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ON GENERATIONAL CHANGE

> Business adaptability: It's what ensures individual businesses — and entire industries — survive and thrive. It's the ability to be flexible and adjust to new business realities. And there is no group better positioned to help the floral industry adapt than the next generation.

We must supplement experiences with the perspective and dynamic attitude of the new generations. They are an undeniable source of innovation in understanding changes to production processes, consumer trends, and current and future customer preferences.

Today, the speed in transferring information, the breakneck pace of technological change, and interpreting it all from a sustainability viewpoint force us to create a meeting point between what is new and what has already been achieved. Next Gen can help us.

Well aware of this need, the Colombian flower industry — mostly made up of family businesses — for the last couple of years has been leading a Next Gen strategy — an initiative by Asocolflores, the Colombian Association of Flower Exporters.

The Colombian flower industry has been recognized for creating stable employment and contributing to gender equality and sustainable development. Asocolflores is looking to the future in other ways, working on new concepts of how to do business and the ability to generate space for technological transformation with the contribution of young family members.

Asocolflores' Next Gen initiative is pursuing three main actions to achieve its objectives.

First, it promotes relationships between new business leaders, made up of flower growers between 25 and 45. Some have a significant worldwide trajectory in the flower trade, and others are internationally recognized for their entrepreneurship and innovation standards. Allowing them to get to know each other, expand their opportunities, and to connect creates a young and collaborative community which is recognized as a major player in the future of the sector.

The Next Gen initiative also hosts activities to help the next generation acquire and exchange knowledge and

identify existing challenges and opportunities to build a roadmap for their companies. Spearheading technologies and their relationship with crops; the logistics chain; social, political, and economic changes; and innovation in production and consumption are among the current topics.

The third Next Gen priority is knowledge transfer. Asocolflores wants to see the older generations take on the role of mentors who build on existing foundations. Thus, the emerging generations will better understand the industry and its successes and failures. The wisdom of individuals who have dedicated a lifetime to this work has to be transferred to leaders in training.

Next Gen also works to attract young workers, professionals, and operators who see the flower industry as full of opportunity. The generational succession in floriculture is imminent and necessary.

The Colombian floriculture industry understands the importance of its generational work so that when the legacy passes, the knowledge of founders and successors is respected and merges with the new knowledge that drives growth, conquers new markets, and is characterized by social, economic, and environmental awareness.

Like the flowers of Colombia, the next generation has an inspiring spirit. Their experience will surely contribute to the growth of all workers and communities where floriculture is present. 🌸

Augusto Solano is president of Asocolflores, the Colombian Association of Flower Exporters.

