creating Security Reports</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What type of security information is documented, and how is it reviewed and reported?</li> <li>2. How do you monitor security equipment and video footage?</li> <li>3. Do you have a backup plan if there is a problem with a camera or accessing video due to internet outage or equipment failure?</li> <li>4. Do you have a plan in place for employees in case of robbery or physical attack?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Our security features include a video doorbell so we can see people pull into the drive and into the parking lot. We also have several security cameras monitoring the following locations: cash register, grow rooms, above the emergency exit (outside), and the entrance.</li> <li>2. All video is stored in a cloud environment. We purchase a subscription for storage of video footage for six-month periods in case we need to review footage from previous weeks or months. The cameras are checked periodically by the owners. Notifications are sent to their smartphones if activity occurs outside of regular business hours. We have an 800 lb. safe on the premises to store important documents and cash.</li> <li>3. In the case of power outage, we have our cameras set up to run from the generator. Internet outages are a bit more paralyzing for us as we do not have a way to access cloud storage or live video from a smartphone.</li> <li>4. We have documented standard operating procedures for the store, which include directions of what to do in case of a robbery.</li> </ol>
<b>Track Grow and Care Technique Data</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Department of Agriculture has asked that you track the growth and care techniques of the Japanese maple and Bodhi trees. How is the information regarding growth and care techniques for plants documented?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Department of Agriculture has provided a software program that enables us to track the growth and care techniques. We enter the information when we plant seeds or create clones as the start date. We continue to document growth (feeding, budding, and blooming for example) until the plant or shrub is sold. We also document pesticide and nutrient applications.</li> </ol>
<b>Creating Safety Reports</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are some of the dangers faced with applying pesticides?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We use only organic pesticides. However, if any of the pesticide gets into the applicator's eyes, they must be flushed thoroughly with water for several minutes. The pesticides we use may also</li> </ol>



Questions	Business Owner Answers
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Are there other safety issues that are faced by employees, such as when running equipment?</li> <li>3. Once a safety violation or danger is identified, how is it documented and rectified?</li> </ol>	<p>cause respiratory issues if inhaled in large amounts, so a mask must be used. We also provide a full jumpsuit used only for applying pesticides.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Employees might encounter issues when using ladders and forklifts. We follow all standards for safety and make sure we are in compliance with required certifications for operating heavy machinery.</li> <li>3. We create monthly safety reports internally and follow OSHA guidelines for safety.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Inventory Tracking</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How are you tracking inventory?</li> <li>2. How do you document non-sale removal of plants? For example, if you lose several plants due to disease or neglect, how is that documented and reported?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How are you tracking inventory? Inventory is tracked through the POS and the Grow and Care software system provided by the Department of Agriculture. Each time we plant or clone a new plant, flower, or shrub, we document it in our Grow and Care software. Once the plant has reached a point for it to be shelved for sale, we enter it into our POS system in addition to the Grow and Care system. Once the plant has been sold, it is removed from the inventory in the POS system and logged as a sale in the Grow and Care system.</li> <li>2. Plants that are removed due to disease or neglect are documented in the Grow and Care system as “terminated,” and a reason is provided in a comment box. We also remove them from inventory in our POS system. When the inventory number of an item in the POS software is reduced (removed), the user is prompted to give a reason why it was removed.</li> </ol>