



## **Please Pass the Pumpkin Seeds**

### **By Aaron Crowley**

Every good thing comes at a cost. And so it is with jack o lanterns and baked pumpkin seeds. Nothing typifies the changing of the seasons like a big plump pumpkin on the porch and cookie trays full of salted seeds.

But the part between the pumpkin patch and the crunchy snack is almost unpleasant enough to compel a dad to tell the kids to paint their pumpkins and buy the seeds at the store. The unsavory part? The scooping and scraping the stringy orange guts. It is a sticky, slimy, and smelly job, but unavoidable if one is to enjoy the benefits of this time honored tradition.

Running a stone business is no different. There are many rewards that are accompanied by some tasks that are, if not unsavory, at least less glamorous and unpleasant. And these tasks are as necessary for the long term success and satisfaction of ownership as are new sales and sexy automated equipment.

Three crucial duties that are easy to overlook, are Safety, Accurate Financial Statements, and Taxes. Negligence in these areas can stop a successful business in its tracks.

**Safety:** Few business owners would intentionally or knowingly put their employees in harms way, yet without vigilance and attention, a worker in this industry can be crippled or killed in an instant or suffer a lifetime of pain and suffering. First, material handling: Does the company have clear written policies that comply with OSHA and MIA standards? New trainees should be shocked into an awareness of how dangerous slab handling can be and trained on how to stay out of harm's way. Second, lifting: Does it budget enough man power on the job site when carrying large pieces up stairs and into houses? Additional help or specialized equipment must be available to reduce crippling back injuries. Third, dry grinding and silica: If a company hasn't made the switch to having a dust free shop, it should have serious ventilation and respirators for its crew. Note: "respirators" and not dust masks.

**Accurate Financial Statements:** Having a clear understanding or "accounting" of the company's financial performance last month, is crucial to achieving victory in this business. Without it, one could be easily deceived into thinking all is well, when doom is right around the corner. There are some great software programs for bookkeeping these days that can provide an owner with incredible insight into the inter workings of their business thru specialized reports. But unless that

owner wants a second part time job, a bookkeeping professional should be hired to run it.

**Taxes:** The good news about taxes is that a business only pays them when it's making money. The bad news is that they are a serious drain on cash flow every 3 months when estimated quarterly taxes are due. If those periodic payments haven't been made, April 15 can sink a cash strapped company. Like bookkeeping, tax accounting should be left to the professionals as their insight and wise counsel can save the business thousands and thousands of dollars.

Successful business is like pumpkins in autumn, the finished product is pleasant, while getting there isn't so much. So let us roll up our sleeves and get to work knowing that while it's sometimes a messy job, the pay off at the end is huge.