



CELEBRATIONS...

This industry is much more than just growing and selling plants.
Celebrating the good things about it is what makes it all worthwhile in the end.

BY STAN POHMER

Few, if any other industries have people at all levels who are as committed and passionate about what they do, who can take in stride and rebound from the curveballs you're constantly served up.

This is the season for celebrations... weddings and graduations, the end of one stage of life and the beginning of another. It's a season of celebrating the accomplishments that one had to endure and achieve to get them to that transition point and wish them well on their new and continued journeys.

We as an industry have a lot to celebrate, too, though it's sometimes difficult to see why, especially for those retailers and growers who had to experience the wrath of the weather gods or deal with product diseases again this spring season. It's not always easy to see the wins when the plans you worked so hard to put together don't come to fruition due to factors completely out of one's control, yet we have so many things to be thankful for and celebrate.

OUR PEOPLE

We can and should celebrate the people in our industry. Few, if any, other industries have people at all levels who are as committed and passionate about what they do, who can take in stride and rebound from the curveballs you're constantly served up — whether it's new

competitive business models, the weather, the economy, disease and pestilence, or governmental intervention, among others. What you do isn't easy; there are so many pieces and parts, processes and science that all must come together almost flawlessly to be successful and survive. What drives people in our industry to accept the obstacles and disappointments you know are inevitable?

I think it comes down to three key factors (and no, money isn't one of them!)...pride, passion and thriving on challenge to surmount the almost inevitable odds that everything will go according to plan; you make the impossible look achievable! To your credit, we're an industry of eternal optimists, and your zeal is contagious. And, your willingness to work together for the common good, not just your own vested interests, to contribute to the industry, to share your experience and expertise (even with your competitors) and to rally support for others who face diversity is a blessing to behold.

Yes, we truly can celebrate our people.

OUR PRODUCT

Perhaps the strength and commitment of the people in our

industry stems from the love of the product that you deal with. Maybe it's the fact that you are truly one with nature in the breeding, propagation and growing processes. Maybe it's the fact that you get to deal with beauty on a daily basis. Maybe it's the fact that you are actively involved in the process of life that drives you on a daily basis.

And your passion for the product you deal with drives you to constantly learn and re-learn, constantly looking for improvements and positive change, whether this applies to the product itself or the processes and equipment to grow it, always challenging for perfection. It never ceases to amaze me to see the attendance at educational seminars and trade shows, even those very early morning sessions and those that go on until the wee hours on a myriad of subjects (even marketing!), just to share your experiences and expertise, and become better educated and knowledgeable in order to continue raising the bar of operational, business and quality performance.

Yes, we truly can celebrate our product.

THE JOY WE BRING

In the heat of the season,

growers are working at a feverish pace to pull, ship and service — working long, weary hours to get the product they've labored over for many months to the retailers. And the retailers are caught up in the battle to receive the racks, unload the trucks, get the product to the sales floor, maintain the plants and get the customers through the checkouts. The growers rarely get a chance to get out into the stores, and the retailers are focused on the process of retail operations; neither really get the opportunity to see the look of sheer joy that the consumer has on her face when she sees the product for the first time each season, the fruits of your long and often tedious efforts. We need to be reminded that the consumer shopping your product is there voluntarily, we're not dealing with the pure necessities

of life like food and shelter; they are there because they want to be, not because they have to be.

Many consumers share your passion, maybe not for the product itself as you do, but for the activity and enjoyment your plants bring them. The term "the joy of gardening" isn't just a bunch of words, rather it eloquently expresses the rapture that people experience when involved with your plants. The act or activity of gardening brings a sense of serenity, a grounding of values in a hectic, stressful and time-starved world. In our high tech world, it offers the opportunity to get back to one's roots, to become one with nature, if only for a brief respite — tending, caring, nurturing. Gardening is truly one of life's simple pleasures.

But the joy you bring goes

beyond the physical activity of gardening. It extends to the enjoyment your plants bring to the lifestyle, home and yard decorating and entertaining. The visual impact — the beauty that your plants add — enhances the life experience of all who view them, easily shared and enjoyed. Your plants enhance and enrich the environment, making everything just a little bit better and pleasurable.

Yes, we can truly celebrate the joy you bring.

AND FINALLY...

In the daily hustle and bustle dealing with all the challenges we face every day, we don't get the chance to reflect on our accomplishments and reasons for celebration. We're truly blessed to be able to work with such a wondrous product, plants that

can touch people's lives and make a real difference in them. We're blessed to be part of an industry that people can be passionate about. We're blessed to be able to work with people who share our commitment, our love of nature and our need to be part of it. How many people in other industries can sincerely say that they enjoy their jobs, what they do or the business they're involved in, as you can (well, maybe not everyday, but I think you'll agree with where I'm going with this).

Despite all of the trials and tribulations, there's a lot we all truly can and should celebrate... ☺

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