What Year Are You In?



No, this isn’t a question meant to see if you’re still cognizant after the holidays. It’s a valid one derived from all the talk percolating about New Year’s resolutions. Resolutions are often these giant pie-in-the-sky ideas that are ways to massively overcorrect bad behavior. The kind of bad behavior most of us enjoy…until we don’t.

If you’re setting goals for your business and deciding what you’re going to focus on and accomplish this year, think about gardening. Growing your business and gardening have a lot in common.

## Everything Has a Season

First, at the risk of sounding like the [Byrds](https://youtu.be/W4ga_M5Zdn4), there is a time and a purpose for everything. We tend to shoot big at the beginning of the year. We’re filled with excitement and the giddiness of potential. We grab a glass of bubbly and announce to anyone in ear shot that “this is my (or our) year!”

But every year can’t be your year. Not in the way that it was Taylor Swift’s year in 2023.

There are years to plant, years to sow, years to harvest, and years to lay fallow. And that applies to business too. That doesn’t mean you go dormant with nothing to do. There’s always growth to be had but the outward signs of that growth look different from year to year (or in the case of gardening, season to season.)

## The Seasons of Business

When it comes to business, years may concentrate on research, growth, thriving, exploration. Repeat. Let’s break that down:

### Research

This is an inner year for your business, one where the focus is understanding and setting the foundation for later growth and thriving. Your focus is inward and building your knowledge. You might spend time cultivating an understanding of your market during this time. Generally, this is where most businesses start but even an established business needs a time of inner focus and planning.

### Growth

This is the heady exciting time where you spend hours “in the field” doing the work, making the connections, building something bigger. This season will begin with unabashed excitement and may end in sheer exhaustion. That’s the nature of growth.

### Thriving

This season is where everything comes together—the planning and the building. You are reaping the benefits of your hard work and enjoying it. This is the harvest and while there’s still work to be done, you’re finally being recognized for your efforts. Conversely, this is also the season where you could fall short of expectations.

### Exploration

In gardening, this season is referred to as the dormant time, when you allow the fields to go fallow to have a successful harvest next year. But since no business can afford to be dormant for a year (or even a season), I’m referring to it as a time of exploration. You’ve planned, grown, and thrived (or not). Now you’re looking out on the horizon for the next big possibility. You’re brainstorming and developing. Some business owners may use this time to seek development, coaching, or clarity. It's a season for both satisfaction and new possibilities. And when you uncover those possibilities, you’re back in research.

Everything in life has a season or a cycle. If you’re always concentrating on one area—like enormous growth, you’ll be neglecting others that are necessary to sustain that growth. Even in nature, things need to be cut back to thrive the following season.

While we used the terms *year* and *season* here, that does not mean your business needs to dedicate a year to any of these cycles. You may be able to focus on them in a quarter. When setting your business goals, be cognizant of your season or stage. Your growth will reflect it.

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