

garden centers of america **Garden retail trends report**

October 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 Tip! 'Made In America' Matters to Your Customers: Now Two Resources Help You Sell It!



More consumers are buying "Made in the USA" products, reports *Independent Retailer*, and there are opportunities for upping sales of these items at your garden center. The most obvious benefit of American-made products is that they support the nation's manufacturing industries. Made in the USA Foundation Chairman Joel Joseph says men ages 18 to 30 are the strongest supporters of American-made products because many realize that if people don't buy American, there may not be a job for them.

Buying American is appealing to consumers in other ways, too. It is better for the environment since the carbon footprint associated with American-made products is much smaller than comparable products that have been shipped from other countries.

To benefit from the growing popularity of "Made in the USA," the article suggests that garden centers not only stock American-made products but let your consumers know you do. Groups like [American Made Matters](#) and the [Made in the USA Foundation](#) can help your store with signage and other promotions.

Three New Ways to Dazzle Your Customers with Service

These hot customer service trends, from trendwatching.com, will set your garden center apart from all other retailers in your area:

- 'Plan B'** - This is defined as access when needed to an alternative or backup product that overcomes the limitations in the original, puts right an emergency ("I've run out!" "It's broken!" "It's lost!"), addresses a common pain point and more. For instance, at the opening of its third Costa Rican store, clothing retailer Forever 21 handed out vouchers to the first 100 customers, inviting them to visit the store's mobile fashion truck during "fashion emergencies." What can you offer for your customers' gardening emergencies?
- 'Video Valets'** - Consider providing webcam-enabled face-to-face interaction with your staff horticulturists so customers can get the personal one-on-one direction they need from the convenience of their homes.



- 3. Deliver 'More Than' the Goods** - Smart garden centers see delivery as much more than functional. This means providing additional services and other extras in their delivery, such as bringing the container garden around the side of the house to the backyard, and putting it in the exact spot the customer wants it.

Looking for Blog Material? Check Your Inbox

It's a common refrain among IGC retailers: There isn't enough time in the day. Marketing projects like blogging can fall by the wayside. In fact, IBM research finds 80 percent of small businesses that begin a blog never publish more than five posts. Since we're so busy e-mailing customers and talking with them one-on-one during the day, many of us believe we don't have time to create new blog content to engage our audience.

But that's not the case. Your daily interactions with customers are rife with content that can be transformed into a blog. Here's how to get blog material from your e-mail, from Huffington Post:



- Look for the questions that are asked by customers more than once. Rather than e-mailing an answer, post it on your blog and send a link.
- Blind copy your marketing staff next time you send a long e-mail to a customer or a prospect. Tag them with making it a post.
- Blind copy yourself and put it into a "future blog post" folder. Review it monthly.
- If you send an e-mail with a strong opinion, polish it up and send it to the editor of a local publication. Then blog about it.

Now Trending in Garden Retailing . . .

- **Forty-six percent of U.S. consumers use social media apps**, according to ExactTarget. Satisfy your customers' appetites with a Facebook page frequently updated with fresh content, a Pinterest page with gorgeous garden ideas and Tweets that offer nuggets of golden garden advice.
- Delivering stellar customer service will pay off in brand loyalty for your garden center. Globally last year, **66 percent of consumers switched brands or businesses due to poor customer service**, says trendwatching.com.
- Here's another reason to post online "how-to" videos that help your customers with their gardens: In three years, **74 percent of Internet traffic will be video**, according to Broadcast.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR GCA MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS



Save Big at IGC East and IGC Chicago Next Summer!

GCA Members save \$100 on each IGC Retail Conference Passport registration during the early bird registration period, and \$60 off each 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.



Four Fast Solutions that Will Move Excess Inventory Off Your Store Shelves

It happens: some product just doesn't move. That excess inventory may seem doomed as a loss, but it may not be a total wash. Here are five ways you can turn that excess inventory into a sales opportunity, from Nathania Stambouli of Via Trading Corp:

- 1. Turn the product into promotional items.** If you're thinking about selling the excess inventory for less, consider giving it to customers as a gift-with-purchase instead. For example, when a customer spends \$50 at your garden center, she gets one (insert excess product here). It will increase customer loyalty and help you upsell.
- 2. Sell it through daily deal sites.** If you're sitting on 200 decorative pots that won't sell, consider consigning to a daily deal site like [Groupon Goods](#) or [Daily Steals](#). You'll get money for the product and some exposure for your business.
- 3. List it on eBay Wholesale.** If you're stuck with an assorted variety of items, post them on [eBay Wholesale](#) in one small lot. Listing your lot here could also connect you with wholesalers you can use to supply your garden center.
- 4. Create a coupon.** Create coupon codes for your excess items and submit them to couponing sites like [RetailMeNot](#) and [Wow-Coupons](#). When a person searches for a discount coupon for your garden center, the coupon for your excess inventory item will pop up and help get that customer into your store.



What You Need to Know to Get More Millennial Moms Shopping Your Garden Center

Millennial moms are a desirable demographic garden centers hope to gain for the long term. Here are three key points you need to understand about this key group of consumers, from punchbowl.com:

What motivates them to buy? Sixty-eight percent of Millennials, many of whom are moms, say they wouldn't be loyal to a brand that doesn't offer a good loyalty program. Offering these moms an ongoing incentive to buy at your garden center could lead to a spike in sales and keep them coming back for more.

Why might they switch brands? Top reasons include a change in financial situation, current brand price increase and a word-of-mouth recommendation of another brand. Fifty-four percent of Millennial women switched brands because it supported a cause they care about. Have you considered hosting a Pink Day this spring?

When will they recommend your store? Seven out of 10 mothers will recommend their favorite brands to other mothers on a monthly basis. Sixty-one percent of these mothers recommend based on special offers, while 54 percent do so based on the brand's sense of fun.

Consumers Still Love Stores, but There's Much to Be Gained from Your Online Offers

Good news: Consumers still want the in-store shopping experience, according to recent research, which shows the majority of those surveyed, by a 2:1 ratio, still love to shop stores. But that same survey, by SmartFocus, shows they are increasing their online shopping as well. Sixty percent are shopping online more frequently, a trend that is more prevalent among women and Millennials. What are your plans to grab this digital market share for your garden center's bottom line?

A generational gap can be seen in the survey's results, which shows 50 percent of Millennials prefer shopping online than in stores, compared with 27 percent of Baby Boomers who prefer online shopping. The survey also shows Millennials are the most open to receiving product offers via e-mail and sharing personal data with a brand in order to receive a more personalized shopping experience. In total, three-quarters of U.S. shoppers are receptive to digital offers and discounts. Make sure you include a coupon in your next e-mail newsletter, i.e., "50% Off Any Holiday Decor Item."

