

Columns

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Kiss My Aster: Yoda Solves Generational Issues

Amanda Thomsen



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When I talk to people in garden centers, it's always the same old story: It's the younger generation speaking, bewildered at the way they're not allowed to bring their ideas, insights and experiences to the table because their parents won't let them/don't trust them/think they just haven't earned it yet. Their bosses are their parents, and even though this younger generation is in their 20s and 30s—and sometimes in their 40s—they're still treated like whiny farm boys from a far away planet that has more than one sun.

This is bizarre in a few ways:

“Train yourself to let go of everything you fear to lose.”—Yoda

The older generation made and raised the younger people from scratch, so the trust and support for them should be 1000000% and come naturally, but if it doesn't? To them, I ask: Do you like second guessing yourself? Because you are, everyday. Are you afraid your grown-up children will take advantage of you at this point? Are you afraid that if they learn exactly how much is in the company coffers, they'll slack off and get lazy? Confront your emotions about why things are the way they are.

“Truly wonderful the mind of a child is.”—Yoda

The world is changing, your clientele is changing—why not let your younger counterparts do whatever needs to be done to help attract a younger demographic? If you can't hold the reins a little looser, why not put them in charge of a younger customer base, however they see fit? Is it time to think about a gradual or total succession?

“Patience you must have, my young Padawan!”—Yoda

Younger people: Use allllllllll your empathy when dealing with your parents. They are dealing with a loss of power and possible (or perceived) loss of independence. Change is hard, especially when you're not looking forward to it. If you want respect and support, make it mutual.

“The fear of loss is a path to the Dark Side.”—Yoda

You might be a micromanager and what I mean by that is ... hello, you ARE a micromanager. It's a wonder your kids WANT to work with you. They're tolerant and patient and I want to hang out with them and listen to horror stories about you over beers.

“Luminous beings are we ... not this crude matter.”—Yoda

Getting along with family you live with and work with is 24/7 hard. You do deserve a merit badge for that but ...

“Do or do not; there is no try.”—Yoda

You have to want to share. No one can make you. In the words of my good friend, Elsa, the most recent operator in a long-standing, family run-business in Arendelle, “Let it go!”

“Always pass on what you have learned.”—Yoda

I still can't get over the fact that you created your own workforce, trained them their whole life and you still feel the need to choke up on the reins. It's time to take a good hard look at yourself.

The other side of this coin is when I do visit garden centers where The Succession is complete ... and successful! These garden centers are vibrant and exciting. They have a totally different vibe that verges on giddy. Usually, these young owner/managers have been waiting their WHOLE LIVES and have a cerebellum full of ideas they've been waiting to implement. It's like an Ewok celebration every day!

I can fully understand having fear of our children failing, but what if they're more successful than we ever were?

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Amanda Thomsen is now a regular columnist in Green Profit magazine. You can find her funky, punky blog planted at KissMyAster.co and you can follow her on Facebook, Twitter AND Instagram @KissMyAster.