

3/30/2015

Wheels on Fire

Amanda Thomsen



I'm not as ahead of the curve as I used to be, so for many, the ideas below are not at all cutting edge. Although I have to say, many garden centers are a little behind the curve. Some garden centers are still working their way up to embrace the "website" and "social media." And that's okay—we all need goals, people. But to them, I may end up sounding like a Jetson with the below ideas. But hey, this is how the "kids" are doing it nowadays and when I say "kids" I mean the general, fun-loving public. So put down your abacus and check out these four-wheeled ideas.

Pop-Up Shops: Go and buy an old camper/trailer and use it as an off-site shop at festivals, street fairs, flea markets, farmers' markets and other charming events. A painted-up trailer can be quite the advertising piece! Spread the word about YOU and YOUR STUFF to crowds that have no idea where you are or what you do. My husband gifted me a 1949 trailer that is gorgeous (to me) but in rough shape. I planned to make that puppy a pop-up (I have no store but I wanted a pop-up; it makes little sense but that's how I roll) and then we found that it would take about 50K in work so I abandoned all hope. (Still looking for a good home for the old girl, if you know all about riveting ...)

Anyways, imagine being able to handpick product to bring to events! Pre-planted herb containers for farmers' markets, the newest chic annuals at a craft fair, mini gardening accoutrements for a street fair with tons of kids attending. Roll out an old carpet, set up your wares and set the sidewalk on fire with your on-trend look. Then you Instagram and tweet it like a complete cuckoo and hashtag it until your fingers bleed. You can easily use register apps (like Square, PayPal or Intuit) and a smartphone to keep track of sales or go old school and just write everything down.

Food Trucks: Having an event at your place? Give your customers the opportunity to grab a gourmet lunch without leaving your campus! OR host a food truck event if you have a lot of parking to offer. What I mean by that is, invite a ton of different trucks to park and sell food at your garden center, promote the heck out of it and watch local foodies stream in to try the food and most likely take home a bunch of plants, too. AND you and your employees get to easily grab a great lunch.

Many food trucks will come for free as long as they will meet a minimum in sales and, sure, that can be a

gamble. A very delicious gamble. Food trucks bring their own power sources, water ... all you have to do is bring an empty stomach. I've attended some of these food truck events and have been impressed with the rabid following some food trucks already have. Now, these food trucks are COMPLETELY social media and website savvy (unlike some businesses I know, ahem) and will promote the heck out of anywhere they will be ON TOP of your promotion. Doesn't this seem like a great way to get some fresh blood through the door? If gourmet cupcakes can't do it ... what can? **GP**

Amanda Thomsen is now a regular columnist in Green Profit magazine. You can find her funky, punky blog planted at KissMyAster.co and you can follow her on Facebook and Twitter @KissMyAster.