

Share and share alike ...



OAN President Ben Verhoeven, left, and Bulmaro Garcia, Blue Heron's operations manager.

PHOTO BY SALAMON BARRERA

It's a clear June afternoon as I pull into Blue Heron's Corvallis farm. Folks are just finishing lunch as Bulmaro Garcia, the operations manager, warmly greets me.

Bulmaro has been at **Blue Heron** since 1989, and it is clear why he is now responsible for leading shipping, spraying, maintenance, irrigation — you name it. He is full of energy as he tells me of all the improvements, large and small, that he and his team have been making.

Some seem simple. Let's use two nails here instead of three. Why not a single rope instead of a double? When you multiply these small improvements by a factor of many thousands, they add up.

Other improvements are larger. Bulmaro tells me the story of an imported \$75,000 root pruner that upon arrival had no capability to adjust. He and his team found a way to out-perform it with a \$650 lawn edger. That's creativity over capital!

What Bulmaro is most passionate about, though, is information and how to share it. Several years ago, he noticed

a disconnect between the office and the field. Information was batched in files, only to be released as a flood of orders. Bulmaro and the team worked to transition to a new software system that lets folks in the field instantly see work quantity on their mobile phones. "Now it is like a game," he tells me. They used to have order fulfillment wait times of days, but now, we're like McDonalds. You order at the window and it's ready."

I ask Bulmaro if everyone was on board. Not at first, he tells me, but "If something doesn't work right away, keep going. There is a learning curve." You also need to know "how to communicate with the field because they are the ones that make the ideas possible. Now everybody is feeling less stressed. There is no more rushing."

Incredible! "What is the secret?" I ask.

Bulmaro smiles. Share knowledge, he tells me. "The information is for all of us." ☺

Editor's note: This column is also printed on the next page in Spanish this month, at the president's request.



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