

Marketing Munchies Podcast Transcript

Episode #20: Linnaeus on Marketing

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Announcer: Welcome to the Marketing Munchies Podcast series hosted by Dr. Bridget Behe. Each week Bridget and her guests will share information, insights, research-based findings, and her 30 years of experience to help your horticultural business connect better with current and future customers. Now, let's join our host, Dr. Bridget Behe.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Welcome to this episode of the Marketing Munchies Podcast. Today I want to talk about a recent trip that I took to Sweden where I had the opportunity to visit the home and garden of Carl Linnaeus. Now, if you're the plant nerd/plant geek that you probably are if you're listening to these podcasts, you will know that Carl Linnaeus is credited with developing our system of binomial nomenclature. I want to tell you a little bit about his history, because it directly affects the roots of our Green Industry. It affects how we name plants, how we communicate as professionals. What surprised me was how Linnaeus' tenacity in marketing helped us end up with the naming system that we have today. Linnaeus was a savvy marketer, and I didn't realize it until this trip.

First, let's talk a little bit about his background. Carl Linnaeus was the son of a pastor, and he was supposed to follow in his father's footsteps. His father enjoyed botany and plants, growing them, and Carl shared this passion, but back in the mid 1700s, if you wanted to study plants you studied medicine. Most of the medical treatments or cures were very much plant-based. So, Carl decided he would pursue medicine and got his degree from a university in the Netherlands. At the time, where he lived in Sweden, he couldn't pursue that particular degree. After he graduated, he got a position at Uppsala University. Uppsala University is in Uppsala, Sweden where he lectured and taught about medicine.

Now, Linnaeus wanted his lectures to be more than just simply "talk." He wanted to have physical examples or specimens. He was given a home that had some property in the city of Uppsala, and he wanted to design a garden that he could use as a teaching garden. He structured his teaching garden by a system that we no longer use—a system of classification that uses the number of pistils and stamens in the flower to classify the type of flower. He also segregated his garden into annuals and perennials. He also has a really interesting bog garden and a water garden, because he wanted to show the different types of ecosystems in which plants grow. It was fascinating to be physically in that garden even though the plant material isn't what it was in the 1700s. They've tried to recreate it as best they can. It was incredible to tour the house and see the desk and chair at which he did a lot of his writing, and to see the table that he used in order to lay out the specimens when he was talking and lecturing to his students.

Now, the really cool part for this marketer was to understand what a true marketer Carl Linnaeus was. At the time, there were competing systems for classification of plant material, but, because he was so well traveled, he had so many people who followed his teachings who learned from

him. He had so many students who went out and collected plant material that his system of binomial nomenclature was the one that won out. While others had proposed alternative systems, his was the one that really gained some traction.

Ultimately, Linnaeus was ahead of his time and really good at public relations. He was a very prolific writer, he traveled, he helped to spread his ideas. This was what made him the marketer that he was and enabled his classification system to become adopted. The next time you look at a plant, and you think about its Latin name, the roots of many of those plant names can be traced back to Carl Linnaeus. He named one plant after himself: *Linnaea Borealis* or the Twin Flower. I also learned from our tour guide that all of the plants that he had in his garden, that he classified and named, that carried the name *Officinalis*, were in fact plants that had medical uses.

It was great to see the garden and the home of a respected pioneer of our horticulture industry and a person whose name still continues to persist in the binomial nomenclature. For me, learning about how he marketed his system of classification really was the most interesting facet to that trip.

I hope if you get a chance to go to Sweden, that you can schedule a visit to Uppsala and see Linnaeus' home and garden and be an inspired marketer like me. Thanks for listening.

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Announcer: Thank you for joining us on this week's Marketing Munchies Podcast. For more information or to download the transcript of this podcast, please visit, connect-2-consumer.org. That's C-O-N-N-E-C-T, dash, the number two, dash, C-O-N-S-U-M-E-R, dot, C-O-M.

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