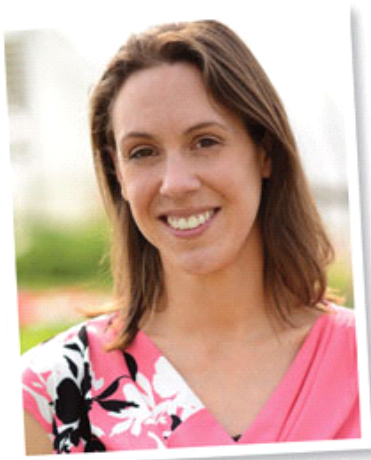


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Common Sense

Jennifer Polanz



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I'm writing this two weeks before that beloved holiday that makes people crazy for things like plastic monkeys that perch on kid-sized fingers and things called L.O.L. balls (don't even ask me what the heck that is—sounds a little scary to me).

The buying frenzy that happens this time of year makes me wonder what happened to our good sense—retailers and consumers alike. Story time: I ventured into a big box retailer (clothing, not home improvement) to buy a present. Online the sale price was \$19.99, but in-store it rang up \$29.99. To me that's akin to bait and switch, but wait, it gets better. The sales clerk says while she can't adjust the price, I can head back to customer service and order it on a kiosk, where I can not only get the sale price, but get free shipping to my house. Huh?

It made me realize that consumers expect (perhaps unreasonably, or perhaps not) that pricing and policy are seamless between channels—online, in-store and however else you offer products. They want to order online and return in-store. They want the same prices everywhere and they want to use perks you provide at any opportunity.

One thing common sense will tell you is the world of consumers is changing and retail needs to be along for the ride. Those who are content to have the same stores, same policies and even the same pricing as 30 years ago are swimming in a sea of denial. One of the biggest areas to change is how we view the landscape and what we offer to inspire customers. Ellen looks at ways to modernize the landscape department.

In our annual Wage & Benefits story, we talk about multiple generations of workers, from Boomers to Millennials, and what they offer in the workplace. While most respondents said Boomers work harder, there were arguments for giving the younger crowd a shot (and people seemed to really dig Gen Xers, which is funny considering we were once labeled Slackers). Common sense, however, dictates the hardest, most dependable workers are still the most valued.

This younger generation also has very little experience in the garden. Very little. Remember, their parents were mostly a Do-It-For-Me crowd, so knowledge and experience are key to getting them to trust their local garden center. Valerie Nalls at Nalls Produce is a pro at this and she talks more about catering to beginners. Columnist Amanda Thomsen has even more ideas for you on this topic.

And finally, I invoke one of our country's most important published works, "Common Sense," a pamphlet written by

Thomas Paine declaring the reasons why independence is best. Well, in this issue we have our own “Common Sense” from GrowIt! co-founder Mason Day, who lays out the reasons why his company works solely with independent garden centers. For his company, it’s simply common sense. **GP**