

## Marketing Munchies Podcast Transcript

### Episode #32

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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'm your host, Dr. Bridget Behe. This week I want to talk about three ways you can nudge consumers to make better choices about the plants that they are going to use in and around their homes and landscapes.

These suggestions I take from a book by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, published by Penguin Books in 2008 called *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. Now I found the book really interesting, especially the first third of the book. As the book went on, it talked about choices in healthcare and in financial decisions which really weren't as interesting to me as the first part, so I'm going to concentrate on that aspect of the book.

What the authors talk about in the book *Nudge* is how people can be "choice architects." Now let me talk about that term "choice architect." Humans don't always make choices that are rational or maximize their utility. If you have heard me speak at any trade association, sometimes I talk about consumers not being rational, and if they were economists would rule the world. Economists tend to think that people are rational and make choices that maximize their utility or the value that they get from the choices that they take. But in Thaler and Sunstein's book, they talk about "choice architects" as businesses or really anyone can help people make better choices simply by how they present them.

The three ways I want to talk about your being able to nudge consumers into better plant choices are by signage, social media, and reviews. One of the first ways that you can help design better consumer choices about plants is by talking about popular items. Popular items are more popular when others have this information. It creates kind of a snowball effect, because people, if they are having a difficult time making a choice, and they see that others are buying that particular item, they are probably going to buy that as well. Thaler and Sunstein present research that backs up how the music industry has benefited from that, but I think we can apply it to horticulture by using some signage—either in the store or on the website about a particular plant being a best seller.

If people are looking for a tomato or they are looking for an indoor foliage plant, you could talk about, through signage, what in fact is a best seller and maybe add some benefit information to that, and tell them why that's a best seller. Maybe it's a best-selling tomato, because it produces early fruit or more fruit. Maybe it's a best-selling foliage plant, because it thrives well in the

light. You could talk about how an item is popular and use signage to indicate that to others and help improve consumer purchases of plants.

A second way I think we can design better choices is by social media. Social media really can influence what others like, because people are looking at what their friends like. Encouraging consumers to post on social media while they are shopping at your store or shopping on your website can help to increase traffic and increase purchases at your particular retail outlet. You might do this by having places where people can take selfie pictures or encouraging them at the cash register to post on social media if they are at an educational event or if they are at a fun event, a workshop, at your particular retail location. Encouraging those social media posts will help your customers' friends see that they are enjoying their purchases and having a good time and buying plant material at your particular outlet. So, social media can nudge people into better choices.

The third way I want to talk about nudging consumers is through reviews. Reviews can shift choice to places and things with very high reviews and encourage them. I bet many of my listeners have looked at an online review for a place or a product. Maybe it's a restaurant. Maybe it's a pair of running shoes and have taken advice from complete and total strangers about the performance of that particular store or that particular product. So, reviews can help to shift choice, and we need to encourage those positive reviews as customers exit the retail space or as they buy things online. We need to encourage them to make those positive reviews by posting signage or sending an email encouraging review after some plant material was purchased in the store.

What this can do is to help shift or nudge their friends or others into a position where they might be making plant choices and will follow the lead of their known or perhaps unknown reviewers, and make a choice about a plant.

I would encourage you to add the book *Nudge* by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein published by Penguin Books in 2008, to put that book on your reading list. Especially that first part of the book that talks about "choice architects" and "choice architecture." It's surprising, the research that's out there that helps us understand that we can help to nudge consumers in a positive direction simply by how we present and when we present different types of information in terms of their making choices.

That's it for this week! 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](http://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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