

Features

2/1/2018

Is Personalization Right for You?

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In an industry where products take months to “make” (and years to develop!), the idea of personalization might sound like a joke. Stitch Fix can you send you personalized outfits every month, but those are clothes. With plants, it can’t be done! Right? But what if you could?

The modern consumer wants to buy something they can feel. They want an emotional connection. It’s about the experience just as much as it is about the product. We’ve gotten pretty good at selling to different lifestyles. Edibles to the health conscious. Exotic herbs to the foodies. The GSV to Grandma (geranium, spike, vinca vine). However, things are getting even more complicated. Consumers want plants that suit their lifestyles, but they also want plants that match their personalities—their individual personalities. How do we cater our products to each individual person? Like everyone else does it.

Setting Up the Back End

Look at how Warby Parker (www.warbyparker.com) has styled its sales approach. The online retailer of eyeglasses starts customers off with a quiz. They ask six questions about your preferred style and the shape of your face. After question six, they show you six pairs of glasses and offer to let you trial five of them in your own home. People love it! They essentially get to craft their own eyewear.

The part you don’t see is how many options there are. On the consumer’s end, they aren’t necessarily thinking about that. Why should they? They get to try out five pairs of glasses for free and pay for the one(s) they like.

On the production side of things, it’s safe to say that Warby Parker is likely not making different custom designs for each individual person that takes the quiz. They probably have somewhere around 50 total options. Then they offer up the six options a person is most likely to desire. It’s a win for everyone involved. The customer gets a product that appears fully customized to their needs; Warby Parker sells more glasses and delivers on experience. They also gain some powerful insight on their customers and could even use that information to help them scale production.

Eyeglasses and plants... very different yes, but the sales strategies don’t have to be. Let’s look at how garden centers can take this model and use it to drive sales to new customers without breaking the bank or creating an inventory nightmare.

Creating the Sale

Step 1: Plan ahead—You’re either about to plan your mixed container program or it’s already in the bag. Either way, you’re going to have some sort of idea of the mixed containers you’ll have this year. If you’re utilizing a pre-designed mixed container program (Trixi, Mixmaster, Confetti, etc.), it’s really easy to pick the top five or six mixes in your

program, and snag photos of them from those websites. If you design your own containers in house, it might be a little trickier. Craft five different recipes and see if you have photos of them, or if you can work some magic on Photoshop or Canva to give someone an idea of what they might look like. If you know quantities of what you're getting, or what you have, that's even better and will give you more options down the road.

Step 2: Just a little research—Now, based on the combos you've selected, do a little research and use some intuition to determine which colors and textures suit different personality traits. For example, if someone's favorite color is red, they might be more likely to be driven and determined. Purple might symbolize someone is more artistic. There are plenty of studies out there for you to lean on in this phase. It doesn't have to be 100%, but enough to help you figure out which people would be most interested in a given combo type. Assign each of your combos a "personality" type.

Step 3: Create your quiz—Depending on your website skill level, this could be something your developer puts on your own site or something that you utilize an outside service for. Hosting on your own website might allow for better traffic and tracking, but BuzzFeed allows you to create different quizzes for free. From there you craft six or seven different multiple-choice questions to determine what type of "personality" a person has. Out of these, what's your favorite hobby? What's your taste in music?

Use your research from earlier to match answers to personalities. Based on their answers, you match them up with the combo that you've already designated that fits that personality. Show them a picture and link them to a page on your website where they can learn more about the product. If you know what your inventory will be, or if you have the ability to order more combos, you could even start incorporating e-commerce strategies and let people preorder the desired "personalized" combo in advance: buy online/pick up in store. For a bonus, encourage them to share their results. What will their friends get for an answer?

Always Engaging

Incorporating a strategy like this can give you a boost on multiple fronts. Not only are you offering a "personality personalized" container option to your customers, but it also gives you the ability to reach and engage with customers during off-peak times. Your website is reachable 24/7, not just during your hours of operation. It allows you to measure ROI of your digital spend.

Instead of just attracting visitors to your website, advertise online to get them to take this quiz, and hopefully, attract interest, if not preorders and actual sales. It's a piece of content that grabs attention AND can net you dollars. You can also use this to plan your production or buying. Do you notice trends in colors that people order? Are certain results more popular than others? Combos could just be the beginning. If you can generate sales there, why not try the same thing with herbs or houseplants? **GP**

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