

Accentuate the positive



by MARIA ZAMPINI

Staying positive is a continual struggle and a hard lesson to learn, but it's one that never goes out of style. And that goes for your personal life and in business.

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I find it hard to believe, but it's been a year now since my "Nursery Insight" column first debuted in *American Nurseryman*. I'd like to thank Sally Benson for the opportunity to share my thoughts on this great industry. It's been amazing how many people have either e-mailed or stopped me at trade shows to introduce themselves and give me feedback, both positive as well as good, constructive criticism, on what I've written. I sincerely appreciate the input and welcome the chance to continue sharing my opinions, thoughts and comments. Most of all, I'm grateful for the chance to connect with readers and those in this great big green industry of ours. So please, if you see me, don't hesitate to say, "Hey, I know you!"

I've actually been asked to continue with "Nursery Insight" in 2011. I'll be honest; I kinda, sorta, never really know what I'm going to write about until I sit down in front of a blank page. Sometimes I'll start a column and then switch midstream to another topic. I think I've got probably five half-written articles just waiting to be finished. It's just that sometimes something comes up that seems more important and relevant. But, I want you to know I'm always open to suggestions on topics you'd like to see discussed, as well as knowing what your take is on that particular subject. So, please feel free to shoot me an e-mail at maria.zampini@yahoo.com or a message via my Facebook page at www.facebook.com/people/Maria-Zampini/1459450949 to share story ideas or provide your personal insights.

When I started to write this particular column, it was the Christmas holidays and a huge nor'easter was pummeling the East Coast with tons of snow. And it got me thinking: First, this year more than ever I've tried to remember the reason for the season. For me, Christmas is not about the presents but the celebration of the birth of Christ. Additionally, as my cousin pointed out, I shouldn't dwell on the negatives in my life, but instead focus on enjoying the positives. I was fortunate to spend the holidays with my parents, my children, other family members and

good friends. Others are not as blessed, and my cousin is right: Don't dwell on what you *don't* have, but instead be grateful and appreciate what you *do* have. Staying positive is a continual struggle and a hard lesson to learn, but it's one that never goes out of style. And that goes for your personal life and in business.

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Second, I'm going to fess up that as I type I'm sitting here watching "Undercover Boss" on CBS. In case you haven't seen the show, I'll fill you in: The head of a major corporation goes undercover to work in his or her own company for a week. Tonight they chronicled the CEO of GSI Commerce, a company that handles all the phone orders, product fulfillment and customer service for concerns such as the National Football League, the National Basketball Association and Dick's Sporting Goods, among others. It is usually an eye-opening experience for the boss, and it always leads to company improvements.

As tonight's episode concluded, the CEO and the workers who were rewarded for some aspect of their job performance (which ranged from exemplary customer service to innovation, positive mental attitude, leadership and more) made some insightful observations. Although not necessarily new, these are basics worth repeating: "Life is so much bigger than business," "Positive attitude will bring good things to your life," and "Karma means something." It may be a corny show, but when you consider the recent upheaval with some major players in our industry, perhaps this show has some simple, but relevant, business lessons we can learn from.

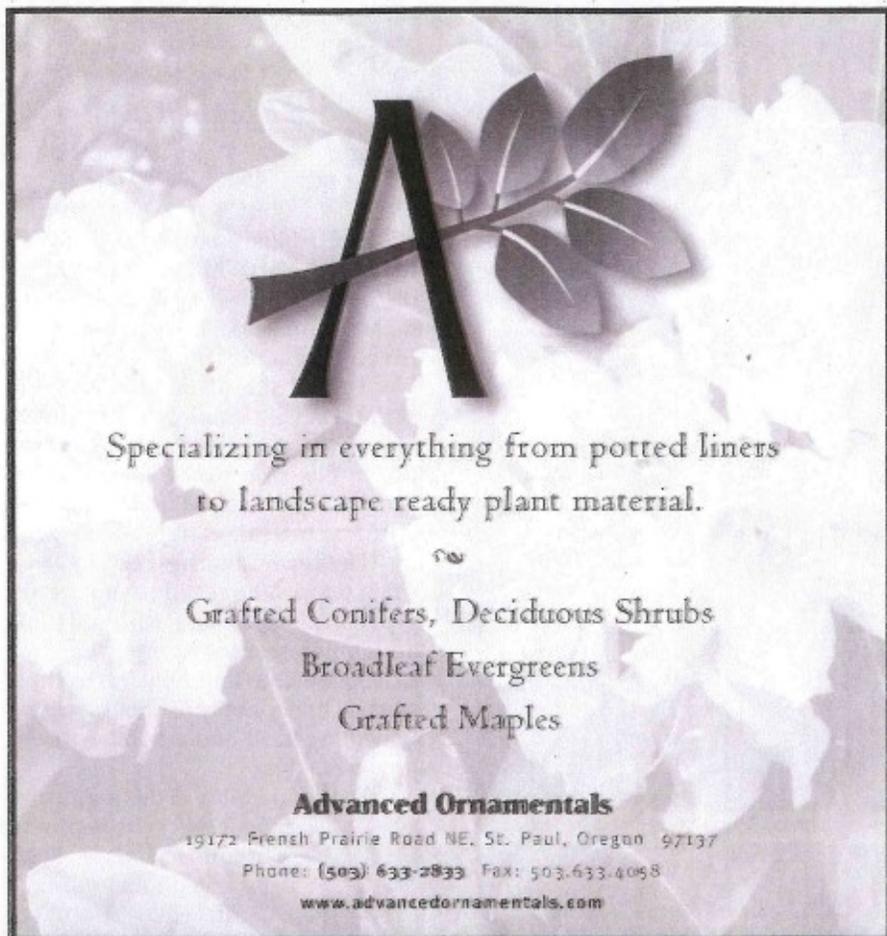
My family always makes fun of me for watching shows like "Undercover Boss" and "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition," but I don't have a problem admitting I like to watch them. Why? Because they're actually positive, and they make you feel good! It's refreshing to see people doing something nice for a change, and to observe people working together for a common goal and not necessarily expecting something in return.

Before the holidays, my dad and I met with Dave DeMore and his right-hand gal, Jen, of Dave DeMore Nursery Sales (Painesville, Ohio). For years, Dave has come to the nursery during the holidays with a large meat platter and fixings at lunchtime to show his appreciation for the previous year's business. Once again, Dave and Jen stopped in at LCN. They made it a point to come down to where our offices are located and include us in the luncheon and sit down for a visit and chat. I think Dave and his company are a good example of how being genuinely friendly and caring about customers and vendors will invariably pay business dividends.

I think those who approach the new year with an open and forward-thinking mind and treat others the way they want to be treated will be the ones standing at the finish line.

So, as 2010 came to an end, I toasted the new year with my cousin Erica, who recently lost her husband to cancer, with the hope that 2011 will be better for us both. I also hope, pray and believe that 2011 will be the start of a real upswing for our industry. I think those who approach the new year with an open and forward-thinking mind and treat others the way they want to be treated will be the ones standing at the finish line. To quote author Zig Ziglar, "Positive thinking will let you do everything better than negative thinking will."

So, cheers! And here's to a perfectly positive 2011.



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