

# garden centers of america Garden retail trends report

March 10, 2015

Garden Centers of America (GCA) has a renewed vigor and is continuing to expand the services available to you. As part of this expansion, we have revamped the whole concept behind our monthly newsletter. It is the goal of GCA to provide you with the information and resources to help you grow your business. Garden Retail Trends Report is designed to keep you on top of what's hot in retailing, both within the industry and out.

## Six Things You Can Do Now to Make Your Customers Happy

We all want happy customers - they're good for business. Here are six things you can do right now at your garden center to get more thumbs-up from your shoppers, from Sujan Patel of thisCLICKS:

- 1. Learn how to measure customer satisfaction.** There are a number of ways to understand how your customers feel about your garden center. You could implement a telephone survey at the end of every planting or delivery service call, monitor online feedback or create a web-based customer satisfaction survey to send to all of your customers on your e-mail list. Keep in mind, though, that only customers with strong opinions will take the time to answer.
- 2. Be the expert.** Position your staff as the top gardening experts in your local market. When you come across as the resource they can trust, people will be thrilled to shop your store and bypass the boxes.
- 3. Make sure your entire team is managing customer satisfaction.** Everyone on your team - from accounting to HR to sales - plays a role in making sure your customers are happy. Remind your staff what they can do to make a difference.
- 4. Engage your staff.** Keeping your store employees inspired and engaged is the only way you can count on them to do the same for your customers. If your employees aren't happy, they won't give great service.
- 5. Build key performance indicators around customer satisfaction.** One way to keep your team focused on your mission to make customers happy is to tie their goals to it in a tangible way. Whether it's a financial bonus, a special parking space or some other perk, find ways to reward employees who deliver excellent results in customer satisfaction.
- 6. Follow up on customer satisfaction measures often.** When you identify issues from customer feedback that you address, take the time to follow up and make sure they are satisfied with the changes you've implemented.



## Good News for IGCs! NRF's Sunny Forecast for Retailers - Video Here



An optimistic outlook from the National Retail Federation (NRF) spells good news for independent garden centers. Its economic forecast projects an increase in retail industry sales (excluding automobiles, gas stations and restaurants) by 4.1 percent, besting last year's 3.5 percent growth. "Already facing far fewer obstacles than this time last year in terms of growth opportunities, retailers are optimistic about the potential that exists for healthy growth in retail sales and consumer engagement in 2015," says NRF President and CEO Matthew Shay.

NRF offers these additional sunny economic insights on what to expect this year:

- A baseline outlook for growth in the economy as measured by the GDP is expected to land between 2.7 and 3.2 percent over last year.
- Growth in the labor market should average between 220,000 and 230,000 new jobs per month throughout the year.
- Unemployment is expected to drop to 5 percent by year's end.
- Gains in equities and housing have boosted net worth to record levels, helping consumers feel more confident about household spending.

Click the video link above for the full report from NRF.



## Social Media Safety Alert! Don't Put Your Garden Center Business At Risk Online

Social media is a resource you use to promote sales and connect with your customers. But you may not be aware of the hidden dangers. Consider this sample scenario, from Robert Siciliano at Entrepreneur.com:

"Not too long ago I spoke to employees at a credit union about how to respond to a robbery. Prior to my presentation, a staged robbery had occurred, with real police officers posing as the bad guys and wielding guns. The 'robbers' barged in, hollering obscenities, brandishing the guns. They did a great mock job: Some of the bank tellers even cried.



"When the 'crime' concluded, everyone discussed it. This scenario even included a teller being handed the following note that she read aloud: 'Your husband works at the Main Street Garage. We intercepted him when he was opening this morning. He is in a trunk at an undisclosed location. If you hit the silent alarm and the police come, we will kill him.'

"How did the 'robbers' know where her husband worked? They searched online for the name of the bank. This led to them to the teller's social-media posts. Then they looked up the husband's workplace. They even found out the times he opened and closed his business."

Siciliano goes on to share these important security tips for social media and general online use at work. Pass them along to your entire store staff.

- **Avoid employment disclosure.** Advise employees not to post any information about their job on social media. Explain how it can be used maliciously. For instance, a criminal could use personal information about an employee to threaten and convince him to give over information or money from your garden center.
- **Teach employees to manage their privacy settings.** Your staff's social media accounts should be set up for their maximum protection. They should not rely on the default settings, which could open their social media accounts to cyber attacks.
- **Implement a workplace social media policy.** Set up a workplace policy for your garden center's social media accounts with rules about what can be said and what is prohibited.
- **Don't ban social media use in the workplace.** If you put a ban social media at your store, there will always be someone who figures out a way to get around the firewall. And once they do, your network will be more vulnerable.

