

GROWERTALKS

Young Voices

7/1/2018

Better Than Sex

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(To all you industry vets, don't be alarmed. This is good, clean fun.)

Keeping flowers and plants at the top of an up-and-coming Millennial market is an enduring challenge. Many of our industry's conventions have events to face our challenges and keep this new generation the topic of conversation. Stay relevant. Be authentic. Make it easy. Incorporate technology. Dazzle them with knowledge, but keep it concise. Create an experience.

We've been trying to outsmart these little trailblazers and my experience has revealed untapped connectivity. We want to lure Millennials into our world, but have we really attempted to understand theirs? We have great stuff to offer, but I feel like we can do a little more with call-outs and packaging that connects with Millennial culture. We've got the authenticity in the bag, but we need to resonate the relevancy and give horticulture some street cred.

An easy start would be with the language we're using to describe and name our items. You can't create an experience without emotion. While there are many facets to a superior buying experience, the witty Millennial appreciates catchy names and phrases eliciting any kind of sentiment.

For the most part, I hate calling myself a Millennial, but technically my birth year identifies me otherwise. I will, however, shamelessly own up to my "makeup junkie" status, wandering the displays of my beloved makeup store under bright lights and loud, trendy music. I collect and test shades of pigmented powders and creams on the back of my hand, looking for something to jump out at me for "inspo."

I needed (okay, wanted) new mascara for a trip. (Gotta look good for CAST '18, amirite?) I picked up a highly-rated mascara on the top shelf from the "best of the best" selections. The tester, coated in raised textured raindrops, read "Better than Sex," the words prominently plastered across its mint green exterior. "Better Than Sex?!" I thought. Please, take my money!

Thirty dollars and a free perfume sample later, the lightbulb went off. Why aren't we doing what the beauty industry is doing? This name is ridiculous, yes, but so awesome at the same time. Did I really think this "Better Than Sex" mascara was going to be life-changing? The daring exaggeration of its promise in name was practically a challenge to find out.

Is there a plant we have that's better than sex? Someone tell me we do. I'll go ahead and rule out the stinky salvias

and corpse flower for you, but to each their own. No judgement here.

The top-selling blush enticingly titled “Orgasm” has over 16,000 reviews and 520,000 “loves” on the Sephora website. The color is nice, but I think the name alone has catapulted its success. We have at least three colors of petunia in the same exact shade of “peachy pink with shimmer.” A boundary-pushing name gives a powerful introduction and has the potential to sell itself. I’m certainly not promoting naming all of our products after bedroom glamour, but ignore not the success of a stand-out product name.

I challenge you greenhouse guys (if you’re still with me) to take a slow, non-greenhouse walk through Sephora and check out the product names and shoppers. This is your new woman consumer on the horizon. She’s smart, willing to test and wants fabulousness fast—but it’s got to jump out at her. She wants to stand out from the crowd and she wants products that do, too. I’d even be willing to bet she’d pay a little more for something with a renegade product name that creates some sort of feeling or experience worth talking about. At the very least, she’d be willing to pick it up for a second glance. Dare her to try.

Beauty has some chic things with packaging, too. Collections of eyeshadows that complement each other in one cutesy box is called a palette. In my market area, monochromatic shades of white are popular in the landscape. We need collections in the garden center called “High Shine” or “Ice Out” complete with a landscape package of whites: impatiens, caladiums, white roses, jasmine. Throw in some white agapanthus and BAM! High Shine for \$300+.

Into xeriscaping? How about “Ain’t nobody got time for that,” a package complete with ice plants, agave and cactus. The customer is thinking, “No, I AIN’T got time to water that! But I’ll spend my \$300 because I’m LMAO and now I’m emotionally invested in the recognition of one of the greatest pop culture memes on YouTube.” Millennial culture isn’t just sex references, they love a good laugh. Cross referencing that laugh with memes and products takes it to the next level of connectivity.

To keep some wall of professionalism intact, do we really think what we have to offer is better than sex? Maybe we do! We could definitely take a risk and try to make consumers think it is. Exaggerate a product line with outstanding performance and benefit in the garden. Name it to be irrefutably unforgettable. Tap into some Millennial language. Package a collection with something that evokes an emotion. Our makeup bag is full of the tools to sell something better than (fill in the blank here). **GT**

Lauren Kirchner is the Director of Sales and Marketing for her family’s greenhouse operation in Waller, Texas. She’s been selling annuals for nine years and testing makeup for 20. Let’s have a frosé together at Cultivate’18!