

The background of the slide is a collage of images related to alligators. At the top, there's a close-up of an alligator's back showing its characteristic bumpy scales. On the right side, an alligator is shown in a swampy environment, with its head and open mouth visible, showing sharp teeth. The alligator's head is reflected in the water. At the bottom, there's a close-up of the alligator's skin, showing the texture of the scales. In the bottom left corner, there's a small inset image of a swampy landscape with trees and water.

**AVOIDING THE  
ALLIGATORS  
IN THE  
GIFT BASKET  
BUSINESS  
SWAMP**

**Joyce Reid**

***Avoiding  
the Alligators  
In Your  
Gift Business***

Joyce Reid

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## An Invitation for You

If your business is selling gifts and/or gift baskets,  
let me help you grow your business!

After you read about all the alligators to avoid as you start  
and grow your gift business,  
hop on over to our website that was created to help you do  
exactly that.

It's Free and Climbing on the Train to Success can be fun as  
well as profitable.

<https://giftbusinessowners.com>

## Avoiding the Alligators in the Gift Basket Swamp

When I was a kid, fishing with my dad in the swamps of northern Florida was always an adventure. Encounters with mosquitoes, water moccasins, and occasionally an alligator were always possible.

But he was an expert who knew the territory and had the skills to avoid the dangers and take home the fish.

Starting and growing a gift basket business is a lot like climbing into a boat and venturing through the swamps to hook the biggest and tastiest fish you can find. If you are fortunate enough to have a guide who knows the territory and can teach you the skills, chances of success are faster and more likely.

But even then, there are alligators waiting to quietly sneak up on you and turn your adventure into tragedy.

A knowledgeable guide isn't essential to success but having one eliminates a lot of trial and error and avoids a lot of alligators.

Twenty-nine years ago, when I first started my gift basket business, there weren't many guides available. Now, thanks to the Internet and the increasing numbers of successful gift basket company owners, there all kinds of resources available.

Anyone with a few dollars and the desire can start a gift basket business. But desire or lots of money doesn't guarantee that you won't be docking your boat and going home empty-handed before the sun is very high in the sky.

If you don't know the territory, there are lots of bends and turns as well as opportunities to veer away from your original course. It's easy to get confused

and lost.

That's where the GUIDE is invaluable. If he can't go along with you as you venture into the swamps of the business world, at least obtain enough information and acquire the skills needed. The confidence to map your way through the swamps and make good decisions is based on reliable planning and knowledge.

Failure to plan is one of the first alligators that many new business owners encounter. If you don't have a map of where you are going or how to get there, how will you know when you've arrived or made a disastrous wrong turn that is leading you straight to that alligator sunning himself on a hot summer day?

You need to have a clear idea of not only where you want to go but also where you don't want to end up.

For example, if you started your business as a way to spend more time with your family and didn't create a plan, your business may grow to the point that you are putting in more hours than you would at a full-time job.

Outgrowing your home office means hiring employees and renting space. That leads to increased overhead expenses and the necessity to create more business to cover the added costs. It becomes a vicious circle that could have been avoided by knowing where you want to end up.

You have to make every business decision with the initial goal of where you want to end up in mind.

One of the biggest and strongest alligators is fear. Fear of failure but also fear of success. These fears usually result from not having a map through the swamp or not knowing how you will handle that big fish when you catch it.

Overcoming those fears is made easier when you know what is ahead of you. Create goals and plan for them.

Failure to pay close attention to your accounting and financial reports is a huge alligator that can easily swamp your boat throwing you into the deep and murky waters of the river.

As you frantically try to swim for shore, fears of the unseen and the unknown creep over you and can create panic and drowning.

Design and marketing are usually what we think of as the essentials of the gift basket business but basic accounting skills and the ability to create and understand a profit and loss statement can be equally important.

There have been many gift basket businesses that have sold lots of baskets, been well known in the community and appeared to be successful only to fail as a result of not paying attention to that profit and loss statement.

