

## Willoway Nurseries

**Location:** Avon, OH

**2017 Revenues:** \$30.7 million

**Employees:** 375

**The Critical Number™:** Profit Before Tax

## Playing the Game

### Results

The Great Game of Business has had a huge impact on the financial side of Willoway's business. Prior to GGOB, a small group put together an annual budget based on a lot of assumptions and the mindset of managing the numbers using command and control. Now team members have ownership in key scoreboard items—which has led to better forecasting and management of expenses. Playing The Game for four years has also had a cultural impact on Willoway, as they have evolved from operating as individual departments to a team working towards the same goal. "Because of the Great Game, we have seen a lot of positive changes in attitude. People are excited and happy to come to work. People now tell us they love working here," says president Tom Demaline.

*"From my perspective I feel that the Great Game of Business has led to better communication overall. This has led to better morale, better understanding, better behavior, better appreciation back and forth, more coordination amongst fellow employees, and all the farms." – Robin Knaup, Sales Account Manager*



### Company Background

Founded in 1954, Willoway Nurseries is a wholesale grower of trees, shrubs, perennials, and seasonal color crops that ships to retailer and contractors in 26 states. Willoway is now the largest wholesale grower of nursery products in Ohio and a leading supplier in the United States, with a customer base of more than 1,200 independent garden centers and landscape contractors.

### Challenge

Margins in the landscape business continue to shrink. To confront these challenges, Willoway needed a way to gain efficiencies and improve quality. They also needed a way to communicate the realities of operating a business to their team and what it takes to be profitable.

### Solution

The team established a regular huddle rhythm with a focus on tracking results through scoreboards. The team also embraced technology to help connect locations for all-company huddles and to facilitate inter-company communications.

## MiniGame™ Spotlight

Willoway has implemented several MiniGames that have influenced positive changes in the culture at Willoway, while also improving productivity.

The company typically has between 10 and 15 MiniGames running throughout the year—examples include games focused on improving managed fill rate and games designed to reduce the number of flat tires—and uses a tracking sheet to keep teammates updated on their progress. In 2017, MiniGames helped generate \$475,000 increase in sales and \$42,000 savings in expenses

Often when winning a MiniGame, employees choose to donate the money to a local organization instead of receiving a prize.

*“We now have a better understanding of managers’ decisions. Now we can’t just blame management for things we don’t like or understand. GGOB has put the action in our hands and has given us the ability to really make team decisions.”*

*Grace Zubko, Office Administrator*

## What’s Next?

Emily Showalter, the company’s head of HR, admits that when it comes to playing the Great Game of Business, there’s always room for improvement—especially in areas like recognizing employees for their hard work and in running their High-Involvement Planning™ (HIP) process.

One of the areas of focus that came out of their 2018 HIP planning meeting was the need to grow the Willoway brand. “We want to build brand harmony as something that all of our employees can rally around and move in the same direction with,” says Showalter. “For this to be successful we needed to engage everyone in the company.”

The tagline the team has adopted is “Rooted to Grow”—which builds off what the company does while also utilizing a metaphor to convey how they can influence and grow both their customers and the people who work for Willoway.

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*“I’ve taken the concepts home. Now I balance my checkbook and have a budget and a plan to retire!” – Mark Shelton, Plant Pest and Disease Supervisor*