

GROWERTALKS

Growers Talk Business

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How Do We Get More People to Buy Our Stuff?

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We've just completed our fiscal year-end meetings at Metrolina and it was a great time to spend with our teams at each of our facilities, as well as our teams in the stores. During these meetings, we talked a lot about how we get more consumers interested in gardening/live goods. We all know that participation in gardening is at about a 60%/65% rate, and while we've spent tons of research on that existing consumer and their wants and needs over the last three years, we haven't done as much work with the "non-user" and why they don't buy plants.

These non-users shop at our retail partners (big box stores) on a regular basis and they even do home improvement projects, but they don't buy plants. So during the last research projects in our Home Garden Panel, we asked the simple question, "Why don't you buy plants?" Our

assumption was they would write, "I just don't like plants," as a majority answer, but among our consumer base of non-users, only 11% said they didn't like plants. Wow! We have 89% of consumers giving us reasons they don't buy plants based on things we can control or at least address. So, we started digging deeper into this.

The number one reason non-users gave for not buying plants was that they "did not know how to take care of them" or they were "afraid they would kill them." So we have a consumer WILLING to buy, but we haven't provided them enough instructions on how to take care of the product or at least how to do a few simple things to keep it alive. We have some simple solutions we're developing to help with this barrier based on this new insight. We do get answers from "regular" consumers already buying plants in why they don't try new products, but we were surprised to see it jump out so strongly among non-users.

The number two reason non-users gave for not buying plants was a "lack of time." That seemed simple enough; people are just too busy. We assume there's not much we can do with this piece of data. But as we dug deeper into the input on time, we found some interesting insights.

First, there's a huge gap of expectation of how long it takes to "garden" or take care of plants, both in the shopping trip and the gardening experience. We asked our users how long it takes to shop for plants and they say it normally runs in the 30 minutes to 1-hour range. But we asked non-users how long it would take to shop for plants and they said on average, it would take two to three hours—a huge gap in understanding we need to address.

More importantly, we asked, "How long do you think it takes a week to take care of your garden/plants?" Our user base (people who garden regularly) said it takes one hour to three hours a week to take care of their garden. But when we asked non-users (people who shop big box, but don't buy plants) how long it would take weekly to take care of a garden, they said it would be three to six hours a week on average. No wonder they say time is the issue.

Bottom line, our non-users expectations of time investment is two to three times what it really takes to enjoy our line of products, so they're scared off and then use time as their rationale for not buying plants. This was a huge insight for us about how to define time for the consumer and how we can chop up the activities of buying/caring for plants into much shorter time bursts. Simple messaging, such as "you can do this in an hour," are some of the things we're working on based on this insight.

There were other reasons given for not buying plants (i.e., budget, weather, etc.), but these two insights really stuck out to our team. We all want to find ways to grow the industry and it seems to me that the number one way to do this is to get more people using our product. When the barriers are real, then the task is more difficult. But when the barriers are things we can address and are based on some simple messaging we can provide, then the opportunity is real and achievable. **GT**

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