

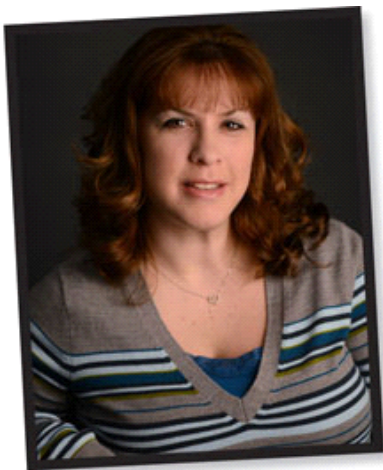
GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

12/1/2017

No One Understands it Better Than You

Jennifer Zurko



JENNIFER ZURKO

There are a few commercials that have been running here in the Chicago area from MB Financial Bank that show bankers walking through a business with one of their customers. One is with a man giving his banker a tour through his machinery shop, using terminology and lingo no one else would know but the people who work there.

The one that caught my attention was of a grower walking through his nursery with his pantsuit-clad banker. He was telling her how many cenizo trees and common myrtles he sold that year because of the buxus shortage. And how he lost some crops due to fusarium blight, as they strolled through hoop houses and rows of small trees.

I like this commercial because: First, it shows our industry and that gives me a warm, fuzzy feeling. Second, I actually understood what he was saying,

which also makes me realize that I've actually been paying attention during my 14 years in this industry. But also because it shows what I suppose MB Financial paid big advertising bucks for me to understand: No one knows your business better than you. And that your business is a lot more complicated than people think.

When people enter the horticulture industry from another sector, many of them are surprised at how complicated the supply chain is and are amazed at how growers and retailers can manage inventory that are actually living things.

Jonathan Saperstein, the focus of our cover story this month, spoke about that when Chris Beytes traveled down to the Houston area for a tour and one-on-one chat. Earlier this year, *Forbes* named him one of the "30 Under 30" business owners to watch in the manufacturing and industry category and that's quite a recognition. So we thought it might be interesting to feature him for our December Business Issue.

Jonathan said that when *Forbes* toured his operation they were "blown away with the complexity of this industry." He was nominated for the *Forbes* list by his bank, which is a testament to how well they know him. They—and *Forbes* magazine—may not exactly understand his business, but he does, and that's all that matters. Make sure you read all about Jonathan and TreeTown USA.

We've got other business-y-type articles for you this month, too, including how to create a good internship program, hiring a professional to man your trade show booth and finding alternative funding.

Just in time for the beginning of the New Year and the start of the 2018 spring season, we have an update on the state of our industry from Dr. Charlie Hall. See why you can remain optimistic.

And, as always, we have the results of our annual Wage & Benefit Survey, which is in its 22nd year. This year, we focused on labor—and the lack thereof—with some interesting (but not surprising) results. Many of you have had to get creative to find workers to help you get your product grown and out the door. Find out what your peers are doing.

I've written about our workforce and immigration reform a lot lately and have been in D.C. twice this year to cover lobbying events by the Society of American Florists and AmericanHort, so I know how difficult it's been for many of you. I've heard your stories. The labor shortage issue seems to be a problem that will linger for many years ... and no one understands that better than you.

Wishing you and your family a joy-filled holiday season. **GT**