

Features

4/30/2025

Beyond the Sticker Price

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We live in a world with 24/7 access to products that will be delivered almost instantly. Although this isn't necessarily the case with live plants, it's still the reality most consumers know. "Going shopping" isn't the end goal when folks visit your store. They want to connect and feel good about where their dollars are spent. They seek knowledge, experience and a personal touch. This is why garden centers and nurseries continue to thrive when other retail establishments shut their doors.

One way to solidify our industry's retail presence is for each business to develop value propositions and use them as a tool to remain focused and stay on track. If your value proposition resonates with a customer base, helps curate experiences and builds trust—customers will keep coming back ... and tell their friends.

What's a Value Proposition?



Simply put, your value proposition includes a statement (yes, put it in writing) that explains how your store provides value to your customers. It sounds easy, but there's more to it than you think. First, you need to understand the advantages provided versus your competition. What differentiates your store? Often, this should be determined by talking to customers and not based on internal assumptions. Advantages are customer centric.

Especially with our industry, a key reason people visit a garden center is to solve a problem. This might be a specific plant for a garden location, a product to eliminate weeds or pests, or something completely different. Ask yourself (or your customers and your staff) what major challenges does your business solve? This will help define your value.

Lastly, what's your "selling proposition"? Is it your people, processes, customer service, location, pricing? It's impossible to focus on all of these (or any others that you identify) as a group—you need to pick the top one or two.

Once you have these three questions answered concisely, it's time to start crafting a statement.

Clear & Concise Mission



Experts tend to use this fill-in-the-blanks sentence to nail down a value statement: We help (target audience) solve (problem) by providing (unique solution) that delivers (key benefit).

Drilling down your notes into one sentence is tough, but it's necessary. A value proposition must be concise or it'll lose power as it's reinterpreted by those who hear it. This will take time to craft because you're close to the topic—your business—and might not want to remove any of the great

benefits you've brainstormed. Remember, the goal is to have a crisp statement that you and your whole team can repeat and use to drive decisions and actions.

Before moving on, here are a couple examples of companies we know and their value propositions. Imagine how hard it must have been for a store like IKEA to drill down all they do into one sentence. But they did. You can, too. And notice how Carhartt included their longevity and corporate history into the statement. Clearly, their 135-year legacy is important to their brand identity. And Gatorade makes everyone who drinks it feel like an athlete.

A key component of your concise value statement is to convey trust and credibility. You are the expert. You are the best source. You are different. Shoppers should come to you. The three brands above covered all of these key differentiators.

The Hard Part



Crafting a statement will take careful consideration, time and effort. But once you have it down on paper, the real challenge begins. Hopefully, it's a fun challenge and one that energizes your entire team—but it's hard work, nonetheless. Now it's time to integrate the value you provide into all aspects of your business.

Your store offers an experience that your competition can't replicate. When shoppers walk through your doors (or visit your website, follow your

socials, etc.), they engage with dozens of interactions that shape their perception of your business. Each of these interactions must align with your value proposition. Personal interactions with your employees are a major part of the value equation because they result in credibility. Your décor and merchandising should reflect your value proposition. Post-sale follow-up needs to be on brand, as well as your marketing and messaging. It all works together.

The top retailers in the world understand their customers intimately and tailor every interaction to go far beyond the task of shopping. In the same sense, your value proposition is so much more than a vehicle to increase sales—it's about creating and following through on an experience that inspires and leads to loyalty. As stated above, shoppers have endless opportunities to spend their money (on gardening products or anywhere else discretionary dollars might go), so your goal isn't to "sell them things." Having a value proposition helps you engage customers in your brand, your experience and the connections your business offers. **GP**