

2021-2022 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Josh Robinson

It's about relationships

As we turn the page to February, there are a flurry of things that come to mind.

Digging, inventory, and orders have been finalized — and now, we gear up for the craziness of shipping. We use the month of February to knock the rust off and prepare for peak shipping to come.

Coming off a busy trade show month of January, we all have additional items requested and added to orders. Calls go out to double-check ship dates, and before we know it, we are off to the races. We get the order pulled and loaded on the truck, then off to its destination. Phew! We all breathe a collective sigh of relief and on to the next one.

It's a whirlwind these days, with all the additional issues associated with logistics and freight. But not so fast.

Yes, the transaction has taken place and the order has been grown and shipped. So, what do we do from there? Are we doing things after the fact to differentiate our service from others? This is a monumental opportunity to cultivate a lasting relationship with our customers.

There are two paths to take: transactional or relational.

The transactional approach solely relies on delivering the product and getting paid for it. An offer is made, and a sale is closed.

The relational approach is based on building mutually beneficial partnerships. It offers both sides a tremendous amount of value to benefit from. This is a partnership between two companies, where both sides are invested in learning about each other's needs and providing a pathway to a solution.

Through establishing these relationships, you create trust, credibility and loyalty. Companies that embody relational transactions are where I want to spend my money. Know who the first one I thought of was? Our very own nursery association.

Do you know what the mission of the OAN is? Here it is: "The Oregon Association of Nurseries is the community dedicated to the long-term success, profitability, and excellence of Oregon's nursery and greenhouse industry."

There is no doubt that that is a partnership I want to be a part of. Hence, why I am here. I can't think of a better example of a mutually beneficial partnership than what the OAN is to its members and what its members are to the association. A perfect embodiment of relational business.

What's the longest-running customer you have? Five, 10, 30, 50 years? The OAN has been doing it with us since 1933. We have all been successful because of the legacy of working together and sharing information.

Are we treating our customers like the OAN treats its customers? We may run into limited resources in being as fully effective as the OAN. I know we all do this to an extent — it's another ingredient of what sets Oregon nurseries apart. What if we could be a resource to our customers on a level closer to what the OAN offers all of us?

I love this organization and the industry it represents. I would enjoy hearing about the unique ways you connect with customers. Feel free to reach out to me any time. ☺