

Here's Looking at You

Is your garden center open for shoppers everywhere to view via webcam at your website? **Install numerous "eyes" around your store to give visitors a look at what's happening in real time.** Technology has brought the price of webcams way down, and you don't have to be a geek to set one up. Focus a cam on your "featured item this week" area. Aim one at your store's display garden or pet bird. Promote the live feed with links in your e-newsletter, and play it up with in-store signage. Get creative!

Billboard Rerouting

Recently, a garden center eager to put up a billboard off the interstate leading to his store ran into a major road block: Local zoning prohibits billboards deemed "commercial." Not to worry, though. This quick-thinking IGC came up with the perfect solution. **He posted a billboard with the message, "North Attleborough Welcomes You - Sponsored by Briggs Garden & Home."** Local authorities approved this "public service billboard," and there it stands. Smart thinking!

Committed to Kids

While most garden centers see the importance of "germinating" future gardeners, few have found success in a kids gardening focus. Advice from those select IGCs that do well points out that, **like any "specialty," kids gardening programs take a strong and ongoing commitment.** This means setting aside both store space and enough caring staff who truly take ownership of the project. Concepts that have worked well include a "Kids Gardening Club."

Do You Twitter?

Do you Twitter? Your customers do - especially those from the all-important Gen X / Gen Y generation. The emerging influence of social networking is in the headlines daily. As a cutting-edge, forward-thinking IGC, you need to be on board, taking full advantage of the promotional opportunities presented by the likes of Twitter, MySpace and Facebook. Get hip to the ins and outs of this hot trend at Josh Rubin's IGC Show presentation, "Using Internet Social Networking to Grow Your Business," Thursday, August 20 at 1 p.m.

You
Can
BE
GARDENCHIC



Shop Your Own

Have you ever walked in your customers' shoes? Give it a try. Take off your name tag, and walk their walk. Is your store layout truly shopper-friendly? Forget all those "reasons why" things are arranged and displayed. Can you, as a shopper, really find what you are looking for? More importantly, were you stimulated and motivated? There's great value in just getting out and walking your store. Take the time, and you may very well find new creative inspiration to improve your garden center!

Got Meatballs?

IKEA creates a point of distinction by featuring Swedish meatballs in its in-store restaurants. **Not only does the menu offering represent the retailer's home country, more importantly it boldly proclaims IKEA is unlike any other.** What's your "meatball?" What is that unique item - plant or decor/gift - that can't be found anywhere else? Think outside the box. Today's consumer is looking for a unique shopping adventure. Find that "meatball" that sticks in their minds.