



Garden retail trends report

December 10, 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.

GCA Hot Link! Video of the Starbucks Mega-Store that's Got Retailers Everywhere Buzzing

"The Ultimate Customer Experience" - Starbucks is going for this retail "golden egg" in a big way with its new destination mega-store in the upscale Capitol Hill area of Seattle. Starbucks Reserve Roastery and Tasting Room isn't your local Starbucks shop - it's a 15,000-square-foot immersive retail experience that invites customers to revel in the process that brings their cup of joe to the table.



It's the highest form of retail theater. As *USA Today* describes it: "The smell of the roasting coffee permeates the air like invisible java junkie insulin. The sights and sounds of the overhead pneumatic transfer tubes - where the coffee beans are whisked from loading bay to roasters to coffee silos - are riveting. A 32-foot-high Copper Cast, where beans rest after roasting, shines like a newly minted penny." There are even live coffee bean trees growing inside.



Coffee isn't just served and sold here - it's roasted, bagged and shipped around the world. Beautifully displayed coffee merchandise is showcased under museum-quality lighting - and is tagged with museum store prices: colorful, handblown drinking glasses for iced coffee, \$75; a waxed canvas apron like the baristas wear in the store, \$149.95; an Italian-made espresso machine, \$3,000.

And the java isn't cheap, either. Bagged coffees go for \$16 a pound or more. A 32-ounce cup of the store's exclusive Pantheon Blend will set you back \$8. Sound like bar prices? There's that element here, too - a pizza restaurant inside the building sells cocktails, beer and wine - some bottles priced \$80 or more.

An area at the back of the store is available for customers to rent for group meetings, birthdays and wedding events - \$200 for three hours or \$500 per day.

Starbucks declines to discuss its investment in this new store, which replaced a former Volvo dealership. A second Roastery is reportedly planned for next year in Asia, though the company won't say where.

Check out the Starbucks prototype here for yourself, in [this video](#) from *USA Today*. (Photos from [USAToday.com](#).)

It's Flu Season: What To Do Now So You're Ready When Your Store Staff Calls In Sick

The absence of one staff member can hit your garden center hard, but there are measures you can put in place now to minimize the negative effects. Here are some of the ways to plan ahead during this cold and flu season, from *Inc. Magazine*:

Document processes -

Make a record of your store's processes and passwords. All of the steps to keep track of deliveries, inventory and more should be put down on paper.



Delegate tasks -

The owner of your garden center shouldn't have everything on his/her shoulders. Spread the tasks around to managers so that one team member's absence isn't disastrous.

Cross-train employees - Make sure at least two people are trained on each store function so there is a fill-in when one employee is absent.

How to Keep Your Cool When Customer Tempers Flare

When a customer's temper flares, it may be hard not to fan the flames with an angry response. However, there are ways to put out the fire and limit the damage while representing your garden center in a positive light. Here are a few, from *Business2Community*:



1. Adjust your mindset to understand the customer's complaint.

Think back. You may not have been in the exact same situation, but it's likely that you've been in a similar one. Recall that moment, and try to empathize.

2. Attempt to remove your feelings from the situation entirely. It would be easy to take everything an angry customer says to heart, but it's likely they don't really mean it and are simply upset with the garden center for one reason or another.

3. Apologize. Even if you feel you've done nothing wrong, a little humility goes a long way in the eyes of the customer and will help diffuse the situation.

Don't Hire for Your Online Marketing, Do It In-House

If you're handling your online marketing in-house, you're not alone. Many independent garden centers keeping it in-store to save on costs. Here's what you can do without spending a fortune on an outside agency, from Jonathan Long, Founder and CEO of Market Domination Media:

Claim your local listings page. If you haven't claimed your local business listing on Google, Bing and other directories, you could be missing out on website visitors, phone calls and physical store visits.

Audit your on-page SEO. Make sure each page is correctly optimized for the target keywords that will help your garden center come up in the search results.

Build an e-mail marketing list. Building a highly targeted e-mail list of current as well as potential customers allows you to keep them updated on current sales, promotions and general information about your garden center.

Become active on social media. Use social media to provide your customers with useful information that will attract their interest, not to give them a sales pitch.

Create a blog. Blogging on a regular basis can help you build online authority and provide engaging content for your website.

Now Trending in Garden Retailing . . .

