

GROWERTALKS

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Five Human Needs (and How We Can Meet Them)

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In our weekly *buZZ!* and *Acres Online* newsletters, Ellen Wells and I have raved about trend-tracker Max Luthy's keynote at January's Tropical Plant International Exposition (TPIE) show because, well, frankly, it was superb—as good a high-level view of current societal trends as I've ever heard (TPIE's other frequent trend keynoter, Christine Boland, is also a rock star).

Max and his team at TrendWatching (trendwatching.com) identified basic five human desires—Wellbeing, Connection, Relevance, Support and Escapism—and listed some of the ways that smart brands are tailoring their products and services to tap into them. Here they are:

Human desire: Wellbeing

Trend: The Burnout (“Consumers’ efforts to be on fire all the time have come at a cost. In 2020, brands will rush to treat those burnt by the

pressures of modern life.”)

The World Health Organization says that “burnout” is now a legitimate diagnoses of chronic workplace stress. Consumers are spending \$11 billion on “self-care” to find relief from stress and anxiety.

Our products offer a remedy. According to the Journal of Physiological Anthropology, “Interaction with indoor plants may reduce psychological and physiological stress by suppressing autonomic nervous system activity in young adults.”

And John Beirne of the New York Botanical Garden writes, “We evolved on earth amongst the grasslands surrounded by trees and plants. It’s no wonder they make us feel at home—for eons they have fed our bodies and our souls.”

Human desire: Connection

Trend: Village Squared (“In 2020, consumers will appreciate brands that provide shared spaces to foster meaningful connection, collaboration and new relationships.”)

Nearly 9 out of 10 Americans feel the country is more divided than at any point in their lifetime, says YouGov. Smart companies are finding ways to bring people together. For instance, Capital One has created the Capital One Café, a

bank branch that resembles a coffee shop, complete with Wi-Fi, “ambassadors” instead of tellers and Peet’s Coffee. Walmart is reimagining the town center at stores in eight states, converting parking lot space into a town square-like gathering space for entertainment, dining and other community activities.

“Plants enhance spaces in ways that connect us,” says Max. Our businesses, whether wholesale or retail, can serve as beautiful, plant-filled gathering spaces for a wide range of community events.

Human desire: Relevance

Trend: Metamorphic Design (“In 2020, consumers will embrace products and services that adapt to maximize value for the user.”)

One statistic says that nearly 40% of global companies have started to deliver personalized experiences in real time. Spotify and Netflix offer music and movie suggestions based on your historical usage. Baze will send you a vitamin subscription based on quarterly blood tests. Tonal is a workout machine that adapts as you gain strength and flexibility. Kia has a system that will base its GPS route suggestions on the driver’s emotions.

In plants, Brooklyn-based Horti has an indoor plant subscription service that slowly builds a customer’s confidence by starting with easy-care plants, gradually sending them more challenging ones.

Human desire: Support

Trend: The Coming of Age (“In 2020, an aging population is guaranteed. Older consumers deserve products, services and experiences that offer independence, connection and style.”)

Eighty-two percent of those over 55 say their favorite retail brand no longer understands them or what they need. Some 70 million Americans will be over the age of 65 by 2030 and companies that win over this aging population will reap the benefits.

Gardening adapts beautifully to the aging process. In England, Cornbrook Medical is prescribing gardening to patients with anxiety, depression and loneliness (common problems as we age). HortTechnology reported that a four-week indoor gardening class at an assisted living facility delivered a significant increase in mastery, and self-rated health and happiness. Knock! Knock! is an online plant subscription service that delivers seasonal trays of plants for front door planters with minimal TLC required. (Don’t be afraid to use tech with this generation—folks 50 years old and older will spend \$84 billion on tech by 2030.)

Human desire: Escapism

Trend: Fantasies IRL (in real life) (“Boundaries between real and imagined worlds are fading. In 2020, consumers will seek even deeper engagement.”)

Admittedly, a challenging trend for those of us embracing the “realness” of our products, but you can combine fantasy and reality in the garden. For instance, the Lúa Smart Planter is a robotic flower pot that “turns your favorite plant into a spirited virtual pet.” A “face” on the pot shows 15 different expressions based on conditions (if you forget to water it, it acts thirsty. If it’s cold, its teeth chatter).

It may not be as easy to put these trends to work as, say, selling plants in Classic Blue pots (Pantone’s 2020 Color of the Year), but the end results may be much deeper, more profound and longer lasting. **GT**