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## Using Resources Wisely

Jennifer Polanz



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Boy, that headline took on a whole other meaning from the time I wrote this in early March to now, when I am re-writing this a week later. It's mid-March and virtually the whole country is experiencing limited contact due to COVID-19.

Businesses everywhere are being impacted, and as of press time, the warnings were it's about to get worse. So how can you stay positive in a dire time like this?

Know that your products bring peace and joy to everyday lives. That in times of fear and uncertainty, digging in the dirt and walking among the blooms can decrease anxiety and help instill a sense of calm. To that end, maybe take a walk through your greenhouse yourself and breathe deeply, knowing that this, too, shall pass.

That all sounds great, but how can you provide the calm and beauty so desperately needed if social distancing is the norm? It goes back to using your resources—all your resources. This is the time to get creative. That includes social media: walk customers virtually through your greenhouses and stores. Send them to your webpage if you have ecommerce. If you don't, now's a really good time to consider it. Ordering online with in-store pickup is a viable option if delivery isn't.

I saw one garden center on Facebook create a few selections of pansy baskets that could be ordered and delivered (with a minimum purchase). I saw others highlight the outdoor and expansive nature of the sales yard, relieving fears of close contact.

Retailers also might want to look at creating a YouTube page, if they don't already have one, and fill it with those educational seminars that got canceled all through late winter and early spring. Hosting Facebook Live events is another great way to interact with customers. If you have large email lists, use them for more than just detailing cancelations—educate through them, as well, and send them to your social media pages. It's going to be a challenging spring (and perhaps beyond?), no doubt about it. We're here to cheer you on, and try to help keep the resources and fresh ideas flowing.

We tried to provide some ideas for new resources in this issue, as well. Customers are constantly looking for solutions on bugs and diseases, and there seem to be a variety of new opportunities out there to help you and them.

This magazine also serves as a resource (a valuable one, I hope!) for needs that can't be met elsewhere. That's

why we're continuing with Part 2 of a series on category growth strategies by The Garden Center Group's Steve Bailey and our very own Senior Editor Bill Calkins.

We're in the home stretch with Bill McCurry's valuable series on buying and selling your business. In this edition, he talks about the resources Berns Garden Center is using to help with their ownership transition. He'll conclude that series next month, and I want to thank him and everyone who talked to him for sharing what can be, at times, personal and sensitive information for the betterment of the industry. You've helped many figure out their path toward the future. **GP**