

Features

1/1/2021

Staffing Plans During a Pandemic

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Many of you are coming off a record sales year. Growers were planting everything they had, you were selling at quite a clip and customers were buying it all. Reason? Yes, you have great products and people love to garden. But the elephant in the room here is COVID-19. The emergence of a global pandemic made people do a lot of things they'd never done before. Both flowers and flour were hot commodities in 2020.

We know the impact the coronavirus had on garden centers in 2020, but how might it impact planning for 2021? As the Ball Publishing staff prepared the 2021 *Green Profit* Wage & Benefit Survey, we saw it as an ideal opportunity to ask respondents how they planned to change staffing levels and training procedures in the face of a lingering pandemic.

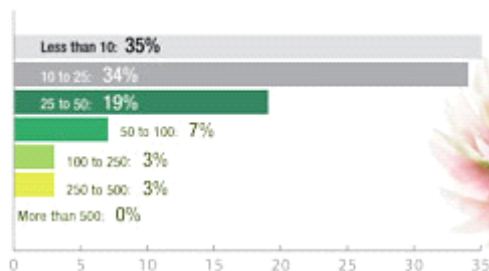
Taking a look at the Staffing Changes chart and you'll see that 40% of your peers plan to add staff for next year—a whopping 11 percentage point increase over last year. The folks undecided about what to do about staffing went up four percentage points and shows how retailers are trying to remain flexible amidst the uncertainty of the virus. Teasing apart the raw data a bit more, you find two interesting results: 57% of respondents from the South plan to add staff with 29% making no staffing changes; and 22% of respondents in the West plan on adding staff with 67% making no changes. The Southern and Western staffing strategies are essentially flipped.

Scattered through this article are quotes from respondents about how they're preparing staff and stores while under the virus threat. Read on for some inspiration. **GP**

Thanks so much to Adriana Heikkila and Allison Westbrook for their hard work collecting and tabulating the data!

WAGE & BENEFIT

EMPLOYEES AT PEAK SEASON



"WE HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY FLEXIBLE ABOUT MINIMUM HOURS WORKED."

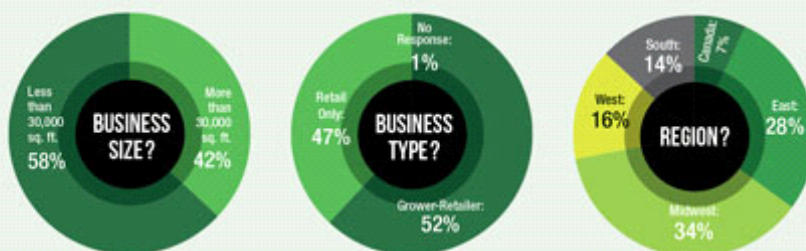
—NEW YORK GROWER-RETAILER

"TRAINING HAS GONE VIRTUAL FOR ALL NEW HIRES AND ANNUAL TRAINING EVENTS. POS TRAINING AND HANDS-ON TRAINING STILL HAPPEN IN THE LOCATIONS SPECIFICALLY WITH CERTIFIED JOB POSITION TRAINERS. NO CROSS CONTAMINATION BY SENDING ASSOCIATES TO OTHER LOCATIONS OR SITES TO TRAIN AS IN THE PAST."

—MICHIGAN GARDEN CENTER

"LESS 'AT-RISK' STAFF."

—OHIO GARDEN CENTER



Staffing Changes

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Add Staff	26%	31%	29%	29%	40%
Reduce Staff	5%	3%	2%	3%	4%
Keep Same	62%	58%	61%	62%	46%
I Don't Know	6%	8%	8%	6%	10%

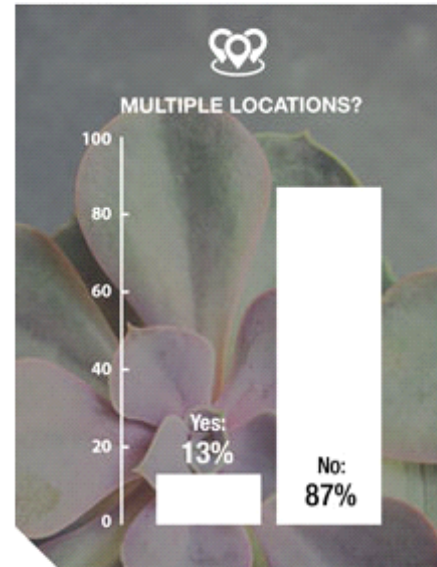
Staffing Changes for 2021 by Region

	Canada	East	Midwest	South	West
Add Staff	38%	41%	42%	57%	22%
Reduce Staff	13%	3%	5%	7%	0%
Keep Same	50%	44%	42%	29%	67%
I Don't Know	0%	13%	11%	7%	11%



"WE ARE BUSIER THAN WE HAVE EVER BEEN ... TRAINING IS SUFFERING SOMEWHAT BECAUSE WE ARE SO BUSY SHOPPING, STOCKING AND SELLING."

