

## Features

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## Tracking Trends

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Inspiration abounds when we keep our eyes open for new opportunities in the retail arena. Adding new dimensions to store operations and merchandising can enhance the value-added to consumers. Consider some innovations we discovered in our recent travels from other retailers that may help boost your value proposition.

### Tactile Displays



Lush is a British-originated company retailer of upscale beauty items like soaps, scrubs, shampoos and moisturizers. Their products are 100% vegetarian and are mostly derived from plant-based products with human volunteer testing rather than animal testing. The company appeals to their consumers' philanthropic side with all of the sales of its "philanthropic skin softener," a lotion named "Charity Pot" going to selected charities worldwide.

Inside the store, consumers can feel, smell and use many of the products. Their hand-drawn chalkboard signs give them that local shop or small-town feel that might not be derived from other global companies. Their colorful packaging and gift packages give the customer a reason to buy some for their use and for others to enjoy as gifts. Sales staff are around to show you how to use the product and just how good it feels. This company has taken the retail experience to a new level.

Many independent garden centers could convey the environmental impacts of their plants, and plant production, in their store and on their website.

Businesses adding solar panels or wind turbines to

offset some of their energy use might appeal even more to today's eco-focused consumer. Certainly, many businesses are reducing their water and pesticide use, and perhaps even using biological controls for pest management. Showing images of these eco-practices might not bring consumers in by the droves, but certainly Lush is among those trendy retailers who tout their philanthropic and environmental practices. Retailers should tout

their sustainable practices with consumers and engage Millennial shoppers with these marketing campaigns.

*Pictured: Lush is a company of British-origin that markets to the consumer's eco and colorful side.*

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## Minimizing Clutter



Some retailers, like Urban Outfitters or Lululemon, merchandise products in a more minimalist manner. Rather than showing the plethora of abundance, some trendy retailers are keeping both their product line and the number of alternatives or choices to a minimum.

Barry Schwartz first coined the term “Paradox of Choice,” which means that many people have difficulty making a choice when there are too many options. Unless you’re aiming to be the Jack-of-All in your area, it’s to a retailer’s disadvantage to give so many options. In fact, researchers Iyengar and Lepper showed in their 2000 study that consumers were 10 times more likely to purchase jam on display when the number of jam

flavors available was reduced from 24 to 6. Many retailers put all of their inventory on display to give the consumer a feeling of abundance when it may only serve to overwhelm them. Upscale retailers are becoming more judicious in their inventory presentation to reduce the stress that may come from too many choices.

We’ve seen a few examples of retailers not chocking the benches full of plants to give the space a more refined look. Hoen’s Garden Center in Holland, Ohio, is one of them. It may take more labor to stock the shelves when the minimalist inventory gets very low in numbers, but it may enable more consumers to see more plants and get more ideas rather than being overwhelmed with too many choices. **GP**

*Pictured: Hoen’s Garden Center in Holland, Ohio, stocks displays with ample, but not overwhelming, merchandise, giving customers a better opportunity to see all of the products on display.*

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Garden center retailers should aim to not only bring their customers new and exciting products, but also consider presenting them in innovative ways. If you’re serving an upscale customer, consider skewing your product line to include more environmentally friendly or trendy merchandise. Finally, unless you’re aiming to be a massive garden center with endless options, limit your number of items to reduce customer confusion and potentially increase sales.

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