

Features

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Making It a Day

Bill McCurry



Pictured: The Heeman's facility continues to expand in terms of growing space, broader offerings and areas under glass. This fall, 33,000 mums will be grown in the field and 6,000 grown under glass and only for sale at Heeman's Garden Centre.

Will Heeman, third-generation Daymaker at Heeman's, makes you feel like you're at the top of the mountain, listening to a guru evoking wisdom when he speaks. Here are just some of his thoughts on their retail operation, in business for nearly 60 years:

"We're generating perpetually rising expectations. We have to stay ahead of guest expectations."

"We don't 'remodel' or have areas 'under construction.' Instead, 'We are making it better for you, our guest.'"

"We love dogs in the greenhouse, but we won't sell pet food or supplies. We know that right now we can't add it to our mix at the standard we expect of ourselves. Our guests know us for excellent retailing and outstanding products. As the magician says, 'The magic dies when something drops.'"

"Keep the family friendly, engaged and productive. Let them do things they're passionate about. Trust them to do their best in the areas they love. Have duties that intersect, but don't overlap, to establish boundaries, minimizing friction."

"Develop staff to keep the organization going and growing. Give them reasons to see a clear future and provide for it."

"We have specific business units, such as Garden Center, U-pick, Food Service, Produce, Cidery, etc. The marketing team looks at each of these separately as if they were a marketing agency with different clients because that's what they are."



Pictured: Instagram-able moments are plentiful and encouraged at Heeman's.

"Build your departments and promotions to fill in weaker times on your calendar. For instance, introduce new ciders on Valentine's Day, not Mother's Day."

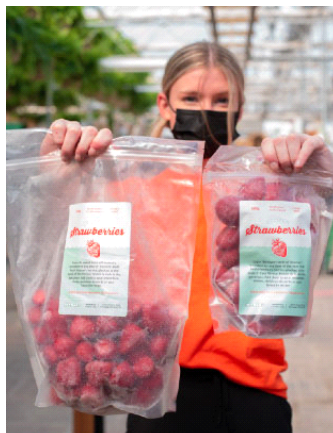
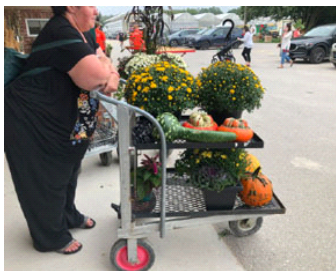
"Heeman's is a 'third space.' After your home and your work, this is your space to come to for relaxation and rejuvenation. Have a coffee or strawberry sundae and enjoy the beauty around you. Our vision is, 'Obsessed With Making Our Space Your Happy Place.'"

"In retail, boring = death. Make sure your store experiences, displays, signs, employees show excitement and an upbeat attitude."

"Stack some things very high. Make your pricing signs large to reinforce how plentiful your inventory is and how good your pricing is."

"When you say 'yes' to one thing, you're saying 'no' to everything else you could be doing at that time. Thinking about decisions in business or in life through this lens really helps put things in perspective about what's most important and worthy of your time and attention."

"Food trucks are great for garden centers. Know whether those customers are buyers of your products or just food truck fanatics. There has to be a win-win. The food truck gets exposed to new customers and the garden center gets new customers who buy. Visitors who come only to eat from the food trucks don't pay the garden center's bills. Select food trucks that bring the customers you both want."



"Good ideas are where you find them. During COVID, we built a drive-thru strawberry facility. The mobility impaired and parents with kids treasured it. It's still open with no impact on in-store sales. It's all additional sales—often from people who previously wouldn't consider coming in because they were in a rush or had 'little ones' to manage."

Heeman's calls their team "Daymakers" because their job is to "make our guests' day better than it was before they visited." They'll continue to do that at a very high level. **GP**



Pictured: Customer experience is always the main concern at Heeman's. Shoppers can choose different cart types depending on their purchases.

• Heeman's is known for quality strawberries. When they went into frozen berries they decided on Independently Quick Frozen (IQF). The customer receives individual berries, not a frozen block that turns to mush. Quick frozen berries are available in

1.5-kilogram (3.3-pound) or 600-gram (1.3-pound) packages.

- *The Heeman's team's orange shirts are easy for customers to spot.*