—TEXAS GARDEN CENTER

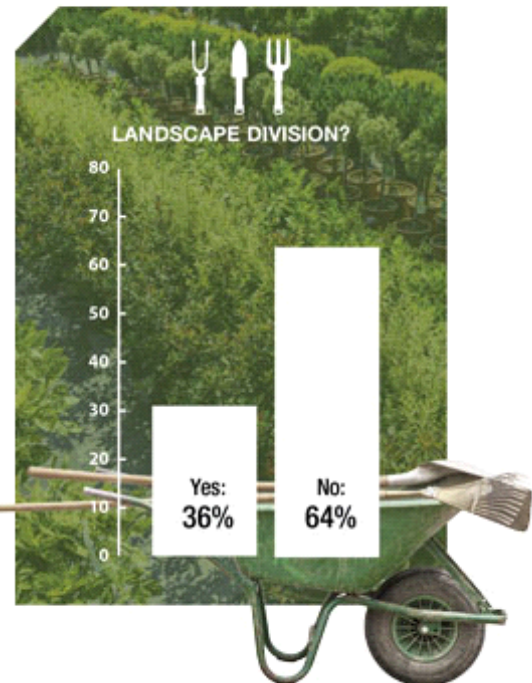


Benefits Offered

	Full-Time	Part-Time
401(k)	31%	4%
Pension	3%	3%
Bonus	42%	26%
Health Insurance	32%	4%
Dental Insurance	19%	3%
Life Insurance	14%	3%
Sick Days	40%	14%
Disability	19%	7%
Paid Vacation	53%	13%
Paid Holidays	45%	13%

When U.S. survey takers were asked which benefits their employees consider most important*, vacation (43%), health (33%) and paid holidays (28%) topped the respondents' lists. For Canadian respondents, vacation and bonuses tied for most important (38% each) with health coverage coming in with 25% of survey takers saying it was their employees' most important benefit.

*Survey takers were asked to check all benefits that apply.



Comparison

United States and Canada

HOURLY EMPLOYEES (per hour)

United States*

	\$7.01- \$8.50	\$8.51- \$10.00	\$10.51- \$12.50	\$12.51- \$15.50	\$15.50- \$17.50	More than \$17.50
Temp/Seasonal General Labor	5%	23%	42%	20%	8%	3%
Part-time General Labor	5%	18%	39%	23%	9%	5%
Full-time General Labor	0%	5%	18%	35%	28%	14%
Head Cashier	0%	10%	20%	29%	23%	18%
Temporary Cashier	4%	15%	42%	26%	8%	5%

Canada**

Temp/Seasonal General Labor	0%	0%	0%	57%	43%	0%
Part-time General Labor	0%	0%	0%	67%	33%	0%
Full-time General Labor	0%	0%	0%	29%	57%	14%
Head Cashier	0%	0%	0%	33%	50%	17%
Temporary Cashier	0%	0%	0%	80%	20%	8%

SALARY EMPLOYEES (per year)

United States

	Less than \$20,000	\$20,000- \$30,000	\$30,000- \$40,000	\$40,000- \$50,000	\$50,000- \$60,000	\$60,000- \$70,000	\$70,000- \$80,000	\$80,000- \$90,000	\$90,000- \$100,000	More than \$100,000
Buyer	7%	16%	22%	16%	18%	13%	7%	2%	0%	0%
Floral Designer	23%	35%	27%	12%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%
Landscape Designer	7%	17%	17%	20%	13%	10%	10%	0%	3%	3%
Landscape Foreman	11%	14%	33%	19%	17%	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandise	17%	36%	29%	14%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandise Mgr.	11%	23%	29%	14%	17%	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%
General Manager	7%	10%	10%	10%	17%	19%	12%	5%	5%	5%
Garden Center Mgr.	4%	14%	21%	23%	16%	9%	4%	4%	4%	2%
Department Mgr.	9%	16%	26%	19%	18%	7%	0%	2%	2%	0%
Owner	7%	11%	7%	12%	8%	1%	9%	7%	11%	18%

Canada

Buyer	0%	0%	20%	80%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Floral Designer	0%	0%	33%	67%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Landscape Designer	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Landscape Foreman	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandise	0%	33%	67%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandise Mgr.	0%	0%	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
General Manager	0%	0%	0%	25%	25%	25%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Garden Center Mgr.	0%	0%	17%	17%	17%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Department Mgr.	0%	0%	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Owner	0%	0%	0%	0%	17%	50%	17%	17%	8%	0%

The value between the U.S. and Canadian dollar is about a 20-cent difference. Because of space constraints, we're not showing both.

