

2021-2022 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Blind spots

I recently had the opportunity to get involved in a discussion with other nursery industry professionals about blind spots.



Josh Robinson

It was an eye-opening experience and helped me better appreciate all the things that our great community does.

What is a blind spot? I don't mean the part of your car that blocks your view of the road. I am talking about an area a person lacks understanding or impartiality.

We may not be able to change people's opinions. However, in life and business, we can make a concerted effort to know what other people need and how to understand their point of view. Take time to reflect on your understanding of a situation. When you lack knowledge in an area, educate yourself. Surround yourself with people you respect and trust — people who strengthen your weaknesses. Seek their advice and apply it.

Of course, these principles may resonate particularly deeply for me, and likely many of you, because we just came out of the short 2022 session of the Oregon Legislature, and not exactly unscathed. I am a bit reluctant to get into politics here, but we were just dealt a piece of legislation to impose an overtime requirement on agriculture labor. The passage of this bill was one of the biggest, most blatant displays of blind spots I've ever witnessed.

I know some of you will think that I should probably check the log in my eye before I criticize the speck in the eye of the bill's proponents, but I refuse to do that for the moment.

I struggle for adequate words to convey my feelings. The agricultural community explained the seasonality of our industry, only to have it fall on deaf ears. We covered this topic from every possible angle, with conviction and passion, to no avail. This may be the single most frustrating thing I have ever dealt with. What do you do when the audience has no interest in understanding something? What if their ideas could drive family farms, which are already on the brink, out of business?

My advice? Choose not to be like that.

I would like to thank all the OAN members and staff, as well as key leaders of the association, for their efforts in fighting the overtime bill. Past President Kyle Fessler and our executive director, Jeff Stone, deserve special recognition. These two went above and beyond to put us in the best position possible to win, despite the deck being stacked from the start.

These two got on Zoom calls with representatives and senators, united and led all ag sectors, took part in workgroups, gave testimony, worked behind the scenes, visited the capitol building, hosted representatives for nursery tours, and so much more. They left no stone unturned. We owe them a great deal of gratitude.

I have never been prouder of our association. We sent a message that no matter what we are faced with, we will fight with everything we have.

I realize more and more how important it is to connect regularly with a group of people who can provide feedback. It's equally vital to accept their thoughts without getting defensive, as difficult as that can be. I know it's certainly hard for me.

I consider myself very blessed. I have my dad and my brother as close partners to help me through any issues working on our business. I have the Lean executive team through The Peters Company to help with leadership development and all business-minded things. We have a great team of employees to help with working on our company.

The cherry on top is all the grower friends and allied suppliers to the industry that are just a phone call away. That is the strength of our membership in my opinion.

No matter what my blind spot is, I have it covered with just one phone call to someone, and very possibly someone I know through OAN. Thank you to everyone who has helped me see! ☺