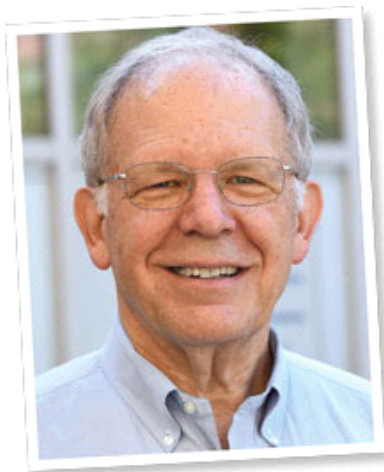


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Managing to Hire a New Manager

Bill McCurry



Bill McCurry

Dear Bill: My spouse is nagging me to hire a general manager who could manage the business and let me slow down. My accountant says I cannot sell the business without a management team in place. We cannot afford this new hire. Plus, good, experienced, industry people are hard to find. Should I hire a manager? How much do I pay them? How do I find them?

Signed, Pressured

Dear Pressured: You already know “it takes money to make money.” If your business required an additional POS terminal, you would make the investment. Your personnel needs are the same. It makes sense to invest in the team you need for success. Even if you’ve been working in the family business for decades, a competent general manager’s paycheck may be larger than yours. If they’re financially competent, they’ll understand the need

to generate sales and savings to mitigate the impact of their salary.

Although third generation at Kennedy’s Country Gardens (Scituate, Massachusetts), Chris Kennedy realized he “wasn’t good enough” to be owner and manager at the same time. After his parents’ retirement, he was stressed and felt business opportunities weren’t being maximized. Chris posted his needs and the benefits of joining the Kennedy team on the job site, Indeed.com.

Lisa Wells glanced at Chris’s Indeed.com posting three weeks after leaving a pressure-cooker position managing nine retail tobacco stores. She had decided to take three to six months for herself, unwinding while determining what steps were next for her career. Chris’s ad matched her management skill set and appealed to her interest in gardening.

Chris wasn’t worried about Lisa’s inexperience with garden retailing. “I needed someone with experience and competence to create and deal with systems and processes while managing HR. Lisa has proven skills in these areas. I wanted a manager with corporate experience who could bring us more structure. I also judged her to be smart enough to navigate any industry’s uniqueness. At peak, we have 30 employees. Lisa was able to bring efficiency and productivity through management knowledge she’d gained by experience. She’s been an asset to the company and a great support in doing the things I don’t like to do.”

James and Sally Gill of Gill Garden Center + Landscape Co (Corpus Christi, Texas) started their business in 1978. In 2017, they knew it was time to develop a new leadership team who could carry the company forward. They

wanted the business to improve, not “die on the vine.” At the same time, Jesse Jenkins was tired of being a public policy consultant, working remotely while traveling to government agencies across the country. A mutual friend told him the Gills were good people and it might be a good place to work with some future in it.

Sally and James hadn’t been actively looking for this “next generation.” They didn’t have a job title or job description. Jesse was willing to gamble because he felt the company was strong, so he went to work on a Gill landscape crew. Within weeks he presented Sally and James with a written document outlining his observations and recommendations. Rapid advancement through the landscape and garden center departments followed.

James and Sally were able to assist in revamping processes and refocusing energies by watching and listening to Jesse. After about two years as general manager, Jesse became a partner in the spring of 2021.

Sally said, “We learned from our consultant, Steve Bailey, that you should always operate your business to attract the best people and be ready for them when they come along.”

If you’re looking for management skills, consider management applications from any industry. Look for people who are comfortable working with numbers and learning our industry. It’s worked for these two companies and their new managers! **GP**

Bill McCurry 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.