

GROWERTALKS

Columns

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Managing the Micromanaging

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By the time this is published school will have already begun, but right now, summer is in full swing and I'm so happy about the way my kids have been managing their lives. My daughter (whom I can hardly call a kid anymore at 20 years old) has found herself a young man who makes her happy and is the first one that has Dad's approval. Happy Dad!

And my 15-year-old son has certainly matured, become much more responsible and secured his first real job at the country club bussing tables and working the "snack shack" by the pool. He's also detassling (corn, for you city folk), which earns him some good money that he hopes to put towards a car when he gets his license this fall.

With his schedule being as busy as mine, I find myself constantly reminding him of everything. Or, to put it bluntly, I'm constantly micromanaging his life. But, you know, it's a parents' duty and right to do that to their kids.

One evening, as I reminded him of how early he had to get up the next morning, I suggested an early bedtime and I got a "Daaaaad!"

I know. I probably need to back off a little. Especially since he's proven his responsibility and built the trust with me. After all, he's been getting himself up and ready by 5:30 a.m. lately.

I think most of us can think of at least one person who's constantly trying to micromanage. Reminding you of sometimes obvious things or telling you to do things a certain way and all you can think to yourself is, "Duh! I know!"

It can be challenging and downright difficult at times working with that type of personality. I even met a grower at Cultivate this year who said he left an employer due to micromanaging.

Is it a trust issue? A control issue? Do micromanagers feel like nobody can do things as well as they can? Or is micromanaging the little things their distraction from the big things they're dealing with?

As my position here at Swift Greenhouses has evolved, I find myself on the threshold of handing over the reins of growing the perennial 288 seedlings to the next generation. As I do so, I'm trying to be very conscious of my micromanaging. And for me, it is all about trust.

Do I trust my assistants to care about the crop as much as I do? Do I trust them to do as good of a job as I can? If I've done my job correctly, the answer would be yes.

My protégé came to work with us right out of college. He had minimal to no experience growing plugs, but he had passion and responsibility, which is all I needed to work with (some common sense helps, too!). He knew the basics and we worked together on the details of what an optimum crop looks like and how to get there.

For more than two years now, I've micromanaged him continuously. Or, more appropriately, it would be considered training and coaching. I've done my best to share with him everything I've learned over the years and to train his eye for picking out potential problems. I've also shared all the creative ways I've come up with to kill plants so as not to repeat them, but instead come up with his own.

Now the time has come for me to take a step back and let him begin to take charge. As I do so, I remind myself that yes, he does care about the crop as much as I do. And no, I don't need to point out dry plants when I see them. I don't need to remind him to turn on the lights on cloudy days. He knows.

What I will continue to remind him of is the goal: optimum crops. How he achieves that may be different from the way I do, but that doesn't necessarily make it wrong. Just different. I trust him.

Now, can I trust my 15-year-old to do his homework and turn it in on time without constantly micromanaging him? That's a tough one! **GT**

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