

Finding the Green Lining

An opportunity lies before us. Have you heard the phrase “green lining” in relation to the global pandemic? More people than ever are interested in plants — plants for aesthetics, plants as a hobby, plants for health, plants for nourishment, plants for the environment.

Something like 20 million people picked up gardening as a hobby for the first time in 2020. We even had a Super Bowl commercial! We must look at ways to inspire and engage new gardeners and bring them into industry careers.

In addition to a boom in interest, we also have workforce demographics on our side. Millennials are now the largest generation in the U.S. workforce. Millennials get a bad rap, but what we know about the generation suggests their values align well with the green industry. This generation places importance on a company’s mission, as well as flexibility, work-life balance, and a sense

of purpose. Are we overlooking future success stories because they don’t have formal horticulture education or experience? Because they don’t fit the traditional mold?

A DESIRE TO LEARN

When I interviewed with Loma Vista Nursery 15 years ago for the role of marketing director, I had zero experience in horticulture. In fact, I had to Google the term “Zone 4 Hardiness” prior to the interview because it was listed as required knowledge in the job posting. I arrived for my interview at the nursery in a skirt, heels, and a blazer and quickly realized I was very overdressed. With my school of journalism portfolio in hand and confidence in my ability to learn quickly, I made it through the interview. But I have to admit I was surprised when they called me later that day to offer me the job. I knew marketing and communications, but I didn’t have any knowledge of the nursery business. But they saw something — a strong work ethic, a positive attitude, a desire to learn?

WORK-LIFE HARMONY

A few years into my role at Loma Vista Nursery, I was lured away by a lucrative offer in the corporate marketing world. You know the saying — the grass is greener on the other side? Well then, you also know that it usually isn’t.

Burnout happened quickly. I didn’t find any value in what I was doing and I had no passion for the work. I was also expecting a child and preparing to be a solo parent. I felt misaligned with my work, and knew I needed a change, as well as better harmony between work and home.

So, eight years ago, I returned to Loma Vista Nursery and the growing industry, eight months pregnant. I think that says a lot about the company. They took some risk that would eventually pay off. As for me, I work for a company and a leader who understands the importance of family and work-life balance, and in doing work that excites me.

TAKE A CHANCE

Working in this industry has brought me joy, afforded me flexibility and a necessary work-life balance as a single mother, and gifted me with countless valuable experiences. I could not imagine ever leaving — I am hooked. The point is, this is not an industry that I would not have chosen as a high school student seeking a college education. And I certainly didn’t have any industry experience.

But I am glad I took the chance and applied. And I am thrilled that Loma Vista Nursery took the chance and hired me.

I don’t have all the answers, but my intent is that my love story with the industry may inspire and motivate us to think outside the box and adapt as we have so many times before. Tap into that “green lining.” Evaluate your company’s mission, values, and non-monetary benefits, get creative with scheduling to allow more flexibility, explore new opportunities for recruiting to reach the millennial demographic, and we can continue to drive our industry forward through the passion and connection people have with nature. [gpn](#)

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