

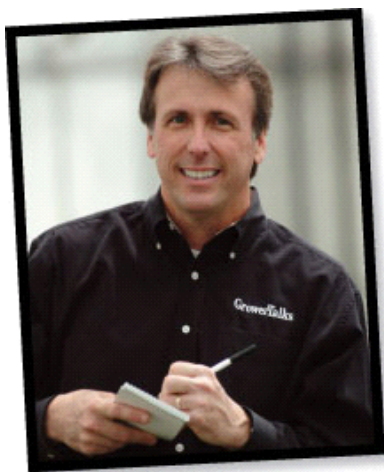
GROWERTALKS

Acres & Acres

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A New York Minute

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Wanting to attend last month's World Flower Expo in New York City but not wanting to spend \$250 on a "cheap" Manhattan hotel, I instead flew in and out in one grueling 19-hour day. The whirlwind trip was definitely worthwhile, however, as I figure I gleaned at least one inspiring tidbit per hour—a good average by any standard. Here's seven hours worth:

"The future of marketing isn't getting people to buy your brand, but to buy INTO your brand." This pithy one-liner comes from Frito-Lay Chief Marketing Officer Anindita Mukherjee, as quoted in the recent issue of Fast Company I read on the plane. I like that long-term view of branding. It means that, rather than think about how your products make your customers happy or meet their needs, think about how your entire business, from soup to nuts, accomplishes that. You

might have a great product. But if you have lousy service, your customers will leave when somebody else has an equal product.

"It's not about selling, it's about engagement. It's not just about customers, it's about people." Also from Fast Company, this time from Esther Lee, former Chief Creative Officer for Coca-Cola, in regards to the trend toward "brands in human guise." Sounds wacky, but it's happening in a big way on Twitter and Facebook. Suppose you tweet late one night, "Starving! But my favorite place is closed and Denny's is a mile away. Bummer." You may get a tweet back from Denny's saying something like "Man up, dude. It's worth the hike! We've got bacon 24/7." Tweeting as the voice of Denny's is the job of 23-year-old Arielle Calderon, a New York ad agency employee. Rather than social media being generic, non-human suggestions, links or shares, Arielle provides a conversation, person to person. Only that person is a brand. Weird. But it's working, and more and more companies are utilizing it.

Russians are buying lots of roses and at high prices. At the Flower Expo (which I'll cover more thoroughly in a future issue), Giovanni Almeida, Marketing & Sales Director for BellaRosa and Rose Connection, a family of Ecuadorian cut rose producers, told me that, of the 35 countries they sell to, Russia is their No. 1 customer. A single stem can sell for \$15. Who knew they had the money for that?

And the big flower holiday in Russia and Eastern Europe is International Women's Day. Celebrated March 8 every year, it's started as a socialist invention (in the U.S. in 1909, actually) that today is sort of a mix of Mother's Day and Valentine's Day. The reason it's bigger than Valentine's Day is because it applies to all women, not just a sweetheart, which means men buying flowers for moms, sisters, daughters and so on.

Eataly does \$72 million in sales. If you want to see retail-tainment done to the extreme, cab over to the corner of 5th Ave and Broadway and visit Eataly. I read about it recently in Wine Spectator magazine and knew I had to visit this Mecca of all foodstuffs Italian. Granted, it's a really cheesy name. But it was founded by an Italian, in Italy, so if he thinks it's bella, it must be. And it certainly is on the inside. It's like an iconic Italian market, with various stalls and shops selling fresh food to take home or enjoy on the premises. It's definitely NOT a quaint Italian market like New York might be famous for. It's polished, with an upscale, professional ambiance, and the New York crowd was digging into the antipasti and wine with gusto. Cut flower bouquets were represented in the fresh produce area. I'd love to see a garden center done this way.

Manhattan has a Home Depot. It's right around the corner from Eataly. With a marble façade, up and down escalators and a concierge desk. And a very large garden department featuring loads of house and patio plants and enough products to build a very nice rooftop or balcony garden.

Only one problem I see with being a Manhattanite with access to Home Depot: Upon leaving, I spotted a woman on the sidewalk with a 2x4. How does one get that home? In a cab? On a bus? Or via bicycle messenger? **GT**