

Kiss My Aster

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So Anyways, About My Bamboo ...

Amanda Thomsen



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There's this old saying: "No one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the American public" and that quote is credited to Henry Louis Mencken. Except he never actually wrote that. What he did say is: "No one in this world, so far as I know—and I have searched the records for years and employed agents to help me—has ever lost money by underestimating the intelligence of the great masses of the plain people. Nor has anyone ever lost public office thereby." I find it incredibly funny that his original, true statement was dumbed down—then it blew up and became a thing people still say 100 years later.

The other day a customer came in, pointed to a display of *Dracaena sanderiana*, and said, "I have a question about bamboo," to which I said, "Great! Let's start here.

Lucky Bamboo is neither 'lucky' nor 'bamboo' [as I gesture to the sign that says this in front of it]. It's related to these plants here [shows other dracaenas]."

She looks at me, like I just did the can-can, and says, "So anyways, about my bamboo ... can I keep it in my basement bathroom that has no light or heat and I'll never water it?"

As someone who was born explaining herself, attempting to put all the answers within our customers' quick reach comes naturally. Obviously, she said jokingly, the more signage I use the less I'll have to explain, right? That said, I'm beefing up on signage in 2024 anyways, even though I often feel like what I've already put out there has been a moot point. Feeling a little defeated, it may even be a performance to prove ... well, I know that not every approach is good for everyone, but I'm just gobsmacked sometimes.

Do you ever feel like you're a pretty happy-go-lucky person that tends to rage when you've laid all the info out there for consumption and it's all for nothing? Again and again? Because that's me. The harder I work to make things easier for the customers and then that info gets ignored ... I don't even know who I am anymore.

Perhaps my "simple" isn't simple for other people. I understand that my brain works like an overthinking rock tumbler that never shuts off, but it's the only way I know how to be. That "rock tumbler" spends sleepless nights trying to figure out how to give the customers the info they crave in ways they can absorb and that empowers them. In my writing and speaking, I've proven to be pretty dang good at breaking down and explaining things, but my family would argue that I'm from another planet and the problem is me. So where does that leave me?

A) I'm beefing up on signage around the shop ANYWAYS for the customers that get it.

B) I'm making short videos that explain my classes better. I've been told I'm a bit of a "just fold in the cheese, David" kind of explainer (which again, what?), so I feel like at least with these videos I can clear my conscience.

C) I'm adding FAQs to everything in 2024 knowing, again, this info is getting floated out into space for those that want to use it and will be completely ignored by the masses.

D) Taking yet another cue from Katie Elzer-Peters, everything gets a QR code and I love the people that use them, and to the people that don't, their loss.

I'm joyous at the idea of learning how others think, to the point that when someone asks an obviously stupid question I like to ask, "That is such a good/fun/interesting question—can you tell me how you came to asking it? Like, tell me about your entire thought process" and, unfortunately, this tends to panic people, but I'm being genuine as heck. I'm genuinely curious and sometimes I wonder if that's where the whole breakdown is. I'll continue to learn to make the connections I seek SO HARD (maybe too hard?), and until then, I'll look at my 2024 signage and info goals like a scientist and await my results.

In the meantime, if you have any rage stories from well-laid-out information that was completely ignored, I want to hear it. Email me at Amanda@kissmyaster.com. **GP**

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