

GROWERTALKS

Growers Talk Business

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Does it Matter?

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The horticulture industry in North America has been fortunate to have Ken Fisher lead our trade association, AmericanHort, for the past 10 years. I recently read that Ken is leaving in May.

This needs to be said: Ken was the right leader at the right time. Much credit must be given to the folks who picked him to begin with. I don't know how they recognized he was just what we needed—a seasoned executive with gravitas and “outside industry experience”—but they sure picked a winner for us!

By announcing his departure six months ahead, I believe Ken is still proving his leadership. We should trust him when he says, “I believe now is the right time for new leadership, new energy and new ideas to carry the organization forward.” The ending matters more than the beginning or else why take the journey?

Ken Fisher has said a lot of things in the past 10 years. My favorite: “What we do together matters.”

I think that sums up why we need a national trade association. Maybe it seems obvious to you, but I'm going to assume you fail to see his point. So this is for the skeptics:

What value do we really get from an organization like AmericanHort? Does membership truly deliver the results they promise? “Perform better, grow faster and prepare for the future!” Okay, that sounds lovely ... but how about you just focus on running the Cultivate trade show? Some of us just want to get down to business here, not sing “Kumbaya.”

It might feel good to belong to a social club, but does it really have an impact on my company? I'm in business to compete and I compete to win. What we do together doesn't matter. That's just preaching to the choir. What I do alone is the only thing that matters in the end.

The thing about being a member of the choir is I'm a sucker for some good preaching. But that doesn't mean the preaching is wrong. What we do as a collective only matters if what we do individually matters, and if what we do individually matters, then what we do collectively must matter, too.

Let's go with the choir analogy for a minute ... The individuals sing praise on their own—in their cars, on a stroll, in the shower—because there's something worth praising. Their solo singing matters much. Indeed, if the singers were silent, the rocks and stones would cry out!

The choir sings together because they can sing alone, but they cannot amplify their praise nor harmonize together if they remain alone.

Your business matters, not just because it's your business. Sure, it makes money. Yes, it provides employment. Of course, it delivers value. All those things matter, but your business matters more because of what it does specifically. Plants matter more than even we give them credit for. I cannot think of another “consumer good” that's more purely linked to both human purpose and to human need. Other goods may lay claim to byproducts such as health, beauty, vitality, peace, joy and wisdom. We're too humble to boast of what our product was designed to do.

Growing matters, uniquely so. What we do—and how we do it—is as important as the product we provide. And if what we do matters, then it matters what we do together.

I wish to thank Ken Fisher and to wish him well on his next adventure. I am confident that Kent Fulmer, the rest of the board and whomever is on the selection committee will pick the next leader for AmericanHort wisely. They have a great track record! Let's get this right, folks, because it really does matter! **GT**

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