* As of now, the average federal minimum wage in the U.S. is \$7.25—though it's higher in most states, with Washington D.C., Washington state, California, Massachusetts, Arizona, Vermont, New York, Colorado, Connecticut and Hawaii at \$15.00 or over. Some states passed legislation to increase the minimum wage to \$15.00 an hour within the next few years.

** The minimum wage in Canada across all provinces averages between \$11.00 and \$15.00 an hour (CAD).

Breakdown

By Size

HOURLY EMPLOYEES (per hour)

Under 30,000 Sq. Ft.

	\$7.01- \$8.50	\$8.51- \$10.00	\$10.51- \$12.50	\$12.51- \$15.50	\$15.50- \$17.50	More than \$17.50
Temp/Seasonal General Labor	6%	27%	35%	22%	6%	3%
Part-time General Labor	7%	24%	36%	19%	12%	2%
Full-time General Labor	0%	7%	18%	38%	27%	9%
Head Cashier	0%	15%	21%	35%	10%	19%
Temporary Cashier	5%	19%	40%	26%	5%	7%

Over 30,000 Sq. Ft.

Temp/Seasonal General Labor	2%	13%	46%	22%	15%	2%
Part-time General Labor	2%	9%	38%	34%	9%	9%
Full-time General Labor	0%	2%	15%	30%	34%	19%
Head Cashier	0%	3%	16%	22%	43%	16%
Temporary Cashier	3%	8%	39%	33%	17%	3%

SALARY EMPLOYEES (per year)

Under 30,000 Sq. Ft.

	Less than \$20,000	\$20,000- \$30,000	\$30,000- \$40,000	\$40,000- \$50,000	\$50,000- \$60,000	\$60,000- \$70,000	\$70,000- \$80,000	\$80,000- \$90,000	\$90,000- \$100,000	More than \$100,000
Buyer	4%	26%	9%	30%	9%	13%	9%	0%	0%	0%
Floral Designer	13%	38%	19%	25%	0%	0%	0%	6%	0%	0%
Landscape Designer	0%	27%	20%	20%	0%	13%	13%	0%	0%	7%
Landscape Foreman	10%	15%	45%	10%	10%	5%	5%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandiser	17%	42%	25%	8%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandise Mgr.	10%	33%	24%	14%	19%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
General Manager	3%	12%	15%	18%	18%	18%	6%	6%	3%	0%
Garden Center Mgr.	0%	23%	23%	26%	6%	16%	3%	0%	3%	0%
Department Mgr.	9%	23%	23%	23%	14%	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Owner	9%	13%	7%	14%	7%	11%	11%	5%	9%	11%

Over 30,000 Sq. Ft.

Buyer	7%	4%	33%	15%	22%	11%	4%	4%	0%	0%
Floral Designer	31%	23%	38%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Landscape Designer	13%	6%	13%	25%	25%	6%	6%	0%	6%	0%
Landscape Foreman	12%	12%	18%	29%	29%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandiser	14%	29%	38%	19%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandise Mgr.	12%	6%	41%	18%	12%	6%	6%	0%	0%	0%
General Manager	10%	7%	3%	3%	17%	20%	20%	3%	7%	10%
Garden Center Mgr.	6%	3%	19%	19%	26%	10%	3%	6%	3%	3%
Department Mgr.	8%	8%	28%	24%	20%	4%	0%	4%	4%	0%
Owner	3%	3%	5%	8%	11%	8%	8%	11%	11%	24%

