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Working the Numbers

Jennifer Polanz



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It's always a wonderful experience to sit in a room full of retailers and see what's happening in their businesses. I've never known an industry so open and honest about their successes, their failures and everything in between.

That's why it was great to head down to Nashville this fall to the Garden Center Group's annual Fall Event, where for three days retailers took a deep dive into their businesses on all aspects of retailing. That means marketing, events, categories, social media, transition planning and even time management (thank you again to John Kennedy for the time-management session—I've been able to apply it in my personal life!).

Though it was all impactful, one of the most eye-opening sessions happened at the very beginning with the Profit & Loss Study summary. Members have the option to participate in this annual study performed within the group,

which allows them to see where the "storm warnings" are. First, the good news: total group revenue increased in 2018 by \$1.24 million and profitability was up 0.4%. That might not seem like much, but it translated into \$696,000 in additional profit for the reporting group members (78 garden centers reported this year).

So what did this exercise highlight? Incremental moves toward the positive resulted in gains. When taking the deep dive into the numbers, it also showed that plants are still the big money-maker and generate the most turns of any category. However, the challenge is to find those categories that don't turn as well and either figure out why or whether you need them. As Consultant Sid Raisch often says, the goal is to turn the product before you have to pay for it.

As we enter this long stretch of winter (that I'm not looking forward to here in dreary Cleveland), it might be a good time to take that deep dive yourself and see what your numbers show. If a category isn't turning well, go deeper. Which products in that category aren't turning? Are there any patterns? Is it a category you need to carry? If so, is it seasonal or year-long? What can you do to get those products turning faster?

We're working on some stories to help with this in the upcoming months, but in the meantime, Columnist and Consultant Bill McCurry has a to-do list to help finish out the year where he hits some of these points as well. And in the interest of using your marketing dollars wisely, freelancer Katie Elzer-Peters has a guest column on how to shop for an agency that will truly work for you.

When it comes to excelling in a lot of different categories, there's no better place to look than the garden "centres" across the pond in England. Bossman Beytes did just that this fall and you can find his report about what the best in England all have in common.

And, finally, because edibles continue in popularity, we have two stories that highlight the snacking side of veggies and popular beverage trends with herbs, fruits and even veggies (Albino beet juice-flavored martinis anyone?). **GP**