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Windows that Wow

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Planting the Seeds of Greatness

Nurturing Your Team to Help them Grow

I recently attended a CEO summit where an HR professional spoke of using artificial intelligence (AI) to gauge the company's culture, employee growth and engagement. I agree with using innovative approaches to



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run your business. Still, I feel strongly that to set a solid foundation for your employees' growth, there is no machine or data-driven replacement for human interaction. Rather than using AI, time spent connecting with your team to learn what drives them, pairing employee passions with their strengths, and developing and executing pathways for their future, are far more effective techniques to plant the seeds of greatness.

Build and Strengthen

Our fast-paced industry makes it challenging to set aside time for these conversations. The potential downside, however, is a monumental loss of talent if we do not invest this time with our employees. At our company, I expect our supervisors to check in with their teams weekly. We may not be able to plan those great flashes of insight, but by checking in with employees regularly, we help stir ideas and aspirations.

We also nurture growth by offering employees a wide range of training options. Just as using a variety of soil nutrients is best to grow plants, so is exposing employees to learning choices beyond one set type of training. Employees are each unique and do not respond

in the same way to identical learning approaches. To find something that resonates with each one, we offer a variety of methods that include structured classroom trainings, webinars, third-party conferences, lunch-and-learns and hands-on training.

We also help employees develop leadership skills by inviting them to participate in our internal committees. We have one committee that invites and evaluates employee feedback and ideas. Another helps to develop training topics and formats, leading to classes in what we call “Giroux U.” The Giroux U classes have now amassed a library of recorded trainings that are accessible to all employees and interns. The trainings focus on soft and technical skills, personal financial planning, mental health management and more.

Training for Growth

Interns are another essential part of our employee development program. We hired Michelle Fainberg as our first company intern back in 1996. After graduating from USC's School of Architecture, we challenged her to transition our shop drawings from pencil and paper to CAD. Michelle is now our director of construction design and technology and a member of our training and development committee.

In an industry focused on relationships, we must also allow our employees to practice their networking skills. Each year we send employees to industry events and require them to share what they learned with their colleagues once they return. Attending conferences allows employees to learn technical skills, practice soft skills, return to their companies and practice their presentation skills.

As our world continually moves forward, if employees are not growing, they are going backward. It's our obligation as leaders to nurture their growth.

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➔ **Nataline Lomedico** is the president and CEO of Giroux Glass, headquartered in Los Angeles. The company has been in business since 1946.