

Kiss My Aster

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I Love It When a Plan Comes Together

Amanda Thomsen



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Since the original plan (see last month's column) was a little off-the-wall to begin with, when things come together and actualize it feels like that moment when everyone has been sitting in the dark amphitheater waiting and then—all of a sudden—Mickey comes up from the floor, with synchronized music, lasers and fireworks, at the beginning of Fantasmic.

I imagine that's why we're all in it, for the rare, but robust, harvests of dopamine from a job well done, but along with my perennially feeling misunderstood, I guess I never expected it to feel this good, this consistently. What am I talking about?

This thing I've built—honestly, maybe the customers, this town—they weren't exactly ready for it, but they rose to the occasion quickly. They accepted the idea that a local plant shop can also be a "third place" (a place you can go

and feel good about that isn't home or work) that came from the perspective that, yeah, the customer is usually wrong and, also, employees should be paid as much as possible and be treated like people you handpicked to take care of your business.

I did know that many people were just going to be unable to grasp it, but to a large degree I'm even more shocked at the amount of people that got onboard the train immediately and are all in, trusting me to create this space that will be a special place in their lives that they look forward to visiting weekly, and so help them, they find me amusing.

In the beginning, I imagined people would be knocking the door down to work here to soak up the good vibes and that ABSOLUTELY DID NOT happen, but it absolutely is happening now. My obsession with being a hyper ethical employer and the aforementioned shop culture is now sending the right people my way like a Shop Vac in a tub of ping pong balls.

The college hort student who applied and said she was ONLY interested in working here in May and June so she could goof around the rest of the summer? Okay, twist my arm on THAT one! I also have Tyler, the high school senior who's an orchid prodigy and is taking to the rest of the plant world like a duck to water. I've elevated him to "junior executive of plant management," which, as he and I discussed, means I rely on him to use his brain (which doesn't even have a fully formed cerebral cortex until one is in their early 20s) to make good decisions about my business and I wasn't even drunk when I decided that. He works so hard here and learns so much, his friends pop in to visit, musing loudly, "JUST HERE TO VISIT OUR ONLY FRIEND THAT MAKES A LIVING WAGE!"

Another new employee asked me to rethink my call time of 7:00 a.m. because she knew 7:30 would suffice because we are in control of the situation and, yeah, she was right and I was happy to listen to her. I feel rich in my team right now and I want to savor this moment because I know that eventually I'll be hot and sweaty and no one will be around to help me load a car and I will curse their very existence.

I guess what I'm working up to is that this unorthodox shop has a wacky leader that isn't afraid to take risks (we now call them Asterrisks (™)) and bold decisions and it continually seems that the bolder I am, the bigger the reward we reap. I had this wacky vision and for a few months I rowed with only one oar in the water, and now more paddles are dipping into the water while customers are waiting behind a velvet rope to get in the boat. The feeling of having a community that started out so "what the heck is this?" and now is so present and supportive was something I only dreamed of and it's here, in an even larger sense than I'd imagined.

I love it when a plan comes together. **GP**

Amanda Thomsen is a funky, punky garden writer and author. Her blog is planted at KissMyAster.com and you can follow her on Facebook, Twitter AND Instagram @KissMyAster.