

GROWERTALKS

Young Voices

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Don't Kill the Vibe

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Do you remember a great first impression? Maybe it was your significant other or someone you admire. Likely the introduction didn't start with "Age: 32. Life Expectancy: 81 years. Needs: 3 meals and 8 glasses of water per day, administer multivitamin when looking tired according to package instructions."

Riveting, right? Want to grab a drink? Not really. You'd probably need a spark of something more to remember a name, be interested in connecting on common ground and create a meaningful relationship. We see a lot of plant merchandising geared around fact-promotion. Within a swift five seconds of a first impression, facts either captivate or disenchant.

We know the average consumer doesn't really know that much about plants. Shying away from products that don't make sense, they're unconvinced about maintenance ability and success. An abundance of information can exacerbate the problem to the unknowing, wary consumer. Overwhelmed with upkeep particulars coupled with limited time, they may turn the other way without a resonating introduction.

Notably, great fact presentation can be a quick problem solver for some, but the green industry is already doing a pretty great job of serving the "facts firsters." There are innovative technology platforms providing resources on plant care, exposure, potential pests, etc. Our tags are loaded with data. As good stewards to our own industry and environment, we've poured our hearts into a conscientious educational experience, which is undeniably important, but facts are hard to captivate as a first impression to those who don't know what they're missing yet. Show that plants are just like them or a friend worth getting to know.

Capture audiences with a little more relatable personification first and a little less fact. Introduce a plant with a human aspect of benefit instead of sun or shade. Facts can be found. Feelings are experienced. Don't kill the vibe.

Personification makes complicated products more easily approachable, learnable and increases willingness to buy. It answers the why without trying too hard. Auto insurance companies have successfully made it an art—the Geico Gecko, Progressive's Flo, Jake from State Farm. Personification builds trust and compartmentalizes complication into understandable human qualities, making it easier to connect and engage. Engagement leads to purchases and loyalty—cha-ching plus an Insta-share and a happy customer.

What the average consumer does know without question is how they describe themselves and their lifestyle. Consumers resonate with products that are an extension of their own personalities and communities to which they belong and make purchases accordingly. They want to befriend the intriguing and cling to commonality.

People know if they're a hopeless romantic, a super busy mom with a need for something natural, a bold southern sass looking to make a statement, an amateur chef looking to add a little homegrown garnish, an adventurer on the search for anything out of the ordinary, an overachiever with demand for constant success, a modern hippie that loves everything chill, the ambitionist: tell me what's trendy and I'll buy it. You get the drift. We have plants that fit each of these categories that can be changed up to fit target clientele and reach out to new potentials. Are you missing out on the husbands with honey-dos a mile long?

Plants can be personified and styled in the same ways we like to identify and describe ourselves. The best first impressions start with an emotional connection and then detail down. It's easier to care more about the specifics after trusting the hook of emotional relevancy. Communicate the vibe first and then go into the deets:

Double Catharanthus: A flirty little charmer on vacay-mode. Perfect for starting an effortless backyard resort. Pairs well with pool-side summer soirees and a cold beverage. (Full-sun container plant. Water regularly, but keep foliage dry).

Lavender: The calm, cool and collected relaxation therapist. A legendary, comforting dose of tranquility. A soothing transporter to Tuscany with scented foliage and flowers. Snip off flowers and add to a warm bath for the ultimate fresh home spa-day. Perfect for the little joys of self-care. (Full Sun. Keep drier. Well-drained media recommended).

Coreopsis: The bohemian-chic of perennials. Naturally genuine and free spirited. Loves making friends with all pollinators through less water and more success. Pairs well with a front-porch view. (Water well until established. Hardy to -20F degrees).

The exercise of re-categorizing plants into more personified collections is a thrust that has immense potential in attracting new consumers. Look for inspiration and commonality in the targets you're serving and seek the qualities that resonate. Find the new romantics, the experimenters, the oldies but goodies and extend to them a spark of unforgettable introduction. As we promote these features of feeling, one thing is for sure: the future is flowers. **GT**

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