

Ghostwriters

Boo! No, it's not the returning spirits of dearly departed gardeners, but rather a possible solution for keeping up with your website and e-mail marketing efforts. **Many IGC retailers struggle with running their stores and keeping their online presence lively and topical at the same time. Look into finding a hired-gun freelance writer who is willing to ghostwrite for you for a fee. With input and direction from you, they perform the actual chore of getting it down ... and up online!**

Happy Clerks

It may just prove the squeaky-wheel theory, but retail store research from Brigham Young University's Marriott School of Management reveals that **although salespeople don't enjoy unpleasant shoppers, they serve them better.** The study also found that, not surprisingly, store personnel in a good mood are more uniform in their delivery of customer service. But oddly, those in a bad mood are more likely to provide poor service to pleasant customers than to unpleasant ones!

Garden Soundtracks

Way too many IGCs overlook the significant impact store background music has on shoppers' moods and buying patterns. The most important thing to do is carefully match your target customer with the music. If you are trying to attract Gen X / Gen Y gardeners, don't play cheesy elevator-type music - rather Coldplay would be appropriate. Also, attention to day cycles are important. Mellow morning sounds and rocking afternoon tunes set an appropriate store beat.

Locally Owned

We call ourselves independent garden centers within the trade, but to consumers that really doesn't track well. A much better term is "locally owned garden center." **Especially among today's younger shoppers, the fact that your garden center is a unique, local business with roots, both literally and figuratively, in the community is a big plus.** Be proud of what you are. Your goal should not be to look slick or cookie-cutter chainlike. Cool and hip ... and local is what it will be all about.

You
Can
BE
GARDENCHIC

Keep it Simple and Pure

Faced with fast-paced modern life, many **Americans will desire convenience and simplicity in 2009, according to trend researcher and tracker Mintel. It targets home-spun activities like cooking and gardening to play even larger roles in people's lives** as they seek comfort. Retailers and manufacturers can capitalize on their quest by conveying the simple pleasures and purity of their products and offerings. IGCs have an obvious opportunity to make the most of this.

Excellent Choice

We've all experienced it: You're ordering your medium-rare ahi tuna with Asian ginger slaw, and the waiter shoots back, "Ah, excellent ...!" You feel gratified and smart as you obviously had the brilliance to select the best item on the menu! Yeah, it's silly, but it is also persuasive and reassuring. **Are you reinforcing your customers' buying decisions with subtle approving comments?** It really comes down to engaging your customers and making them feel good about their selections.

