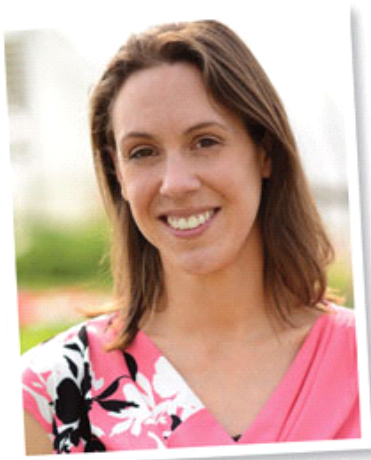


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What Does “Success” Look Like?

Jennifer Polanz



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I recently read a story about larger retailers moving toward the next step of customer service, which they call customer success. That's after nailing the customer experience, of course, which were the buzz words prior to success (I'm skeptical that very many retailers have customer experience nailed, too, by the way).

So my obvious question is what does customer success look like? To me, for a large retailer like a Walmart or a Target, it would mean easy navigation of an omnichannel experience (more on that later) and purchase of a product that works for me. Seems simple, right? It can be, until it's not.

Let's talk about a personal experience for a minute. I recently ordered a chair for my daughter's total room makeover on the website of a large, big box retailer. We received it, and it was broken, so we sent it back. She **really** wanted that chair, so we tried it again, ordering online to pick up in store. Got

to the store, asked to check it before we took it home, only for the employee to say it's too hard to get it out of the box. Bring it home and guess what? It was broken. We returned that, too, and had some issues with the refund because some of it was on a gift card. Simple, until it's not.

So what does customer success look like in the garden center? To me, it's effective communication before they even walk through the door, having a product mix that inspires the customer and selling items that'll work for its intended purpose, with the customer understanding how to best use the product for maximum success. It sounds simple, but as you well know, it's not, and it takes a lot of work to execute success like this. Fortunately, we can try to help in this issue.

Let's start with edibles, our issue theme. Part of success is selling fool-proof plants. That's why we asked All-America Selections (AAS) to compile a list of their best edibles that still stand the test of time (many date back to the 1990s). Long-time AAS judge Tom Johns didn't disappoint, with a list that will help you pick the best varieties for customer success. In case you're not familiar with AAS, it's been around for 86 years and today trials ornamentals, edibles and for the first time next year, perennials, at more than 80 trial sites across the United States and Canada. As a non-profit organization, it's one of the most valuable resources we have to identify regional and national performers in those plant categories.

Now let's turn to omnichannel. Katie Elzer-Peters is in the midst of a three-part series detailing the omnichannel retail process and why it's here to stay. As you begin to navigate online sales or creating a more robust online

presence, be sure to check out her stories to get the full picture of how to use omnichannel retailing to your advantage.

A key of customer success is communicating efficiently. As Katie notes in her story, part of that begins long before the customer comes into the store. Another part happens in store and industry veteran Todd Davis details how retailers can work more efficiently at this by printing their own signage.

And while there are a multitude of ways to use technology to help with customer success, in the end it comes down to the humans. A personal note, a passing smile in the aisle, a compliment at the register—these also promote customer success. Because part of that success is coming back again ... and again. **GP**