

Kin's Farm Market



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When Kin Wah Leung opened his first produce stand in 1987, he was "just trying to make a living." Twenty-two years later, he and his family are running a produce empire with 26 stores and revenues of \$63 million per year.

When the Leungs came to Canada, they didn't know anything about running a business, but they did know how to make a healthy meal – which always included lots of vegetables. Figuring that everyone else needed vegetables too, they opened an 8-foot produce stand on Granville Island.

"We wanted to market a product that we knew would sell," Kin says. "We always enjoyed eating healthy, so it was a no-brainer to go into the vegetable business."

The success of the produce stand led the Leungs to open

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their own produce shop in Richmond. Then, the idea of expanding to multiple stores was sparked during a business course Kin took at Vancouver Community College.

“I had a wonderful teacher, whose mentorship was priceless in getting Kin’s to expand,” Kin says. “We started with a business plan, then we just made sure to implement it. It is just as simple as that. A lot of people fail to grow their business simply because they are afraid of implementing it.”

The implementation stage was not without its challenges, however. Transitioning from one family-run shop to leading a team of people running 26 stores requires a change in management style, and new roles for everyone who was involved in the early stages of the business.

“We had to transition from being a family-operated business to becoming managers of a business,” Kin says. “We had to put systems in place to make sure that the business would run smoothly when we were not around.”

To develop those systems and grow the business, Kin embraced his inner entrepreneur, focusing on three key strategies:

“First, I never wait around waiting for things to happen,” Kin says. “I always try to turn ideas into action as fast as possible. Second, I am not afraid of making mistakes. We learn more from making mistakes than from not having mistakes at all. Third, I am always thinking from the customers’ perspective. I try to put myself in their shoes and I try to address their needs. This is key in keeping our customers satisfied. At the end of the day, the customers are the ‘engine’ of our business.”

That willingness to embrace mistakes as a learning opportunity has been a critical part of the growth of Kin’s Farm Market – since Kin points out that if you’re not willing to make mistakes you will never take the risks necessary to make your business grow.

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“The biggest challenges always present themselves when we are in the process of reaching new milestones,” Kin says. “The biggest challenges we faced were during the opening of our second store, then during the beginning of our new franchise program and thirdly, during our expansion to Ontario. If I were to go back, I would like to face the same challenges and to make the exact same mistakes, because these experiences made me what I am today.”

For those who are hoping to build their own business empire, but don't know how to get started, Kin offers the following advice:

1. Work hard every day, always focusing on turning ideas into action.
2. Focus on always learning new concepts and skills.
3. Always think outside the box and welcome changes.
4. Treat team members as family.
5. Exercise open and honest communication.

And one final word of wisdom from this established entrepreneur who's built a business empire starting with one small produce stand:

“As a business owner, you could not possibly be able to do everything. So, it is important to hire capable people and give them the flexibility to make decisions, make mistakes, learn, and improve.”

Kin's Farm market has 25 locations in BC. You can get information about the store nearest you, and find weekly specials, online at www.KinsFarmMarket.com.