



Garden retail trends report

August 11, 2014

Garden Centers of America (GCA) has a renewed vigor and is continuing to expand the services available to you. As part of this expansion, we have revamped the whole concept behind our monthly newsletter. It is the goal of GCA to provide you with the information and resources to help you grow your business. Garden Retail Trends Report is designed to keep you on top of what's hot in retailing, both within the industry and out.



Four Store Layout Tweaks that Make a Big Difference

Is your garden center layout maximizing your sales potential? Consider the following tweaks for a store layout that moves more product, from Intuit Small Business Blog:

- 1. Avoid placing merchandise in the "decompression zone."** Design for free space near your store entrance. Studies show customers frequently miss displays within 15 feet of the front door. Also of note: Customers tend to turn to the right when they enter a store, so make sure there's something new there to grab them.
- 2. Minimize counters.** They separate your staff from your customers and can create an "us vs. them" environment, says Bob Phibbs of Retail Doctor. Instead, your staff should wander the sales floor, posing as shoppers, to make your garden center appear busier and more vibrant.
- 3. Beware of the "butt-brush effect."** Paco Underhill coined this phrase when he discovered that customers will avoid browsing if it brings another customer's backside into close proximity. Make sure your aisles and floor space allow shoppers ample personal space.
- 4. Maintain good visibility.** Keeping your garden center shelves low to increase visibility will help cut back on inventory losses. Make sure your temporary store displays aren't providing cover for shoplifters.

Give Your Employees a Sense of Ownership & Watch Them Shine

Building a culture of stellar customer service relies heavily on your staff and how invested they are in your garden center. To help your employees develop a sense of ownership, Micah Solomon of Forbes.com recommends the following:

- **Give your employees discretion to solve issues.** Rather than requiring a manager to authorize solutions, empower staff to solve customer problems. Allow them to discount merchandise or offer perks like a free plant in order to boost customer retention.



- **Give them input into and control over how their work is carried out.** For employees to have ownership, they need to be a part of the decision-making process.
- **Never underestimate the negative impact of an unfortunate hire.** When three people are acting like owners and a fourth isn't, the one who isn't on board can easily bring down the other three. Try finding another position for the odd man out.

E-Marketing Trends to Put In Place Now

These e-marketing trends from ExactTarget will engage your customers more often:

Advanced Personalization - In the era of e-mail engagement, greater relevancy is critical. Personalization that goes beyond first-name merges will make your messages more relevant to your customers.

Unique Voice - Influenced by content marketing and social media engagement, marketing communication is undergoing a shift from promotional, corporate and detached to helpful, conversational and timely. Get your customers thinking fall now with tips on how to prepare their gardens for cooler temps.

Smart Rendering - E-mails must adapt to and thrive in a variety of environments. Rendering tactics will help ensure your garden center's message is optimized for the platform, situation, person and time of open.

Triggered Messages - These e-mails are sent in an automated way, often as a response to a click-through on a previous campaign, web page or on a certain date within the database, such as a customer's birthday. They are among the most effective e-mails you can send.

Inspired Fundamentals - Don't forget the fundamental messaging and design tactics that have been effective for years - like focused, shareable e-mail content on your garden center brand.

Now Trending in Garden Retailing . . .

- What your customers are saying about you matters - big time. **Eighty-nine percent of consumers say customer testimonials are the most effective marketing content** and **70 percent review online customer reviews when they consider a brand**, reports social media software company Lithium.
- **Millennials are faithful to and heavily influenced by brands introduced to them by their parents**, reports Concentric Marketing. Make your garden center family-friendly to encourage parents and older kids to shop together.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR GCA MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS



Save Big at IGC Chicago Next Week!

GCA Members save \$100 on each IGC Retail Conference Passport registration during the early bird registration period, and \$60 off each IGC Chicago Monday Garden Center Bus Tour registration!

Other benefits include:

- Two free drink tickets per company for redemption at Wednesday evening's party and IGC Classic Rock Concert, featuring chart-topper Eddie Money
- Special reserved seating at the concert - be sure to come early, seating is limited!
- GCA Membership Networking Lunch

Log in to get your GCA Discount Code before registering: [Click here.](#)
IGC Chicago Registration: [Click here.](#)

Take a Lesson from this Lawsuit: Monitor Your Garden Center's Info Online!

A recent lawsuit against Google serves as a warning for IGC retailers, and points to the importance of monitoring your garden center's information online. The owner of the Serbian Crown, Rene Bertagna, is taking Google to court, saying his restaurant suffered a 75 percent



drop in customers over weekends in early 2012. Bertagna attributes the loss to an incorrect listing on Google Places, which reported the restaurant was closed on weekends and Mondays. The Serbian Crown, a successful business for 40 years, eventually closed shop in the spring of 2013 following the error. Bertagna had hired an Internet consultant to take control of the listing, but the damage was already done to the restaurant, which was busiest on the weekends.

Bertagna says he had never used Google Maps, or the Internet, at the time of the incorrect listing, and he did not make the change to the restaurant's hours. The lawsuit claims Google is to blame for allowing the listing to be "sabotaged" and failing to act quickly to undo the damage.

Anyone with a Google Plus account can submit a change to a Google Local page, even if it is unverified. Changes include business name, website, address, phone number and hours of operation. While changes are submitted for review, it doesn't always prevent misinformation from being posted.

These Twitter Tactics Will Get More Moms Shopping Your Garden Center

What garden center doesn't want more mothers shopping our stores today - and shaping their kids into our customers of tomorrow? Punchbowl.com offers the following tips to reach the 5.4 million moms who use Twitter:

- **Use Twitter influencers to increase your garden center brand's reach.** Influencers are important - moms trust other moms. Seventy-three percent of mothers say they purchased a product because of another mother's recommendation on Twitter.
- **Tweet coupons and product updates.** Ninety-six percent of moms who follow brands on Twitter do so to find out about new products, discounts and coupons, so give them what they want.
- **Tweet photos and videos.** Tweets that contain photos average a 35 percent increase in retweets, and tweets with video average a 28 percent increase. Show off your best display garden with photos, and tweet video of your next fairy gardening event.
- **Tweet about more than just your brand.** Share interesting, brand-relevant content. Seventy-one percent of moms want business tweets to include links to interesting articles and news stories. Planning a big bulb promotion this fall? Tweet a link to an article in *Garden Design* listing the best bulbs to plant in autumn.



Study Proves It: Staff Training Produces Sales Increases

Garden centers that invest in ongoing employee training are reaping the rewards in the form of sales, according to the National Retail Federation (NRF). A recent study of 63,000 sales associates by Experticity found that knowledgeable retail associates sell 87 percent more, reports NRF. Additional important findings from the study:

- Employees who engage are selling a lot more. Sales associates who completed as little as one training module sold 69 percent more than those who didn't. Associates who completed six or more trainings sold 123 percent more.
- Employees who engage with a brand sell a lot more of that brand. Brand sales were 87 percent higher for sales associates who engaged with just one training module for that brand compared to those who didn't engage at all.
- Sales performance increases because of interaction. Sales associates who took one interactive course containing an average of three modules sold nearly 10 percent more after the training.