- Giving customers a memorable experience in your garden center can make them less price-conscious. In fact, **86 percent of people will pay up to 25 percent more for a better customer experience**, according to the "RightNow Customer Impact Report."
- Millennials still buy in-store, despite the one full day each week they spend online. **Eighty-one percent of their dollars are spent in stores**, according to research by the NPD Group.
- Local media coverage of your garden center adds to your credibility in the consumer's eye. **Seventy percent of consumers prefer to get to know a company through original articles, not through ads**, reports ContentPlus.



Directional Audio Moves Customers Where You Want Them In Your Store

More than just Muzak, the use of directional audio in retail stores is leading to an increase in sales, according to a pair of Swedish studies. In one of the studies, conducted by professors at the University of Stockholm, directional audio was used to point shoppers toward organic products instead of non-organic products. To influence the shoppers' purchasing decisions, the sounds of farm animals and a woman narrator talking about the benefits of organic products were piped into the store's dairy section. The shoppers exposed to the directional audio lingered in the dairy section for 15 seconds longer than those who weren't, and sales of the organic products rose 10 percent.

In the second study, conducted at Swedish retailer ICA, directional audio yielded even more positive results. The study showed the sales of two beverages rose 60 percent during an advertising campaign that used directional audio.

Another IGC Advantage: Research Shows Shoppers Despise Self-Service Checkouts at the 'Orange & Blue Guys'

The self-service checkouts at the box stores are vexing most customers, according to research from Glory Global Solutions. In fact, 88 percent of consumers are frustrated with them, giving independent retailers like your garden center a leg up. The personal service you provide is a welcome relief from the agitation.



Both men and women alike are annoyed with self-service machines: 89 percent of women and 88 percent of men report frustration.

The aggravation is so deep for a third of consumers that they avoid using self-service machines altogether and instead seek out human interaction and customer service. Consumers 55 years and older are most frustrated by the machines and are least likely to use them. A warm, friendly smile at your garden center could make these ruffled shoppers your customers for life.

Get Meaningful Customer Feedback You Can Act On

When you have the chance to get input from your customers, take advantage of the opportunity by asking them questions that will tell you how they really feel about your garden center. RetailCustomerExperience.com offers these suggestions:

• **Extract more specific feedback from compliments.** Ask: "What specific items or actions pleased you the most?" It will tell you if your initiatives are hitting home with your customers or if they are missing the mark.

• **Zero in on the "so-so" parts of the experience.** Ask: "What would you like to see us add to our inventory or store layout?" Don't pose the question, "What makes you satisfied?" It leads to a lot of "um" and "I'm not really sure" replies. Instead, "What should we add?" encourages customers to think about what's missing.

• **Conquer the frustrating parts of the experience.** Ask: "How could we make it easier?" Consider ways they can help you help them.

• **Invite credit for good service where credit is due.** Ask: "Who serves you best here?" If there is an employee who stands out in influencing your customers to remain loyal to your store, this is the perfect opportunity to find out.



• **Ask specific "satisfied" and "unsatisfied" customers questions about the process and experience.** Ask: "What can we do to improve the checkout process?" Or: "How can we better improve the way we inform customers about our classes?" Questions like these will lead to more valuable insight than simply asking, "What can we do to improve?"

• **Ask this one continually throughout the customer journey:** "Have we been able to provide everything you need?" Make sure your customers are comfortable telling you when things are not perfect. It gives you the chance to apologize and promise to fix it.



Make Your Store a Community Hub & Customers Will Come

Retailers are becoming more than places to buy products - many are now becoming hubs, says PSFK's "Future of Retail Report 2015." This trend, called "Community Cornerstone," has retailers setting aside space in their stores to offer complementary services and experiences that go beyond their core product offerings. Consumers today are looking for meaningful experiences in brick-and-mortar stores where customers can interact with each other and build relationships. For example, Urban Outfitters, another company of Terrain garden centers, sells the lifestyle experience at its Manhattan flagship store with an in-store Intelligentsia cafe and a photo booth for Instagram snapshots.

By offering communal experiences your customers can participate in at your garden center, you will create engaging moments that will bring them back again and again. Your store can become a meeting spot by adding a gardening club that convenes once a month in-store. Hosting fundraisers and other events, such as Ladies Night, can also set the stage for you to connect with your community and become a meeting - and shopping - hub.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR GCA MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS



Save Big at IGC East and IGC Chicago Next Summer!

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

Other benefits include:

- Two free drink tickets per company for redemption at the pre-party evening receptions and IGC Classic Rock Concerts
- Special reserved seating at the concerts - be sure to come early, seating is limited!
- GCA Member Networking Lunch

More details and registration information will be available soon.