

1/1/2023

No One Knows What's Next

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As I write this, it's mid-December and we're fast approaching the holidays. As you read this, the 2022 holidays will be a memory, and you'll be buying for yet another holiday and prepping for 2023.

We talk a lot about the future, whether it's trends, economic forecasts or just plain weather forecasts. And while we have a lot of technology and experts who help us determine what to grow, buy and sell, in the end the future is what we make it.

I always think about the book analogy. You just wrote the most recent chapter of the book for 2022, which in looking back at it, involved some rough weather patterns, lots of making up sales in many places, scrambling for workers (more on that later) and all told, not the best year, but not the worst year, either.

But look at the next chapter. It's blank. Because you haven't written it yet. YOU haven't written it yet. You have agency, to make your own plans and determine your own future.

So what will 2023 look like? You can take the information you know (and, hopefully, learn more in this issue) to solidify the plans that will help you weather the storm, whether that's a recession—which is looking more and more likely—or an actual weather event.

Recession in itself could be an opportunity, depending on the severity. Obviously, a more severe one would be concerning, but less-severe recessions tend to result in more staycations and more gardening. In fact, Axiom Marketing's annual gardening survey showed 88% said they would spend the same amount of time or more in the garden this year.

This month is a great time to make those plans and get them on paper. In our news section, I asked retailers what they were planning for 2023, and one answer that really stood out to me was Renae Bobbett's at Beaver Bark Gift & Garden Center in Washington, who said one of their focuses this year is cross-training to build a stronger team. That's an actionable way to make sure when one person isn't there, the whole place doesn't fall apart. (Do you have that one person who everyone depends on? Make sure they have a back-up!). You can see all those answers in Front. While you're there, check out our newest addition, Shop Corner. This year-long segment will focus on concepts for houseplant shops and departments.

If you're looking for trends to make buying choices for holiday, we've got that for you. You'll be happy to see a return to a more natural look, which goes perfectly with what we offer. We tapped Jessie Jacobson from Tonkadale Greenhouse for tips on freshening up the merchandising look, too.

If you're looking for hard data, well, we've got that, too. In the first of a three-part series, university researchers Bridget Behe, Melinda Knuth, Alicia Rihn and Charlie Hall all collaborate on retail-focused studies about consumer behaviors. Then go to our annual Wage & Benefit Survey results to see how you stack up pay-wise versus your peers. There are some very definite trend lines you'll want to know about.

That's not all that's in this issue, but I'll let you get into it yourself. I hope you have a happy New Year and cheers to what's to come in 2023! **GP**