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Seeing All the Potential

Jennifer Polanz



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This year marks our fifth Style issue and the first to have a man on the cover.

It's an interesting juxtaposition, with 2018 touted as the Year of the Woman, and a record number of women recently being voted in to Congress. So why a man this year?

For as long as I've been in this industry, we've focused on women as our core customer. Specifically the affluent, college-educated, 45- to 65-year-old woman. But now, some statistics are indicating more men are becoming involved in the lawn and garden market, particularly in the 18 to 34 age bracket. You can read all about what retailers are seeing and perspectives on why we may be seeing it now.

Here's an interesting aspect of this whole exercise—I went to go find the study or studies that pegged that affluent, college-educated woman as our target audience. The funny thing was, I couldn't find anything concrete. And when I asked around, it seemed to be just generally accepted knowledge for retail in general.

Now, maybe there was a solid case for that 15 or 20 years ago, but what have we done to verify that lately? With all the data we have at our fingertips, it's time to base our decisions on what we actually know and not what we *think* we know. So here's the rub: if more men are participating in gardening activities but not shopping our stores, then where are they shopping? Are they buying online or going to big box stores? Retailers will have to dig deeper into what's happening in their local area to see if they're missing out when it comes to attracting this potential buyer.

And please know, I'm not suggesting we abandon our traditional female customer in any way. We just have to look at all potential customers and understand how to serve their needs. Men also enjoy get-togethers and special events, too—we do Ladies Night Out, what about a Guy's Night Out? Or a couples night? Why limit your store's customer base (and potential profit), even inadvertently?

On that note, let's talk about kids. Here's another segment we can have a huge impact on, which can eventually (or not so eventually) impact retail bottom lines. It's fashionable these days for parents to spend more on educational and enrichment activities with their kids, which can also include spending time outdoors. If you want to know more about how to help parents create a love of outdoors, read Amanda Thomsen's column (and get her new book "Backyard Adventure: Get Messy, Get Wet, Build Cool Things, and Have Tons of Wild Fun!").

So now that we've looked at what's in style for men and kids, let's talk trends. See the new colors, textures and finishes Ellen found for 2019. And then see what all your editors liked this year.

And finally, in today's increasingly divisive society, I hope the one thing that comes back into style next year is civil discourse. Read Bill McCurry's year-end hope for a better 2019 and beyond. **GP**