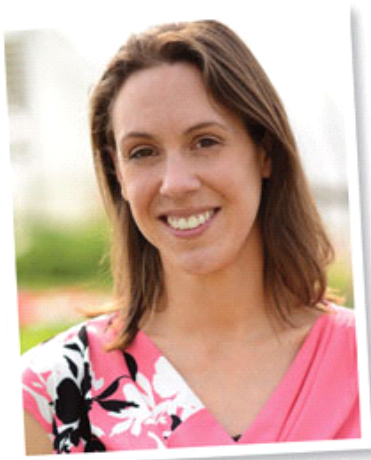


Columns

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Face Paint and Fresh Greens

Jennifer Polanz



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We've put a lot of emphasis on technology in the last couple of issues, mostly focused on the world of online sales and whether or not small retailers can jump in to that already crowded arena. This month, our long-time columnist and retail consultant Bill McCurry takes an excellent look at the pitfalls of such a venture in his column, where he talks with a fraud expert from Microsoft about cybercrime and the risks of online retailing. If you're even considering having an e-commerce platform, you must stop reading this (come back later, though) and read his column.

The reason I bring up technology is because fall and early winter is the perfect time to put down the electronics and enjoy Mother Nature, family and friends. Many retailers have an opportunity in September, October, November and December to pad their profits before going into January through hands-on events like Fall Festivals, Halloween activities and winter holiday sales. There's money and memories to be made in these months, so we talked with two retailers who've been doing these events for many years to get their thoughts on how to do them properly.

Notice I said money and memories. Memories are probably more important now than ever—leaving that lasting impression on young parents and their children will keep them coming back for as long as you have your holiday event. I should know, I'm one of those parents. And we (happily) have a routine that includes visiting Bremec's Garden Center's one-day Fall Festival to enjoy face and pumpkin painting, games and buying our mums, kale, corn stalks and hay bales for the front porch. The day after Thanksgiving is now officially reserved for Sugar Pines Farm, where we venture out into the rows of Canaan and Frasier Firs and ceremonially choose one to grace our living room for the next month.

Today, so many kids are removed from rural living. They get a daily dose of technology and a plateful of food without knowing where it really comes from. So disconnecting and running around the farm or garden center in the fall? That's pretty much like heaven (and no, it's not Iowa, it's Ohio).

In the absence of low, low prices (which no one can sustain) and massive volume, independent retailers need something that sets them apart. The fall and winter holidays are perfect for evoking those lasting memories

that keeps customers coming back year after year (just make sure they know you're there in the spring, too!). The events don't have to just take place during these months, either. Heidi Lindberg and Bridget Behe of Michigan State University start a four-part series on garden center marketing with a look at events that can drive traffic at all different times of the year.

And, of course, last but certainly not least, you may have noticed our retailer on the cover—Andrea Snelgrove from Wingard's Market in Lexington, South Carolina, is this year's *Green Profit/Dümmen* Orange Young Retailer Award winner. Read how she's helped grow that already successful business even more and helped position them for the future. **GP**