There's a twin alligator out there waiting to grab you and that is bad inventory decisions.

As we grow our business, we attend the tradeshow and are easily tempted by the "cute little gift" that could theme a particular gift basket. Soon we've spent our cash on lots of cute little gifts and not enough on the products that we really need to create the baskets that sell. Attention to cash flow is a great weapon against this alligator.

An alligator that is just around the bend, when you first launch your boat and head down the river into the swamp, is the belief that "if you design it, the customers will come."

Failure to market is a leading cause of drowning in the gift basket business. This, too, is tied to both fear and cash flow.

There are lots of imaginative ways to get the word out about you and your business that require little money. This should be an important part of that initial map that you created with your business plan. There are many excellent resources and guides available to help you create this map.

Another alligator that you can usually find sunning himself along with this one is “trying to be all things to all people.”

Failure to create your own individual brand can cause you to drown as well. Branding is a current hype word created to sell marketing services and materials but basically it is just knowing who you are and how you want your business to be perceived. This is the first decision you should make when choosing a name and creating a marketing plan. All of your other marketing decisions should be based on that premise.

As an example, Ladybug Gift Baskets creates a vision of a fun business with lots of bright primary colors catering more to the personal market while Executive Services would be a more subdued corporate business.

The marketing for each company would be different. Ladybug might design her marketing materials with bright ladybugs, advertise in family-oriented publications and participate in the local shows that attract people interested in buying personal gifts.

Executive Services’ marketing materials would use more corporate related colors, participate in business to business tradeshow, and advertise in upscale venues where successful business owners and managers could be found.

Both businesses sell gift baskets but each has its own unique brand.

An important result of this is the ability to narrow your inventory to the types of gift baskets that you will be creating. Executive Services would probably have more gourmet food and upscale baskets and ribbons while Ladybug would have fun-themed foods and containers as well as bright ribbons.

There will always be times when the corporate customer will want a fun get-well basket for a client's child or a personal customer may want to send a thank-you gift to a business. But, knowing that these are not your principal sources of income influences how you shop at the tradeshow and what inventory you stock.

Sometimes we get so busy and wrapped up in the daily activities of our business and personal lives that we let another alligator sneak up on us. That alligator is "failure to provide the kind of customer service that we expect to receive from a business".

We have to remember that our customers don't care about our personal problems and the fact that we haven't planned for them. For example, no matter how sick you or your kids are, you are expected to answer your phone, check your online orders, and be in business. If a customer can't depend on you for service, your competition is just around the corner.

And people have long memories. I would never buy a car from a particular local dealer because of poor customer service I received from them over ten years ago.

Being easy to reach is essential to customer service. If you work at another job, you have to provide an option that will allow potential customers to reach you quickly. An answering machine works in many cases but a cell phone or answering service is much better.



And don't make the mistake of thinking that all of your customers will send or respond to text messaging. Believe it or not, there are those who do not have cell phones, or have flip phones that don't use text messaging, or even have text messaging blocked. I'm one of those who has text messaging blocked on my cell phone so you would never be able to reach me by sending me a text message. There are many others out there like me.

Trying to imitate your competition is another familiar alligator. There's no way we can compete with Walmart, Costco or Sam's Club on price. Trader Joe's, Farmer's Market, and most of the grocery stores and florists create gift and fruit baskets.

The successful gift basket business doesn't attempt to compete on their level but instead provides quality and services that these businesses are unable to. The customers who buy from me are not the same people who buy gift baskets from any of these other businesses.

Perhaps you have other gift basket companies as competition in your community. Even then, don't imitate. Create your own unique reasons to buy from you.

There are many more alligators waiting to snap up the unwary gift basket person whose boat is winding its way through the swamps. Just as fishing with my dad was an adventure that I look back on with fondness, so can creating and growing a successful gift basket business.

There are always unknown alligators waiting around the bend. Having a knowledgeable guide, creating a good map, and acquiring the necessary skills will make the difference.

Happy Gift Basket fishing!