

BUILD TODAY'S TEAM for TOMORROW'S ECONOMY

Motivating meaningful change can improve the culture of your business

By John Kennedy

As our industry returns to the new “normal,” the need to rebuild, renew and re-engage has never been more important. It appears America is roaring back, and we need to be ready for the five-year run.

Recently a respected economist reported that the next five years will be a wonderful opportunity to drive sales, profits and success in our growing economy – it’s all looking up for the industry, and we deserve every dollar coming our way.

Capturing every dime is essential to making the most of this economic momentum.

But the bigger issue: Are you prepared for the predicted growth on the horizon? Do you have the right folks on your team – the foundation to build the next five years of your business? If so, great!

If not ... it is time to make that change.

Overall, there are three types of change: change by crisis, change by drift and change by design.

To build a new and improved culture to meet the new and improved needs of our clients, we need to design and build our team.

Forming

The first step in building your team is called forming – and that means looking at every player and determining the right seat for him or her on the bus. This will help your team go from good to great.

Storming

Second is called storming – facilitating and debating the changes necessary to get to where you are headed (Insight: Having the right team is far more important than the direction you are headed. With the right team, anywhere is possible.)

Norming

The third stage is called norming, and this is where the traction begins – getting everyone aligned to a common cause, purpose or direction.

Whether it is 98.5 percent fill rate on your orders, reducing energy usage, raising the average sale on each transaction/client (up-selling green) or increasing customer satisfaction ratings, these can become the established norms that everyone can believe in, buy into and deliver.

Some clients choose values such as integrity, respect, faith, teamwork and commitment. These are also powerful “norms” to consider.

True leadership is where the norms are established, communicated and measured for success – daily! The team is only as great as the leader who is willing to invest to make them great. How invested are you?

Performing

And lastly, my favorite: performing. What incentive programs do you have in place to make sure that not only engagement but also rewards for excellence are in play?

(Continued on page 62)



MEET JOHN
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BOLD IDEAS. BIG RESULTS.

New England Grows – scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 4 – Friday, Feb. 6, 2015 in Boston – is renowned for its innovative educational conference and world-class exposition.

The annual event connects more than 11,000 of the region's top green industry professionals with leading suppliers from around the globe. New England Grows was recently named one of the fastest growing trade shows in the country by Trade Show Network News. Always on the lookout for emerging trends, the 2015 Grows program includes some of the top names in today's green industry.

An impressive speaker lineup includes urban trendsetters, policy-shaping environmentalists and hard-driving entrepreneurs. With more than 50 educational offerings, home and garden retailers have plenty to choose from including:

- *From Farm to Fantastic: The Hole Family's Retail Journey* with Jim Hole
- *Chic Plants for Modern Gardens* with Kelly Norris
- *Garden Center Success: A Practical Five-Step Formula* with Rick Segel
- *Heaven is a Garden: Designing Serene Outdoor Spaces* with Jan Johnsen
- *Plant Extroverts: Wonderful Woodies & Praiseworthy Perennials* with Jared Barnes

The Grows exposition will be jam-packed with more than 1,000 booths displaying the hottest new plants, equipment, technology and more. Check out NewEnglandGrows.org, or download Grows' mobile app, for a complete list of suppliers who are ready to do business and will be offering show specials.

IGCs can join The Garden Center Group at Grows and single out the products they think have the best sales potential by nominating them for the Retailers' Choice Awards. Tom Kegley, acclaimed marketing consultant, will announce the award recipients on Feb. 5 and will lead a tour of the trade-show floor to showcase the winners.

More Grows highlights include a Kick-off event at Laugh Boston; Women in Horticulture Networking Luncheon; Learning Hubs; Sprint Sessions and a Live Patio Build on the Expo floor; as well as a chance for attendees to earn Hoisting License Continuing Education credit.

To learn more about New England Grows, and to register, visit NewEnglandGrows.org.



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MANAGEMENT

I love creating incentive programs for organizations. In essence, you cannot expect what you cannot inspect, and rewards for excellence in inspection are a very key ingredient in building and sustaining a successful team.

Setting the metrics in place for basic success is important, but what is imperative is what happens when we go above and beyond the call of duty.

A classic example of mine is a grower and garden center on the east coast. We were looking at ways to increase the average transaction for each client visit. We formed the team, stormed ideas, came up with a norm and executed (performed) it extremely well.

The team agreed that a particular soil amendment would be a great way to up-sell anyone who is buying plant material.

They all believed in the product, they were knowledgeable of its features and benefits, and they all saw the potential in adding it to any purchase.

We reviewed the numbers from the previous year and set a "game" where everyone could participate and win.

If we sold twice the amount as last year, each team member would receive a \$10 gift card. If we sold three times the amount, each team member

would receive a \$20 gift card, and so on.

The team committed to the game, and the managers tracked it each day. They reported how the team was performing, and they motivated the team to sell five times the amount that they had done during the same time last year. Not too shabby!

The best part about this success story is the momentum it created – a belief that when united after a common cause, motivated by leadership and supported by other team members they can accomplish great things. Who doesn't want this?

We created a solid and unified force of people and energy focused on accomplishing the same mission.

Other success stories include rewarding the team with a monetary spiff when customer satisfaction ratings continue to perform at 94 percent or better three months in a row. Studies show that higher than average satisfaction ratings translate to higher than average sales – every time.

What about creating incentive programs around energy reduction, fuel usage, safety, inventory management, shrink, accounts receivable, call-in-sick days, overtime hours, new client acquisition, client sales growth, client retention or – my favorite of all – sales.

Creating a culture of sales and service is paramount in today's new economy.

The client's expectations have changed dramatically over the last five years. What used to be acceptable is no longer acceptable and those growers, nurseries, garden centers and landscape companies that get it will grow – those that don't, won't!

It's that simple.

Clients' new expectations – as I have researched – are a perfect product, delivered by caring, friendly people in a timely way.

Which of these three do you have? Which are missing? And what are you willing to do about it?

Change by design is one idea, one customer, one team and one change at a time. **LGR**



John Kennedy is an industry strategist, author and speaker who will be presenting this topic at New England Grows in February. You won't want to miss this relevant and timely topic to drive change

and opportunity in 2015 and beyond. He can be reached at www.upsellinggreen.com or by email at john@ishakeitup.com

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