

GROWERTALKS

Growers Talk Business

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Collect Diamonds, Not Rocks

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You're surrounded by rocks. Some of those rocks—who knows which ones or how many there are—only look like regular rocks. But they aren't ordinary rocks; they're actually diamonds.

Your job is to find 'em.

All the obvious diamonds have already been discovered and claimed. They were easy to identify because they glittered in the sun. They got good grades, went to the best schools, studied things like law and engineering and maybe started their own businesses.

Most of the diamonds you discover will come to you “in the rough.” They're heading in the right direction, which is another way of saying they're coming from the wrong place. Removing “the rough” can be messy, painful and uncomfortable. It's not a fun process, but as bad as the polishing phase can be, there's even worse in store.

Some people come to us as “phony diamonds.” They're cubic zirconia and they're far more dangerous than plain old rocks. These folks look like diamonds. They wink and strut and go around pretending they're the real thing. “I'm grade-A diamond, baby, all the way!”

As a business owner or leader of a company, your most difficult task is to figure out people. You must judge the character of your employees. Your question is, “Who's really on my team?” Who's faking it? Who's just in it for themselves? Who's cubic zirconia?

This is an extraordinarily difficult job! What makes you qualified to judge people like this? Nothing, except you sign the paychecks, so you have to do it.

The cost of getting it wrong is great. The whole team suffers. And your customers will suffer, too, whether you see it or not.

The reward when you get it right is priceless. Things go smoothly. Your team enjoys every challenge they face. The positive energy builds and builds.

Rarely do employees stand up and announce, “Look, I'm not on the team. I'm a phony diamond. I only care about myself. I'm poison.” No, they try to hide this for as long as possible.

The main way to tell the difference between a true diamond and cubic zirconia is to see which one cracks under

pressure. Maybe they can't handle the stress of spring. Maybe they mistreat others. Maybe they steal from the company.

When people you thought were diamonds are proven otherwise, it can feel like a very bad thing. But it's a good thing. Listen, it's actually quite valuable!

They just did your toughest job for you. They gave you clarity. They showed you who they really are, what they really want. Don't get mad. It might not be the outcome you were hoping for, but it's still "mission accomplished." It's always better to know than it is to guess. Proof always beats assumptions.

In the end, business is definitely a team sport. So, while we must care about every individual, the priority must always be the team. We're diamond collectors, you and me.

Personally, I don't care all that much about the quality or perfection of the diamonds in my collection. Size or color don't matter, either. My diamonds have flaws. That doesn't faze me. I want the substance, not the beauty. I want durability.

They say, "Diamonds are forever," but that's a marketing fantasy. Nothing is forever. Your employees are not your "greatest asset" because they can't be owned. Never forget—you're renting your diamonds.

I don't know about you, but I'm so grateful for the diamonds I have in my collection ... and I can always use a few more! **GT**

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