

GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

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Take This Job & Love It

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One of the top reasons people leave a job is because of poor management. Lack of career growth and unsatisfactory compensation/benefits are the number one and two reasons, but lack of support, ineffective communication and micromanagement by their supervisor is the third reason why someone would quit their job.

Yes, people want a more defined career path with decent pay and good benefits, but they also want a boss who's supportive, reliable and gives them room for positive growth.

Many of our Young Grower Award winners have been supervisors where they lead a team of people. And most of them were nominated for the award by their own bosses. But I could probably count on one hand the number who were nominated by a member of their own staff.

This year's winner—Mike Wijesinghe, head grower of Bell Nursery's Springfield, Ohio, location—is one of those people.

As he and I talked for this month's cover story, it was apparent that he really values his team. He talked a lot about how he operates as a manager, and how he tries to empower them to make their own decisions and learn from their mistakes. He's also constantly working on improving himself, learning and figuring out new ways to solve problems. He even made it a point to become fluent in Spanish so that he can better communicate with his Spanish-speaking staff.

His first thought is never himself—it's of his staff and how he can support and challenge them to be the best they can be.

Mike is the boss you want to have, which is why Maleah Wellmann, a young plant grower on Mike's team, sent in the nomination. Some of the things she wrote were:

- "With every challenge Mike faces, he makes a decision with both the company and the people in mind."
- "Something unique about Mike is that he finds a way to improve processes without sacrificing his team's safety and morale."
- "Every grower at Bell Springfield has told me that their work-life balance—and work, in general—has improved significantly once Mike became head grower."

- “He has made adjustments to growing methods in order to save time and make life easier for the other growers.”
- “I know that I can confidently share my ideas and thoughts without fear of being belittled. He always admits any mistakes and is open to other people’s suggestions. This is especially significant for me as a woman in this industry.”
- “I have never seen the bare minimum from him.”

That’s very high praise from a young staff member. It proves that Mike’s efforts are indeed noticed and appreciated by his team. It’s a rare thing that he should be proud of every day.

As a manager myself, I know it’s not easy. Every staff member is different and you have to adapt to how you manage certain people. But that’s the job—you have to take the time to learn what your people want and need to be supported. It’s a constant work in progress and you continue to learn the whole time. Sometimes, I take what I’ve learned from supervisors I’ve had—good and bad—and use that as a guide. It may not always work, but taking the time and always trying matters.

You may not need the perfect boss in order to love your job, but having one that listens to you, admits their own mistakes, offers support whenever you need it and allows you to make your own decisions sure makes it a lot easier to come to work every day. May all of us who supervise others continually strive to be like Mike Wijesinghe. **GT**