

If you abandon projects too quickly, you'll always be in start-up mode. Sometimes a problem child just needs some tender loving care...



Don't give up too soon: keep tweaking a good idea

By Susan Abbott

Almost three years ago, I bought an orchid. It was beautiful, but after the first flowers faded, that was it. I thought I was caring for it properly, having listened carefully to the salesperson, read the brochure, the fertilizer label and several online articles. After more than a year of frustration, I couldn't figure out what was wrong.

Then I spoke to my friend Andrea who has many beautiful orchids. She helped me sort out correct watering. I was letting toxins build up in the soil because I wasn't soaking the plant.

I repotted, trimmed off the dead roots, used cinnamon to protect the cut spots from fungus and diligently watered using Andrea's method. The plant loved it, but still no flowers.

Then I tried changing fertilizers. Several weeks ago, I decided to give it a rest for the winter, and cut back on the fertilizer. Things would either happen in the spring, or they wouldn't.

Finally, incredibly, there is now the beginning of a flower spike. It's probably the wrong time of year, but I don't care. I feel so vindicated for my efforts to learn, and my testing of different approaches.

In business, we often give up on our orchids too soon.

We blame the idea instead of looking for the tweaks that would make the idea work. *[That orchid won't bloom. Too bad. Nice idea, but it's time to move on. Apple is having great success with dendrobiums. Google is all over azaleas. Gartner says the future is in geraniums. Time to get with the program.]*

We think the program is implemented just because we announced it. *[You told me we'd have flowers. Where are the flowers? What happened to all that fertilizer we invested in? If we're not getting flowers this quarter, we need to seriously rethink our investment here.]*

We focus on new sales and forget to keep tending the customers we already have. *[You shouldn't be spending so much time on that plant. Forget it and move on. There's hundreds of them at Home Depot.]*

To really move things forward where people are concerned, you need to invest real time. Customers take time to forgive you for the mistakes of the past. Your staff won't think you're committed unless you hang in with a program for at least a year. Hiring and training don't happen overnight. Launching a new brand or fixing an existing one is a multi-year mission.

Don't give up on your orchids.

We wish you success with your orchids -- er, projects -- during the year ahead. We help clients gather qualitative insights about customers and use them to grow bigger, more beautiful flowers. Please call us if we can help.

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