

May 16, 2013



To Our Merchandisers;

When we conceived of this month dedicated to all of you, my greatest fear was that no one would even notice. Today however, as I review the statistics from our Facebook page that tell me that more than 5,200 people have visited the page and have at least read about what our team does, I realize that I have underestimated how much everyone wants to hear about the company, and I finally grasp (hopefully not too late) that I have not placed enough importance on my personal story and feelings as it relates to our Merchandisers. Today, I intend to change all of that.

Some of you may know that I started as a merchandiser—we were called “salespeople” back then. The job was different at the time—we had a truck assigned to our territory which we met at 6:00am and we worked all day until the truck was empty. We got paid by the day, following the truck from store to store as it made its drops, and so we all learned to work FAST so that we could go home before 9:00 at night. We also had to write orders when we got home, and had to FAX them to the office. It was hard work, and often frustrating, but I loved it because, as I left each store I could turn around and look at the garden center that I had created and could feel like I had done something that hundreds of people would enjoy. Despite not getting paid much, working 60 to 80 hours a week and having a boss who was so bad that I nearly got into a fist fight with him one day (he’s no longer here, by the way), the feeling of satisfaction that I had every night made all the rest of it worth it.

I know that for many of you, it’s that same satisfaction that drives you. For some, it may be the beauty you are able to create. For others, it may be that you don’t have a boss breathing down your neck every minute of the day and for others, it may be something as simple as being outside rather than in a stuffy office. Regardless, for any of us who last more than a season in this job, there is something that we love about it.

Your love of the business, your love of the work—those are what make Gardenvision great. When I look at the pictures that are posted of your work, when I have the chance to meet and talk to you in the stores, when I have conversations with your Supervisors, and store personnel, and vendors—all of those things remind me that you are not a collection of laborers who are doing the job you are because it’s the only one that made you an offer. You are, as a group, a professional, dedicated and excellent merchandising team that can execute any task that is put before you.

It used to drive me crazy when customers would ask a question and then say “Oh, I’m sorry, you’re JUST a vendor.”

Just a vendor? HA! I know what those customers do not. Each of you is the glue that holds together the garden center. Without you, corporate programs do not get executed. Without you, tables are nothing more than a jumble of various products that no one can make heads or tails of. Without you, vendors would be completely blind to what is happening in-store—unless they were willing to hop a plane to go to the most distant corners of the Southeast themselves. Without you, there are no price signs on anything. Without you, that customer might not have anyone to ask a question of in the first place! I

know who you are in that garden center—you are not “just” anything. You are the Gardenvision Merchandiser.

Sometimes, I think, the fact that I am asking for more and more from you each day and each year seems to you as if I am not aware of who you are. I believe that you all think that my impression is that your job is easy. The truth, however, is that you all have it backwards. Not only am I aware of what you do and of how difficult it can be, but the fact that you all excel at it is what makes me think that there is more that you can contribute. Think about it—who would I rely on more? A person who I think does very little, or a person who I know is a superstar and who can handle what I am asking of them?

To me, the Gardenvision Merchandiser is the most important person in the Garden Center and the most important person in the company. As a management team, we spend more time working on solutions for you than for any other person or group. Without you, we have nothing—literally. Our entire business model is built on relying on you, both as a group and as individuals, to do your part every day, every week, all the time. We have developed processes to insure that we are hiring only the people who can be successful, programs to educate you and to give you tools to move forward, contests and incentives to spur your creativity and your passion, and procedures that make your opportunity to succeed clean and clear. Why? Because we know if we give you the tools to succeed and then get the heck out of the way, you will amaze us and exceed every expectation we could possibly set.

I remember being a merchandiser. The biggest compliment I ever got from my boss was “This doesn’t look half as bad as I thought it was going to look” after he walked every table in the garden center without a word. I hope we’re doing a better job of letting you know how great you are and how pleased we are with what you are able to accomplish each day, and I hope that this message will let you know how I feel personally about you.

In case it hasn’t:

**Thank you**

**Any success we have is because of you.**

**You are the greatest merchandising team I could ask for.**

Sincerely and with best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Wisener", written over a large, simple oval shape that serves as a placeholder or a stylized element.

Bruce Wisener