

By Zeke Jennings

One of the toughest things about social media for garden centers and other small retailers, aside from finding time, is getting your followers to engage, whether it be with shares, likes, comments or retweets.

Especially on Facebook, the frequency of your followers interacting with your posts directly affects how often your posts show up in their newsfeeds, commonly known as the post's reach.

It's essentially the bang for your buck, which in this case means time spent.

Even if you increase the frequency of your posting, it won't make much difference without increased followers and increased engagement.

While we can't guarantee your efforts will go viral, here are some social media campaign strategies with histories of success.

### Contests

Same idea as radio stations that ask trivia questions and then the first caller who gets the answer right wins free tickets to a concert or other prizes.

This concept works well on social media too. Try offering a free plant or a \$20 gift certificate to your store (or whatever amount you feel



## SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL MEDIA

5 tips to increase the quality of your social media interaction

comfortable with) by posting a question via social media with a stipulation that the correct answer must come with a certain hashtag — preferably something with your store name in it for promotional purposes.

If you want the hashtag to gain any sort of traction, which can be tough, be prepared to do the contest on a regular basis, say weekly.

### Customer Service

Spotify won a Webby Award for its customer service social media campaign, SpotifyCares. It

primarily offers graphics with technical support and tips or answers questions directly from users.

An independent retailer wouldn't need to go to the lengths Spotify did, but the premise is a good one.

Try to offer a Tip of the Week on best ways to use the products you sell and always encourage any other questions followers may have, whether on that topic or anything else related to your business.

When in-store customers check out, be sure to let them know they can call or post questions on your social media sites.

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Always be sure to acknowledge their post as promptly as possible.

## Push Your People

As in, push them outside their comfort zone. A short video of an employee of the month is a nice idea, but take it a step further. Get video clips or pictures of them doing something silly, like posing in costumes or with balloons, singing, or better yet, rapping. Ask them to be good sports and share it on their personal pages. Chances are, their friends and family will react and share.

## Puppy Dogs and Kitty Cats

Nothing gets shared more than a pic or video of a cute animal or a child. Do you have a garden center mascot? Tell people about him or her. It will make them want to come visit as well and see Fido or Tabby in person. Think about reaching out to your local humane society to talk about ways your store can help out. Maybe something like a "Pet of the Month"

campaign, where an animal up for adoption dons a pet costume your store carries.

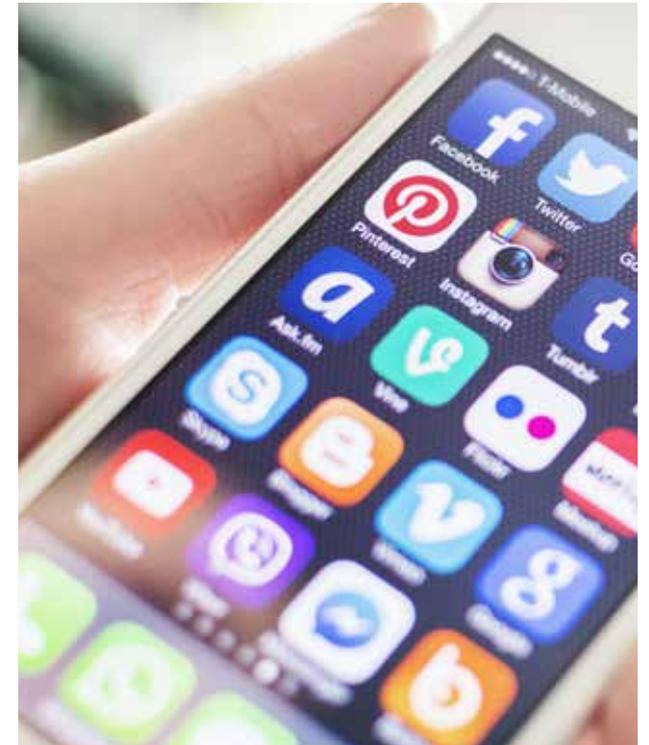
The best PR often comes from genuinely doing good deeds.

## Graphics, Ecards and Memes

We've all seen "One Does Not Simply..." and the Dos Equis guy "I Don't Always (insert activity) But When I Do..." memes on Facebook. Although I wouldn't suggest using those particular ones — try to be a little more creative — they are easy to make at sites like [www.someecards.com](http://www.someecards.com) and [www.memegenerator.com](http://www.memegenerator.com).

Inspirational or funny messages always do well on social media. Don't forget to include a reference to your business. **LGR**

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