## The New Way to Apologize to Customers Is In Real Time

Speaking of keeping customers happy, responding in a timely manner to problems your customers may have is more possible today than ever before, thanks to the Internet. The Young Entrepreneur Council has three ways your garden center can use modern technology to apologize to your customers in real time:

- Scan** - Create an "internal SWAT team" to watch social media feeds for your garden center. Create an emergency on-call team to consistently scan what conversations are happening.
- Build** - Create a trusted network from your customer base. By finding and engaging with your most loyal customers via social media, you can leverage their influence when an unfortunate situation comes up.
- Focus on humility** - Be real. You can't change what happened or how your customers will react, but you can show them that you hear them and that you care. If you act with humility, you will only strengthen your garden center's brand.

## Now Trending in Garden Retailing . . .

- Another reason to set up your online store - **consumers boosted their spending via smartphone 125 percent in just the last year**, according to research from MarketLive. Need help setting up your store's e-commerce offerings? Don't miss Kyle Lacy's IGC Retail Conference Track, "Keep Calm and Sell On! Taking the Fear Out of Bringing Your Store Online" at the IGC Shows this summer.
- How's your Yelp rating? Online reviews matter to young consumers. **Nearly 60 percent of shoppers who consult reviews for every purchase are in the 18-34 age range**, according to research from PowerReviews.
- Is your spring campaign ready to go? A study from RetailMeNot shows **coupons, sales and special offers trigger in-store purchases for 91 percent of shoppers who use in-store promotions.**

## This Is What It Takes to Win More Customers Today

For years, retailing has been about product selection and presentation, but the future will bring broader reach, according to Jessica Elenstar for NRF. In an effort to stay ahead of consumer expectations, savvy retailers are experimenting with these ideas:

**Let customers shop on their own terms.** There is a push to bring shopping cart functionality to every online experience, including "buy" buttons on Twitter. The option to reserve products online for in-store or curbside pick-up at your garden center gives customers control over delivery - a benefit they value.

**Encourage digital discovery, in-store and online.** Smart multichannel retailers not only encourage customers to look up product information on mobile devices but find thoughtful ways to bring digital features to the retail environment, adding a useful layer of information over the "real world" shopping experience. One retailer is testing beacons inside mannequins that let shoppers access information and special offers for the featured products.

**Design destinations and communities.** Stores are becoming hubs for communities of like-minded consumers, with services and experiences beyond products. Urban Outfitters' Herald Square concept store offers salon services, bike repairs and Instagram photo printing.

## Four Trends Changing the In-Store Shopping Experience

Impressing customers with your in-store experience requires more now than ever before. Carve out a unique value for your garden center's shopping experience that will keep your customers coming back for more. Gary Lee from InReality shares these hot retail trends as inspiration:



- 1. The Social Store** - Retailers are spending 17 percent more on digital marketing, and now they're merging it with the shopping experience. For example, Nordstrom is playing off its Pinterest following by promoting its "most pinned" shoes and handbags in-store.
- 2. The Mobile Checkout** - Mobile will matter more to your garden center as new mobile payment apps enter the scene and technologies are developed.
- 3. The Immersive Digital Experience** - Beacons, RFID and digital kiosk displays are allowing customers to interact with products in new ways. How can you step up your garden center's product positioning to align with the expectations of today's consumer?
- 4. Getting More Out of Consumer Data** - Retailers are looking to make in-store shopping as intelligent as online shopping by using footpath tracking and targeted consumer research. It's the wave of the future!

## TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR GCA MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

### GCA Summer Tour, Milwaukee, June 21-24



This year's GCA Summer Tour turns the spotlight on leading and innovative retailers in the Milwaukee area - plus lots of local flavor and color!

Network with your fellow garden center professionals and energize your business with fresh retail strategies driven by the best practices proven to power profits. Tour-goers will have the opportunity to take advantage of the area's many dining and entertainment opportunities, including the Milwaukee RiverWalk, a 2-mile excursion that winds along the river with access to some of the city's best restaurants, brewpubs, shops and waterfront nightlife.

Register today at [GardenCentersofAmerica.com](http://GardenCentersofAmerica.com). Register by May 31 and **save \$50 on each registration - no quantity limits.**

### Save Big at IGC East and IGC Chicago!



GCA Members save \$100 on each IGC Retail Conference Passport registration during the early bird registration period, and \$60 off each IGC Show Garden Center Bus Tour registration!

Other benefits include:

- Two free drink tickets per company for use at the IGC Show receptions and the **Tuesday evening FREE party and concert featuring the Gin Blossoms LIVE!**
- Special reserved seating at the Gin Blossoms concert - be sure to come early, seating is limited!
- GCA Member Networking Lunch

Enter the promo code **GCASAVE** when you register:  
IGC East Registration: [Click here.](#)  
IGC Chicago Registration: [Click here.](#)