Being on the road I meet a lot of creative and interesting people in the horticulture industry. There are different philosophies and ideas about running a business. When they are directly involved in their own business, sometimes they can’t see the same things outsiders do.

We all know what a competitive business we are in, and if you want to get a hit, you have to swing the bat. It has been my observation that some areas of the industry are out there swinging and some are waiting for just the right ball. Others prefer to be walked.

Are you going to be content with no hits, no runs, and no errors? What is the difference between the progressive company and the non-progressive? Has the game become too much? Are you just getting tired? How do you get pumped up for the game? If you are loosing your zest for the game at work, you are probably loosing it elsewhere also. It is very difficult to keep one part of life from spilling over into the next. The unfortunate part of this is that your families, the people that love you the most, get the worst part of you. I have spoken to some very successful business people on this subject and I want to share some of their advice.

First, try to revive your sense of humor. Why do we take ourselves so seriously? Try coming to work with a smile and treat your employees and customers as you would a guest visiting your home. A little courtesy, a friendly disposition and an honest expression of appreciation go a long way in setting the work atmosphere.

Now set some goals that are visible and that all can take part in completing. The No. 1 thing employees value is feeling a part of the company and believing their opinion matters. Having ongoing projects keeps interest levels high and enables the feeling of solid accomplishment. This could be as simple as a little contest, a remodeling project or a plan for a company picnic.

Successful people want and need things to run smoothly for themselves and others. Develop a system of standards for your business that everyone can follow. These systems need to be custom designed for the goals and objectives of each business. Systems should include a chain of events which allow things to progress without interruption. Priorities need to be seen and met in a logical sequence. A business system with a natural flow of need and supply will allow the business to run without obstacles and crisis. Relieving the pressure of day-to-day events will allow for more creative energy to be spent in other areas.

Get plenty of rest. Fatigue affects reasoning and good judgment. When tired, you are susceptible to negative thoughts and actions. Attitudes become self-defeating. Nobody can perform their best when worn down from lack of sleep and poor diet. When things get busy, the hardworking people in the green industry rally and go, and go, and go until they have nothing left to give. Take time to recover. A couple days off can return you to a more productive state of performance.

Finally, develop a plan to be progressive. Nothing stays the same. In order to compete in today’s market, you must be eager to learn and willing to educate yourselves with all that is available. Join professional organizations, read the literature in trade magazines and get all the latest information on research and products. Get pumped, an attitude to win is 80% of the game. Remember, “If you want to get a hit, you’ve got to swing the bat.”

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