

Sales vs. sales, customer reviews, POP, potting mix and what looks good

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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

- Sales vs. Sales
- Let's Talk Customer Reviews
- Speaking of Customers ...
- Potting Mix via Pyrolysis
- What Looks Good Finally

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Sales vs. Sales

Ball Horticultural's astute "hortistician" Dr. Marvin Miller (actually, he's the market research manager) emailed the Ball Publishing editors with a wondering of his: "I'm wondering what the state of sales is," he wrote. He made it clear his pondering wasn't the same "sales" that Bossman Chris Beytes asks about each week (e.g. "How'd your sales go last week?"). Marvin is more interested in the "Entire bench, 50% off!" type sales.

And this is why he was wondering. "During the pandemic," Marvin wrote, "a lot of folks swore off sales. There was no need to put anything on sale, as everything was selling at full price. Now, I'm wondering if folks are back into having sales, especially when it's been a so-so kind of spring in many parts of the country."





Here's Marvin's questions for you: Have you resorted to sales to offload some inventory? And if so, are your "on sale now!" strategies different today than what they had been prior to or even during the pandemic?

By the way, now that spring is astronomically over, how would you rate your spring sales ("sales" as in Bossman Beytes' meaning, not Marvin's "sales" meaning)? Drop me a note about any of your "sales" meanings [HERE](#).

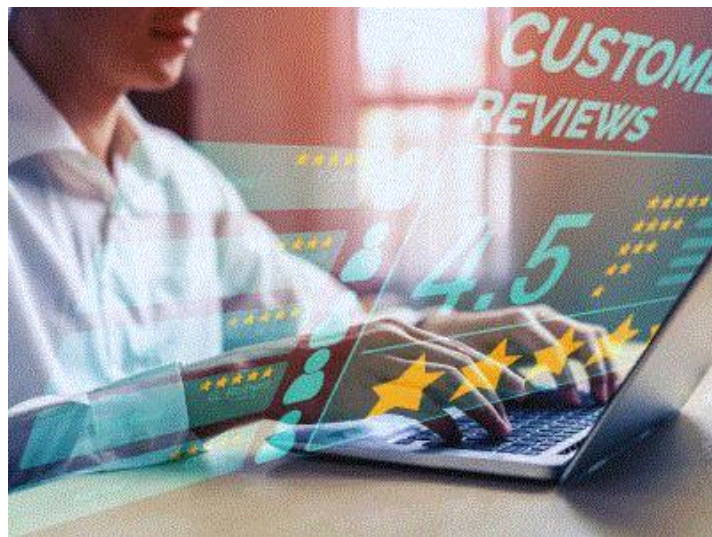
Oh, and happy summer solstice!



Let's Talk Customer Reviews

Fact: How other people—friends, family, even strangers—feel about a product or service goes a long way in influencing a person's purchasing decision. Subjective observation: We in the horticulture industry do not use customer reviews to our full advantage. Take my dog trainer as an example. All of his marketing materials seem to have more customer reviews than the listing of what he does and how he does it.

Check out his [WEBSITE](#) to see how he uses reviews. You can see in a video on that page that he even has posterboards of customer reviews plastered on the walls. "But folks are already here," I was thinking last night during agility class. Then it dawned on me—these reviews are here to make me feel confident that I chose the right trainer, and to entice me to continue with other training classes. Brand trust is really what customer reviews are all about.



The StartupNation.com website posted a list of eight ways companies could be and should be using customer reviews. I'll list them with a brief description, and please feel free to explore them a bit more on your own [HERE](#).

Add reviews to website pages (like my dog trainer does!). Reviews displayed on high-traffic pages (home page, pricing page, dedicated testimonial page, etc.) you reinforce your brand's image and credibility.

Use a social feed plugin. A social feed streams social media posts to your website, and you can integrate reviews onto any website page. There are some tools to help you incorporate the

reviews automatically as well.

Use in emails and newsletters. This lets you offer customers and potential customers social proof that other people enjoy your product or service. Don't overdo it though—add in one or two highly positive reviews to each edition and that should get your point across.

