

Marketing Munchies Podcast Transcript

Episode #29

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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: Hi, and welcome back to the Marketing Munchies Podcast. I am your host, Dr. Bridget Behe. This week I would like to talk about five ways that you can make your signs more effective, connect better with your consumers, and, hopefully, sell more plants.

The first way you can improve your signage effectiveness is by creating a uniform look and logo. Whether you generate your signs by hand or by machine, you want to make sure that there is a lot of consistency in the look, and you want to reinforce the store name, the store image, or the store brand by using the logo consistently. You would be surprised how many impressions it takes for a consumer to remember a brand. The more you can enforce your brand or your store name, especially on the sign, the more effective you are going to be in creating that consistently positive brand image.

After you have a consistent look, then think about what you are going to make the headline and what you are going to make the byline. All too often, I see price listed as the key element of the sign. In other words, "price" is in the largest font, but we know that we make it easier for customers to not make a purchase or to decide not to buy a plant if they do not believe it is worth the price. You do not want to make "price" the headline; you want to make "price" the byline. Now, if it is a product that is on sale, of course you want to emphasize the price, but usually that is not the case. When you think about how large of a font you are going to convey "price" in, you want to make sure that "price" is smaller than some of the other key elements that you are going to include on that sign.

The third key factor to making more effective signs is to think about putting "price" on the right side as opposed to the left side. You want to take a cue from the TV show *The Price is Right*. We have done some eye-tracking research here at Michigan State to show that people physiologically see price signs faster on the left than on the right, and people will see higher prices faster than lower prices. Since in our culture we read from left to right, what you want to do is make sure that for the majority of items (when you are listing the price) you want to put that on the right-hand side and lower down in the sign.

The fourth important thing to create more effective signs is to focus on benefits not on features. Features are technical aspects of the product like how tall it grows, what the flower color is, how far apart we should space them, or how much water they require. But, benefits are features translated into action. If a plant does not need much water, it will save you time and it will save you the input of water. If a plant is shorter, the benefit of that is you could put it in the front of

the bed or you can see over it. We want to make sure that we are translating features into benefits. Charly Hall did a great podcast with me earlier this year on plant benefits, and I would encourage you to go back and listen to that.

Then, the fifth tip for making more effective signs is using image congruency. A lot of garden centers like to focus on beautiful plants—they want to highlight beautiful plants especially in their signage. But, retailers will tell you, when people see images of themselves or they see people who they identify with or who look like them using a product, buying a product, or enjoying a product, it can really help boost image congruency. When we have imagery of people (not of plants) and people who look like residents of our community, we can increase image congruency.

White Oak Garden Center in Ohio does a great job with this. They hire a professional photographer and give her product seasonally (three or four times a year) and she is able to incorporate friends (with their permission) and children (with their parents' permission) into some of the signage. For White Oak, she creates local product with people who reflect what the composition of the local community looks like. All other things being equal, when we see people who look like what we see ourselves as (enjoying or using a product) we are more likely to buy that product.

Think about your signage for next spring, and think about using a uniform look and logo. Think about putting “price” in a smaller font versus a larger font. Think about putting the regular prices (not sale prices but the regular price) on the right side of the sign. Focus on benefits (not on features), and try to create some image congruency. Hopefully, that will help you create more effective signs and be more profitable next spring.

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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