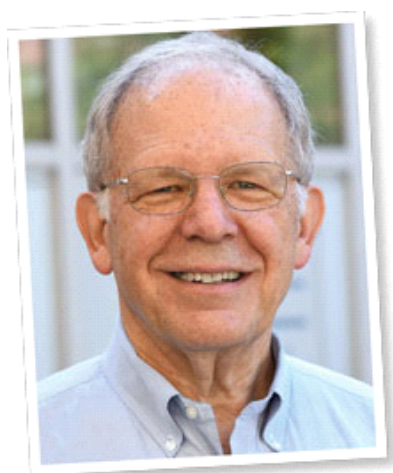


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## Spring Into November

Bill McCurry



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Garden center operators don't get to do spring cleaning. Let's start a new tradition of November cleaning, looking at our business through new lenses. How's this for a November to-do list:

**1. Reconsider products and services for highest payback.** Our inspiration is Debbie Foisy (Deb's Greenhouse in Morinville, Alberta, Canada). During the white Alberta winters Debbie designs and promotes customer pre-ordering of new products or larger green goods. Online customers can view/order new ceramic pots she'll stock, plus trees, shrubs and some perennials.

Deb's excitement for pre-selling ceramic pots stems from the cash flow advantage, as well as the marketplace confidence her final order generates. Her inventory order is largely based on her customers' advance order preferences. On web orders, she charges the customer's credit card

immediately.

"They're web shoppers; nobody bills them when it ships. Customers are used to paying up front. Why disappoint them? Besides, if it's already paid for when they pick up, they have new flower money. At pick-up, they've already forgotten the cost and are ready to invest more in their gardens."

Debbie will no longer offer pre-orders for fruits/veggies. "Tracking items sold at pick-up, normal trees, shrubs and perennials generated \$100 to \$500 in additional sales. None of the fruits/veggie buyers spent extra. We'll tell those customers there's no need to pre-order, as we'll have enough product. We'll use our time/energies for things returning the highest benefits."

Debbie doesn't discount for pre-orders or plants in containers. Instead, she always prices advance and seasonal orders for the value each purchase represents.

**2. Evaluate new products/services for the spring launch.** Deb's daughter Paige invented Envee kits ([www.enveekits.com](http://www.enveekits.com)) to market this fall. What new products/services should you be offering? How can you commit your customers to your garden center next season by getting payments now?

**3. Consult with your tax/legal advisors now—not December 27.** There have been changes in the tax codes and, in some states, numerous regulatory changes. Most advisors have a year-end appointment crush, so book time now to review how the changes will impact you and, potentially, your family and employees. Which

investments/capital outlays should be made in 2019 and which should be delayed to 2020 or beyond?

**4. One hour of your time now will generate five to 50 times spring sales.** You know you'll be running fast in spring. What can you get done now? How many social media posts can you write this month with identified dates for future publication? A general warning about poison oak/ivy can be written now and released when they appear in your region. What else can you write in advance?

**5. Determine your issue and prepare materials now.** What new crises can our industry help resolve? Declining bird populations are serious. Why not launch campaigns encouraging bird feeding, nesting areas and habitats? Media awareness is rising, so be prepared to ride this "marketing tailwind." When prepared, you can offer solutions. (For excellent information, check out: [www.birds.cornell.edu/home/bring-birds-back](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/bring-birds-back).)

**6. Be critical of your space.** With your team, walk every inch of your property. Ask two questions: 1) How can we generate more margin dollars with each cubic inch of space?; and 2) What can we change by spring to wow, excite and motivate customers? If nothing changes year-to-year, customers can't look forward to discovering new things.

**7. Plan your submission for Young Retailer of the Year.** You know deserving candidates. The application deadline is March 2, 2020 ([www.greenprofit.com/YoungRetailer](http://www.greenprofit.com/YoungRetailer)). Start the process NOW. By March, you'll be busy getting ready for spring. Today you can reflect on the nominees who're worthy of recognition.

**8. Set a goal for the year ahead.** This isn't a New Year's resolution; it's a thought-out business goal that can unite your team and focus their energies. Plan for a big celebration when you reach it! **GP**

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*Bill would love to hear from you with questions, comments or ideas for future columns. Please contact him at [wmccurry@mccurryassoc.com](mailto:wmccurry@mccurryassoc.com) or (609) 688-1169.*