Share on social media. No explanation needed here. But here's an idea: pull an amazing one-liner review from a customer and add it as a caption for an Instagram or Facebook post.

Create review-focused ads. Find a review that is specific about a benefit of your product or service, then pair that with a relevant image or video to create an ad.

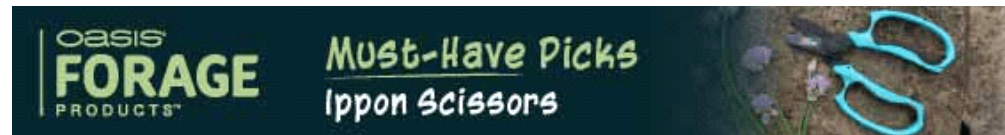
Add a review to your packaging. Including reviews on the product itself gives potential customers a recommendation as they are evaluating the product in a store.

Highlight reviews in your sales materials. Do you have a sales team for, say, your landscape department? Feature positive customer reviews in sales decks, brochures, flyers and such to help your potential customer feel confident they are about to choose the right company for the job.

Ask for reviews. You can only share reviews if you get some reviews to share. Folks are busy these days, so sending them a prompt to fill out a review is a great idea. I recently purchased a [BullySafe](#) from Woof, and then filled out an online customer survey about the product. The brand manager subsequently contacted me directly to ask if I wouldn't mind posting a review to their site ("plus here's a 15% discount code for your next purchase").

I am remembering that Proven Winners used this customer review tactic with their springtime billboards. I will look into how that worked for them and report back later.

Which of these eight customer review strategies have you implemented successfully? And which might you try next? Drop me a note about customer reviews [HERE](#).



Speaking of Customers ...

A smart way to get them to buy your products is to give them as much information as possible at point of purchase. Signs, bench cards, hang tags and the like are your "silent salespeople" as garden center retail marketing guru Judy Sharpton says. Syngenta Flowers now has POP materials to support some of your—and your customers'—best-selling brands.

Here's what they have:

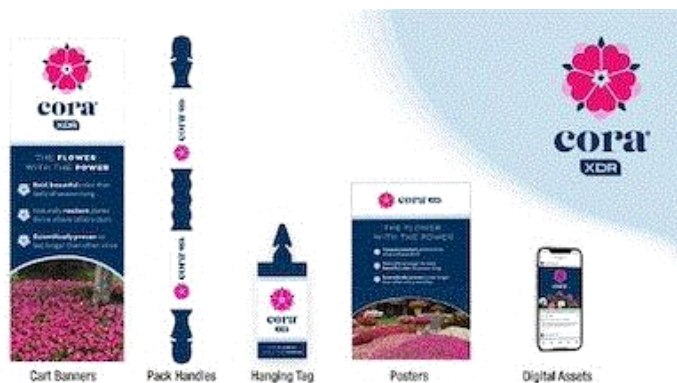
For Calliope geraniums, with the tagline "Intense Color That Lasts":



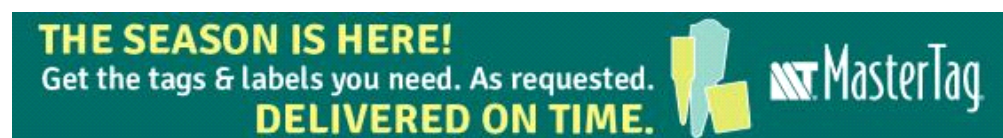
For Sunfinity sunflowers, with the tagline “Endless Blooms All Summer Long”:



For the disease-resistant Cora XDR vinca, with the tagline “The Flower with the Power”:



Too late for this season? Maybe these extra materials will help you sell through some product you already have. And you can always add “Get Syngenta POP materials” to your winter to-do list. See all the POP they offer [HERE](#).



Potting Mix via Pyrolysis

In my experience, this is the point in the season where customers are refreshing their spring flowers into something summery. They may need some potting soil. The folks at [Sun Gro Horticulture](#) have a new potting mix for your consideration.

