It is always a dilemma this time of year. The winter has slowed business, and we begin to look forward to the warmth of spring and the hustle of business. If increases in the growth of business continue as predicted, we can realistically expect a 6 to 9 percent increase in sales for plants and hard lines.

• The questions we need to ask ourselves every year need some creative answers.
• How can I add value to the product?
• How should the product be displayed for maximizing space and product allure?
• What will the “hot” items be this year?
• How can I attract more customers?
• What do we need to change to give a fresh look?
• How do I train employees to be better informed about product, sales and plant materials?
• How can we take advantage of all the technology that is available?
• What is the best sign design with information to help the customer make decisions?

• How much advertising is cost effective, and how can I track its effectiveness?
• I hear that customer service is everything. Am I overlooking some service areas in my business?
• Do I need an employee handbook? What is the benefit and for whom?
• What does it take to be an effective leader for my company?
• How do I find out what the customer really wants?
• What does fair market value mean?
• How do I determine how to price my product to make a profit? Are there formulas to help?
• How can my company work more efficiently?
• Would it pay for my company to remodel or relocate?
• Who is my direct competition?
• How can I achieve a competitive advantage?
• What are my resources, capacities and core competencies?
• How can I effectively monitor the external and internal forces that affect my company when I am so busy?

These questions are only a few that need answers to keep up with a rapidly changing and growing industry. Without a marketing plan of action and central goals for the company, it is difficult to see how your company fits into the big picture of businesses, locally and now globally. To maximize profits and establish a sustainable future in the 21st Century, these questions need some thoughtful creative thinking and innovative answers.

Spring Training

Every winter K-State Research and Extension delivers learning opportunities for retail garden centers and landscape/grounds maintenance companies to train employees. Spring Training is a one-day school bringing in specialists from KSU and the green industry to help companies prepare managers and key employees for spring with the latest research, creative ideas and profit-making techniques.

Dates will be posted in the Horticulture Newsletter. For more information, contact Cheryl Boyer, crboyer@ksu.edu, or Christy Dipman, cdipman@ksu.edu.

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