

3/1/2020

Personality Traits

Jennifer Polanz



Jennifer Polanz

One of the reasons I love this industry so much is experiencing the personalities of all the retailers I meet. You all are a lively bunch, I don't mind saying.

Those personalities often show in the stores we visit, which I think is a great thing. Part of being an independent business means sharing a part of yourself and creating that bond with customers that keeps them coming back. When you know your local retailer is way into houseplants personally, for example, you'll head there to see what's new because their excitement shines through in the displays and product selection.

And while the owner's personality is important for customers to see and know, I love garden centers that get their staff front and center, too. With social media, content creation and the work on the sales floor, there's plenty of work to go around and it makes sense to share the load by letting staff

shine just as much as the owner. It's great to see how-to videos featuring staff who are passionate about the subject matter or in-person workshops that showcase the sheer amount of knowledge employees have.

Sometimes, however, our personalities can create blind spots to areas of the business that can be improved. I've talked to many a gift buyer who says they constantly ask themselves when shopping at the Mart if this is a product they like or their customer would like. It's a difficult distinction.

There are sacred cows, too, of product lines or niches that owners enjoy, but don't sell well. In fact, this is one of the many topics discussed in our new series about category growth, written in collaboration by *Green Profit* Senior Editor Bill Calkins and financial guru Steve Bailey, best known for his work as a financial service provider for The Garden Center Group. You can find that story, including how to eliminate sacred cows (along with Steve's personal story about the topic).

Many times an owner's personality is wrapped up in the store completely—which is fine ... until the business is sold. Bill McCurry continues his series on buying and selling a business, and how sometimes personality can play a big role in how the sale goes down.

Looking at it another way, the customers' personalities also come into play and that's where some of our issue coverage is heading. The trends we see coming are determined by what consumers find important to them. Study after study shows consumers want companies to act responsibly when it comes to their environmental footprint and

help them be better stewards of the environment. This is one where we can help quite a bit, and my story shows how to home in on a few key areas to boost sales and help customers garden in a way that benefits the earth.

And, finally, consumers love to show off their personalities via their plant and product purchases. At this year's TPIE, Ellen and Chris brought back lots of ideas for how to help customers express themselves. **GP**