I was talking with a gentleman who had worked for a company for 43 years “You must have loved your job to stay there that long,” I said, “It’s just a job,” he replied.

That idea seemed sad. I thought about our horticulture industry. Do our employees, after years of contributing to our businesses say, “It’s just a job?” It is hard to imagine working day after day with no passion. Sure, the day-to-day jobs need to be done. Every day cannot be a party, but does it have to be mundane or purposeless? Walking into work with a cheerful smile and a pleasant attitude can make work more enjoyable for everyone.

I recently visited with a woman who had interviewed for a position with a garden center. She thought the position would be a perfect fit. She was knowledgeable, knew what to expect, had a firm grasp on the industry and knew what she would be getting into. The interviewer’s first comment was, “I expect you to be here every day. We are going into a busy season, and this means you will have no life. If you have a problem with that, you may leave.”

Although there was truth in the statement, the communication left much to be desired. This statement made it seem that employees would not show up, their lives were not important and employers wouldn’t care about her. Being acquainted with the garden center, I am sure this was not the message they intended to send. However, it was a loss for both the employer and prospective employee. She did not accept the position, and the company missed out on a quality employee.

There are “slackers” in every organization, but I believe that most people who want to work also want to do a good job. And stomping on someone’s spirit certainly doesn’t inspire a zest for work. We cannot assume that every person is just there for a paycheck and won’t give back to the company. Every person has a gift. In the right position, employees can develop the same desire for excellence that we feel as owners or managers. Employees are the company’s most valuable asset. If you expect quality employees, show them how much you value what they do.

The next generation of employees views the world with a different perspective than the postwar or baby-boomer generations. They desire purposeful work and sense of personal engagement. They will not work 43 years at a job without fulfillment. A study on the differences and similarities of people in the past three generations and the next generation sheds light on how people need to be managed in the workplace. Those coming into the workforce are not task oriented, but interested in why we do things the way we do. The study shows that even though younger generations have different expectations because of changes in society, technology and increased independence, all people want to work where they are valued.

Remember the woman who decided not to take the job? She eventually accepted a position outside the horticulture industry.

Too Much Attitude

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