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Creating the Balance

Jennifer Polanz



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What is all this talk about balance? It's in the headline on the cover, it's here in this column—what's all the fuss about?

The more I talk to the younger people coming into this industry, the more I hear the words “work-life balance.” Usually, it's in a conversation expressing concern over the lack of it that has defined this industry for generations. The topic came up again during my wide-ranging interview with this year's *Green Profit*/The Garden Center Group Young Retailer Award winner, Michael Fiore, vice president of Smith's Gardentown in Wichita Falls, Texas.

In our chat, Michael highlighted the culture of constant work as a retailer or grower's sole identity in the green industry. It's a growing concern among members of all generations, but especially Millennials and Gen Zers, who love plants and want to work in the industry, but don't want to give up their whole life to it. And don't mistake this for lack of work ethic—many of them don't mind hard work, but at the end of the day they want to leave work at work.

This would be a difficult transition for our industry, but an improved work-life culture could result in positive strides: employees who are rested and happy to come into work, managers who can think creatively and take time off when they need to, and owners who can delegate responsibilities so they aren't on call 24/7/365. Nothing's perfect and it's all a process, but cultural changes that start now throughout all aspects of our industry can help attract—and retain—the best talent possible. Otherwise, our real future is this: operations that attract good quality young talent, only to find they immediately bail when they realize there's no balance to be had.

Over the next couple of months, we'll talk more in these pages about this balance and the strategies retailers can employ to make that cultural shift. If this is something you're working on, please email me at jpolanz@ballpublishing.com to let me know how you're doing it. But for now, I'm happy that Michael is focusing not only on finding his own balance, but helping employees find theirs, too.

Of course, it's that time of year again and our roving band of editors (boy, that kind of makes us sound like pirates) convened in Columbus this summer for Cultivate'23. Check out the new booty ... I mean, products ... we discovered. And since this is the Tech Issue, we have a couple of related stories: Amanda Thomsen's column on what she can control in her store from her iPhone (hint: it's a lot), a deeper dive on mobile POS and new retail tech trends.

And, finally, do you know what a stumpery is? I sure didn't, but now I want one (or at least want to visit one). If you'd

like to know what piqued my interest, turn to John Friel's column. **GP**