Sunshine Black Bear Indoor & Outdoor Potting Mix is what they are calling a “climate conscious” potting mix. That’s because it is formulated with a carbon-rich biochar, which contributes to carbon sequestering.



Biochar is created through the process of pyrolysis using forest by-products. The remnants of pyrolysis is a sustainable alternative to perlite and helps with aeration and drainage in the mix. Black Bear does have Canadian sphagnum peat moss in it, which is made using responsible peatland management practices—it’s even certified through the Veriflora Responsibly Managed Peatlands program.

This Black Bear Potting Mix can be used in indoor and outdoor containers, baskets, boxes and fabric pots. Each of the 1.5 cu.ft. bags stores 2 lbs. of carbon that would otherwise have been released into the atmosphere as 7.2 lbs. of carbon dioxide gas. A whole truckload of these bags can store the CO2 volume equivalent of driving 5,300 miles. It’s currently available in several states and pending approval in California, Oklahoma and Oregon.

Look into it for yourself by contacting [Heidi Remondino](#).



What Looks Good

I once again am loving the plant samples I have received from various breeders, and thought it might be fun to report on their progress as we did last summer. I'm going to throw it back to recap spring for a moment. Suntory's Senetti pericallis hybrids have come and gone, but they are my annual no-brainer for my front stoop.



Two Red Halo Senettis with the Blue Bicolor Improved in the center on the day of planting. They got bigger!

At the current moment, Dümme Orange's Calibrachoa Bloomtastic Blue Sky is excelling in my Woolly Pocket. I gave one to my mom, and she reports that it's doing great.



Calibrachoa Bloomtastic Blue Sky

I have other varieties stuffed into these Pockets, as well, and I will feature them in future *buZZ!* editions.

Colleague Jen Polanz also has some plant samples that are looking amazing. Here's her report on what's looking good in her Cleveland-area garden:

"The Danziger Capella series of petunias has more than 20 colors now, including novelty patterns. This is Rim Raspberry (with the white picotee edge) and Fuchsia Lace, both with a nicely controlled habit that plays well with others in a basket or mixed container. According to Danziger, these require minimal PGRs during production and have an early bloom time. These were in full swing about two weeks ago and continue to put on a show.



Capella Rim Raspberry



Capella Fuchsia Lace

"You can't get much more patriotic than this Petunia F1 Trilogy mix from American Takii, featuring a new Red Gen 2 for a brighter red. I received this as one pot, and it's filled out a hanging basket nicely with Dümme Orange's Verbena Empress Sun Kiss Blue. The petunias have a nice, doming habit and would be perfect for Fourth of July or just for a patriotic display."



Petunia F1 Trilogy Mix

Looking great, JP! Stay tuned next week for another “What Looks Good” report.

Finally

I’m ending this edition of *buZZ!* with a few bits and pieces picked up over the last few weeks. The first is from Judy Mitchell of Mitchell’s Nursery and Greenhouse in North Carolina. She was replying to my question from a few weeks ago about how small businesses are doing so far this year:

“Sales are up due to more customers coming in, however dollar amount spent per customer is down. I am glad the number of customers has made up for the drop in spending per customer to give us an increase in dollars spent.”

Yes, thank goodness for that. I find myself shopping—groceries, home improvement items, garden centers—with the same frequency, however I am buying fewer and less expensive items.

The second is from the folks at [Walker Farm](#) in Vermont. This was Jack’s response to my question about how retailers are learning to turn on their creativity a la the [Garden Goddess](#) and the [Bee Man](#).



Jack wrote in to say, "We like the saying, 'We don't sell steak, we sell sizzle!'" Or perhaps you sell the roar! Jack and family saw a similar animal sculpture in front of a beach bar while vacationing in St. Martin. He tracked down the seller and found the manufacturer to be Casa Padrino in Germany. He got in touch with them to create a custom gorilla and—voila!—here's his gorilla. Actually, they've named it Growzilla. It's a selfie magnet!



Ellen Wells
Senior Editor
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