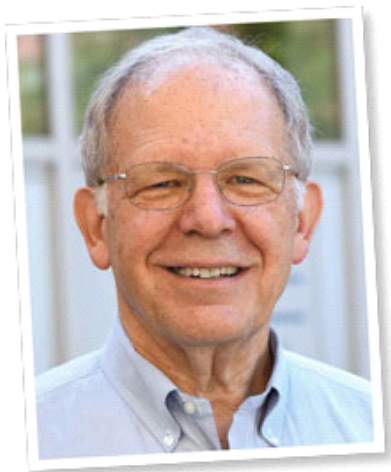


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Indications

Bill McCurry



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In some states the road sign should read, "Welcome! Turn on your left turn indicator for next 300 miles." Yes, I've been frustrated by drivers falsely indicating a turn that never happened.

In life we often give "turn signals" when we're not committed to taking action. Listen to owners planning to sell or transition a business and you'll hear, "Nobody wants to own a business today. Nobody wants to take risks. Nobody wants to reach for the brass ring ...". In the next breath these same owners talk about how great it's been to own their own business, the amazing folks they've met, the terrific things they've accomplished and the fun they've had. "Why wouldn't other people want this?"

However, when you privately ask the younger generations why they aren't interested in taking over a family business you hear a different story. "My parents kill themselves in that business. All I hear is how tough it is and how

tight money is. I want a better life."

The challenge here is to signal your intentions and commit to your signals. Parents want the kids and non-family managers to understand how difficult it can be to run a business. Unfortunately, their constant complaints are chasing away future owners.

Parents think their kids are avoiding hard work. Actually, they would embracing hard work if they could see commensurate rewards at the end of the day. Both sides are leaving on their turn indicators, sending erroneous indications of what they want without showing the follow-through commitment. They need a balanced perspective.

Buying Danville Gardens (Danville, Illinois) in 1993, Nathan and Lisa Campbell decided to show their key employees the fun and professional growth of horticulture. Early on they took employees to industry events like Ohio Short Course (today we call it Cultivate). The first-time money was tight, so Nathan, Lisa and two employees shared one hotel room and ate sandwiches brought from home. Today, everyone's hard work allows them to budget enough to more comfortably attend multiple conventions. Their team meets new people and reconnects with colleagues. They share the fun of considering new products and crop ideas, along with discovering new solutions to business frustrations.

Nathan strongly believes helping his team grow has led to longer-tenured employees, less turnover and a more professional crew compared to others.

Does your organization budget for professional team development? What indication are you giving if you don't invest in your team's growth and education? You can find possible places to excite and educate your team at hortcalendar.com.

Consider giving each employee an annual budget to invest in their personal development to perhaps travel to a show, take a class or purchase books/videos to help them in their job. The amount could vary depending on position, seniority, etc. What's important is they have the potential to select their own development with your coaching.

Boasting about the team's importance without helping them improve professionally means you're like those blinking turn signals with no turn planned. No one believes in indications that never happen; actions speak louder than meaningless turn signals.

If family or key team members only hear complaints, how will they see any future for themselves? How do you sound to them? Are you driving away your greatest assets?

It's difficult to run a garden center in 2021. Every day brings significant challenges and new stresses. It's not what gets thrown at you, but how you respond that indicates to those around you how your business—and their futures in it—could be impacted if they were prepared to take on more responsibility.

Indicate there's a balance. Let your people know this is a great industry. Sure, it's work, but there are also tremendous rewards. Signal those rewards and follow through as you drive down the business highway each day.

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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 or (609) 688-1169.