



Make sure you and your team are ready to have your best spring yet and set your garden center up for even more success in the future.

By John Kennedy

As we enter into the magic “100 days of spring” in our garden center industry, the three short months of “driving dough,” or as the Rolling Stones kind of sang, “I see a red ledger and I want to paint it black,” it’s a good time to sharpen your strategic tools and deliver every revenue-generating opportunity you possibly can.

When 60 to 70 percent of your revenue is generated in such an abbreviated amount of time, every activity, every step, every touch, every strategy matters.

Strategy 1: If you are going to grow your business, you must grow your people.

As I work with multiple industries around the world, a common theme does seem to percolate to the top of every business owner’s concerns — what motivates employees to perform?

How can I build an engaged workforce that is as committed to the health and wealth of the company as I am?

The answer is both complicated and simple.

First you need to go back to square one ... to the **hiring phase** of employee engagement.

Are you doing an appropriate job in the effort of interviewing? Are you crystal clear in the expectations of employees that you invite to join your existing team (or the expectations of the employees you currently employ while we are at it)?

Bringing on some seasonal workers to fill the gaps as you move into your busy season does not automatically mean you must settle for mediocrity.

Setting **standards**, holding all employees **accountable**, driving leaders to own their departments and setting **consistent brand expectations** are key to your strategic success in 2017 and beyond.

Now that we have established the importance of **hiring right**, how do we do at **inspiring right**, as well?

The top needs every employee desires in workplace America have remained the same for well over 50 years. So if you are wondering what motivates today’s workforce, it’s the same it has been for the many decades that you have been open (and in the case of **Dickman Farms** in Auburn, New York, that equals over 11 decades).

As we move to a more engaged workforce at Dickman Farms (one of a small group of clients within the green industry I am engaged

to drive momentum, direction and revenue in 2017 and beyond), we needed to first look at the leadership team.

We have chosen to take a unique approach and created a “self-directed” team of leaders focused not only on their own activities of daily revenue-generation, but also equally focused on employee engagement as well.

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They are nicknamed the “Fab Four.” Although one of them does hold the title of general manager, they all hold the responsibility of general leaders — driving a consistent message of unity of leadership to the entire garden center team.

If we are to grow an engaged workforce, we must be mindful what we feed it!

“You grow what you feed.”

If you feed fear, you grow fear. If you feed

negativity and gossip, you grow negativity and gossip.

If you feed hope, you grow hope. If you feed success and finding folks doing things right, you grow success.

At Dickman Farms, the “Fab Four” is committed to growing approachability, listening, empathy, compassion and engagement.

The way that will be accomplished is through setting standards for **plants, people, process and promotion.**

Kelly, Kate, Christin and Stephanie will each own their role in delivering a list of standards that will address the “Fab Four” Strategic Initiatives within Dickman Farms Garden Center in 2017 and then communicate and engage the entire team each and every day to what part they will play in the success of that day.

When you put your strategic tools in place on a daily basis, communicate the outcome of the effort on a daily basis and then measure and report on a weekly basis, you have a much greater chance of meeting and exceeding expectations on a monthly basis.

Please shy away from the temptation to report monthly goals monthly!

When you have 100 days to make up 70 percent of your revenue, waiting until the end of the month to alert folks we are behind is 29 days too late in my book.

Strategy 2: Identify the revenue-generating activities that your employees must know at any given time.

I shop at a local grocery store where that memo has not been delivered. More often than not, the grocery carts are scattered throughout parking lots ... stranded out in the lonely sea of pavement.

I see some customers making the effort to lasso them for their own to use, but I see some folks just grabbing a basket instead (loss of revenue opportunity is tough to track, but if you pay attention, you can see the hemorrhaging all around you).

When you track your number of transactions and your average transaction, which you absolutely should be doing every day, don't just assume they are buying less or not coming by.

Maybe your customers are leaving without buying because the strategic tools necessary (carts, baskets, employees) are not at the ready to assist them in the buying experience.

Suggestion: Create a RevGen list for each department and ensure the activities are done on a daily basis.

