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## Taking Pride in Your Culture

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Congratulations, dear reader, you've survived (and possibly thrived in) another year. Welcome to 2019, where everyone gets a do-over and a fresh start to another year.

Let's talk about that fresh start. In this issue, our esteemed Editor Ellen C. Wells wrote this year's Wage & Benefit Survey story (our 10th!), which asked retailers what they're doing to improve their business to attract quality workers. We settled on that question because we were hearing retailers talk about how difficult it's been to attract workers of any kind. There are lots of great answers, all of which can be found in the story.

That question brought us to the need for a series of human resources articles on cultivating a positive culture, hiring the right workers, training them appropriately and tweaking the culture to make sure it continues in a positive manner. Why is culture so important to this equation? Because it's really the glue that holds the team together—or conversely, the force that tears the team apart.

Culture isn't just having a steady schedule, pizza parties or happy-looking employees. It's about employees feeling safe and satisfied with their work—like they're a part of something bigger. It's about fair pay, the benefits that workers want and flexibility. It's also having a standard of treatment that's equal for all employees and a process by which employees can rectify complaints.

A positive culture doesn't always mean everyone's happy. It means employees have a way to feel heard and there's a policy in place to rectify problems if they aren't happy. Are you proud of your workplace culture? If not (or if you think it could use some work), let us help you get started.

It isn't always easy to build and manage your company's culture, either. It's a constant flow, and sometimes workers who were fine once become toxic later. Sometimes it can be years later, and it's difficult for owners and managers to make hard choices about those employees. Columnist Bill McCurry worked with a retailer to tell their story of making those hard choices.

And lest you think the whole issue is business, we do have some lighter fare for you. For example, our resident woody ornamentals expert Matthew Chappell breaks down the beauties you can tempt your customers with this year. And if you enjoyed Shane Pliska's story on houseplant rentals in the December issue, you're in luck, because he's back with a look at how houseplants are trending on Instagram. And let's just say you won't want to miss this *Monstera*.

Here's to a happy, healthy and prosperous 2019. **GP**