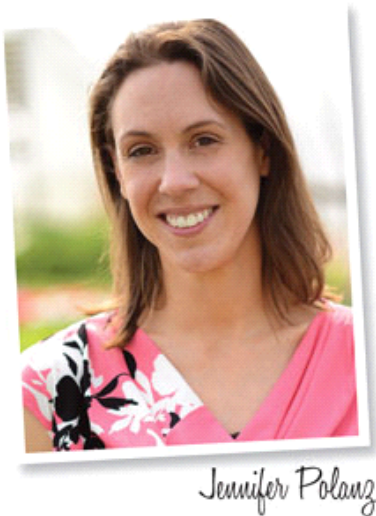


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A Matter of Trust

Jennifer Polanz



I've got a short story that all begins with a canoe. See, we recently took our Girl Scouts canoeing during a campout and I had one girl who was afraid to go on the water (a very flat, docile lake). I took her out in a canoe, and before long, she was having a blast changing our direction and rowing as fast as she could. Why? Simply put—trust. She's been in the troop for four years, from the beginning, and I've earned her trust.

Trust is a tricky thing. It can take years to build up and you can easily lose it with a few choice words. But particularly in retail, it's vital to the survival and success of our stores. The stores that work hard to build a relationship on trust and value are the first ones consumers think about when they go for that gift, that new accessory or when they need to rip out their landscape and redo it. They also know they can trust you when they make a mistake and need to fix it (or they have a problem, like pests or diseases).

But trust doesn't happen overnight and it's not built on cheap gimmicks or rock-bottom prices. It's built on consistency and community—as in, being a trusted part of the local community. That means sponsoring the local t-ball team, or opening up the store to Girl Scout or Boy Scout tours, and contributing when there's a disaster or community-wide issue. Essentially, it comes down to an authentic relationship with your customers and community.

I'd like to think we've built a relationship on trust, too. Every month, we work hard to provide you with informative articles that you can count on to educate and entertain. You may not always agree with what we wrote, but you can trust that we thoughtfully put together the magazine each month with the idea of offering different perspectives. However, in today's day and age, the idea of discussing controversial issues (like minimum wage) thoughtfully and respectfully is dying quickly. See Bill McCurry's column, "Come, Let Us Reason Together" to see what I'm talking about.

One organization that's built on trust—All-America Selections—has been going strong for 85 years. This month, contributor Katie Elzer-Peters takes a look at why it's so important to have the AAS seal of approval and what it can do for retailers.

Now that you've earned the trust of those new gardeners who are growing edibles like tomatoes, peppers and basil, you can tell them about some of the unique veggies Editor Ellen Wells affectionately refers to as "Edgy Veggies."

And finally, one organization that comes to mind that has truly excelled at earning its customers' trust is Disney, in

all ways possible. Read Amanda Thomsen's takeaways on Disney's customer service. **GP**