Whether it's a checklist or a “huddle” that is offered each day, driving revenue in each department is the difference of working “in” your business (activities that generate activity) and working “on” your business (activities that generate revenue).

This strategy has been implemented with great results from another industry client, Van

There are few things worse within an organization than a team of employees living in the dark relating to the effort and commitment they are making day in and day out.

Wilgen's Garden Center and Garden Marts in Connecticut.

Each department and each employee within that department is informed and engaged in activities that will drive margin dollars to the bottom line while balancing a wonderful shopping experience for their consumers.

We facilitated a team strategic plan, engaged the teams in crafting their own playbook to execute the strategy, and will drive activities and efforts that will maximize the time and



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talent during the magic 100 days of spring. One thought ... one over-reaching goal is **margin contribution**.

Strategy 3: Measure and report the effort of the team.

In the interest of momentum and engagement, there is a concept that states, "You can't expect what you can't inspect," or also known as, "You can't manage what you can't measure."

The importance of a system and culture of reporting can't be emphasized enough as a success strategy for your "100 days of spring."

The "dashboard" or scoreboard allows an opportunity for each and every team member to get a glimpse into the success of the season.

Creating a compelling method of reporting allows the employees to not only feel valued and respected for their effort, but also shows the measurable outcome of their investment of time and talent to drive a wonderful customer experience that affects revenue, profitability and growth.

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the dark relating to the effort and commitment they are making day in and day out.

Leadership needs to commit to a daily update on the health of the organization. Whether that is measured in a "secret shop" performed by an un-biased party or the increase in the average transaction that we are driving, communication is key.

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My son Ben is able to now access his grades online at any point in his day or week. It shows the exact grade(s) he is getting in each of his classes and is good not only for his commitment to improving, but also it is good

for me to keep an eye on his commitment to improving.

In essence, we should be able to set the "metrics" of a healthy organization, establish standards and strategies to drive those metrics through strong leadership, consistent reporting, daily communication, weekly updates and monthly outcomes, and then reward and recognize the employees of the organization for their effort and success.

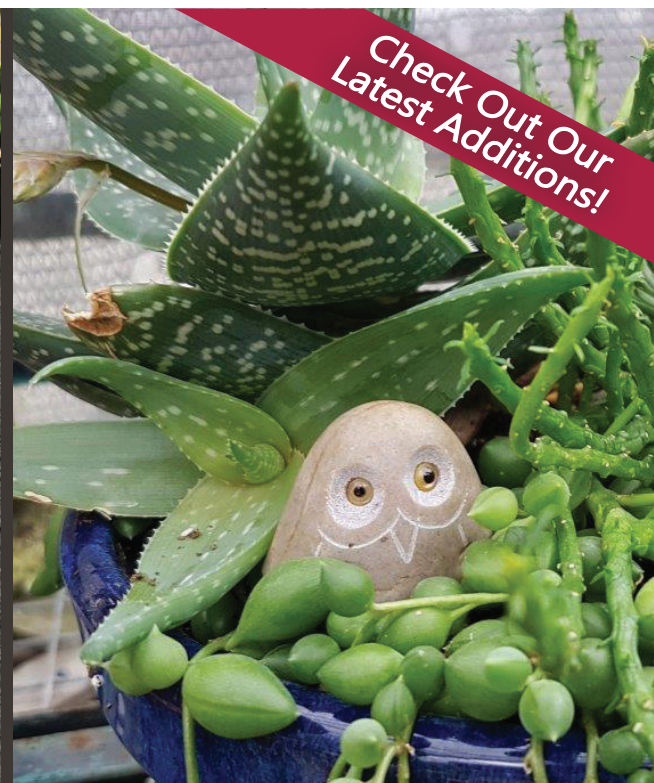
Not by chance, not by happenstance, but by strategy.

Every strategy matters and putting those strategies in place over the immense pressure of the "100 days of spring" will alleviate some of the chaos that naturally comes under such circumstances.

You grow what you feed ... what's in your diet? **LGR**

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