WAGE & BENEFIT



Breakdown By Region

		\$7.01- \$8.50	\$8.51- \$10.00	\$10.51- \$12.50	\$12.51- \$15.50	\$15.51- \$17.50	More than \$17.50
HOURLY EMPLOYEES (per hour) "TRYING TO KEEP EVERYONE EMPLOYED. FIRST QUARTER 2021 WE MAY NEED TO FURLOUGH SOME PEOPLE." —WISCONSIN GROWER-RETAILER	East						
	Temp/Seasonal General Labor	13%	9%	41%	25%	9%	3%
	Part-time General Labor	10%	17%	20%	33%	10%	10%
	Full-time General Labor	0%	3%	13%	23%	40%	20%
	Head Cashier	0%	8%	13%	21%	42%	17%
	Temporary Cashier	0%	8%	38%	38%	13%	4%
"INCREASE STAFFING TO COVER EXTRA SANITATION DUTIES." —ALBERTA GROWER-RETAILER	Midwest						
	Temp/Seasonal General Labor	0%	43%	41%	14%	3%	0%
	Part-time General Labor	3%	25%	53%	19%	0%	0%
	Full-time General Labor	0%	9%	27%	39%	15%	9%
	Head Cashier	0%	14%	28%	38%	14%	7%
	Temporary Cashier	7%	30%	52%	11%	0%	0%
	South						
	Temp/Seasonal General Labor	7%	20%	60%	13%	0%	0%
	Part-time General Labor	7%	20%	53%	13%	7%	0%
	Full-time General Labor	0%	8%	15%	62%	15%	0%
	Head Cashier	0%	20%	20%	30%	10%	20%
	Temporary Cashier	14%	0%	43%	29%	14%	0%
	West						
	Temp/Seasonal General Labor	0%	6%	38%	25%	25%	6%
	Part-time General Labor	0%	6%	29%	24%	29%	12%
	Full-time General Labor	0%	0%	11%	28%	39%	22%
	Head Cashier	0%	0%	20%	27%	13%	40%
	Temporary Cashier	0%	7%	33%	27%	13%	20%

SALARY EMPLOYEES (per year)

East	Less than \$20,000	\$20,000- \$30,000	\$30,000- \$40,000	\$40,000- \$50,000	\$50,000- \$60,000	\$60,000- \$70,000	\$70,000- \$80,000	\$80,000- \$90,000	\$90,000- \$100,000	More than \$100,000
Buyer	0%	21%	0%	32%	11%	21%	11%	5%	0%	0%
Floral Designer	33%	33%	0%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Landscape Designer	0%	33%	22%	11%	11%	0%	22%	0%	0%	0%
Landscape Foreman	9%	18%	18%	9%	36%	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandiser	14%	21%	36%	21%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandise Mgr	0%	33%	27%	0%	18%	9%	9%	0%	0%	0%
General Manager	5%	5%	15%	5%	10%	30%	5%	5%	10%	10%
Garden Center Mgr	0%	14%	19%	19%	10%	14%	5%	10%	5%	5%
Department Mgr	0%	4%	24%	0%	29%	12%	0%	6%	6%	0%
Owner	4%	15%	0%	19%	7%	19%	4%	11%	4%	19%

Midwest

Buyer	15%	23%	38%	8%	15%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Floral Designer	20%	40%	33%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Landscape Designer	17%	8%	25%	17%	25%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Landscape Foreman	14%	14%	43%	29%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandiser	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandise Mgr	21%	29%	29%	14%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
General Manager	15%	15%	5%	10%	30%	15%	10%	0%	0%	0%
Garden Center Mgr	12%	29%	29%	18%	12%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Department Mgr	20%	20%	33%	20%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Owner	12%	12%	12%	4%	8%	8%	12%	0%	16%	16%

South

Buyer	20%	0%	20%	0%	20%	20%	20%	0%	0%	0%
Floral Designer	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Landscape Designer	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	50%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Landscape Foreman	0%	0%	67%	0%	17%	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandiser	20%	40%	20%	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandise Mgr	20%	0%	0%	40%	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
General Manager	0%	11%	11%	22%	22%	0%	22%	0%	11%	0%
Garden Center Mgr	0%	0%	0%	57%	0%	14%	14%	0%	14%	0%
Department Mgr	25%	0%	0%	50%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Owner	25%	0%	0%	10%	10%	0%	30%	0%	10%	20%

West

Buyer	0%	0%	50%	0%	38%	13%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Floral Designer	0%	0%	67%	0%	0%	0%	0%	33%	0%	0%
Landscape Designer	0%	0%	0%	60%	0%	0%	0%	0%	20%	20%
Landscape Foreman	20%	20%	0%	40%	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandiser	0%	29%	29%	29%	14%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandise Mgr	0%	0%	40%	20%	40%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
General Manager	0%	10%	10%	10%	0%	20%	20%	20%	0%	10%
Garden Center Mgr	0%	0%	27%	18%	45%	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Department Mgr	0%	0%	29%	43%	29%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Owner	0%	0%	15%	15%	0%	15%	0%	15%	15%	23%