

A person wearing a grey pinstriped suit jacket is holding a large white rectangular sign in front of their chest. The sign contains the title and subtitle of the article. The person's hands are visible at the corners of the sign, and they are wearing rings on their fingers. The background is plain white.

# DISCOVER THE POWER OF YOUR PERSONAL SALE

Why marketing you is a great way to market your garden center

**B**rian Wheat says he “never misses an opportunity to tell people who I am.”

Who he is is the CEO of Lafayette Florist, one of Colorado’s largest floral and garden centers.

Who Brian Wheat also is is one of the premier self-promoters in an increasingly competitive industry. At a time when there are thousands of garden centers in America, Wheat realizes he has to sell more than just flowers.

“Now more than ever you have to sell yourself,” he points out.

## Creating a Personal Brand

The cornerstone of his self-promotion efforts is his personal brand: “The Flower Guy.” It’s the name of the weekly cartoon he creates online and in a local newspaper, his Pinterest site and his email address.

It’s also the identity he has created to gain and maintain attention (“top-of-the-mind awareness,” he calls it) during his successful 30-year career in the green industry.

He is past president and an active member of a local Rotary club and chamber of commerce, a

member of three other chambers of commerce, and you’re sure to find him at ribbon cuttings for new businesses in the area.

Stop by Lafayette Florist, and chances are you’ll see him conducting tours – for anyone from college floriculture students to garden clubs to kindergarten classes.

Add to that the articles he writes for industry publications, the videos he posts on Facebook and the local radio garden show he sponsors, and you have a self-marketing mix that serves him and his garden center quite well.

“You can only do the best job of selling your garden center products when you do the best job of selling yourself.”

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You, too, should understand the power of the personal sale.

## It's All About Selling

You can only do the best job of selling your garden center products when you do the best job of selling yourself. The personal sale is the most important sale you ever make.

That sale begins with promoting, on your website, the one combination customers can't get at other centers: you and your staff. And that promotion begins with your personal profiles.

What goes into good bios? Give yours a boost by including such info as:

- Awards and other honors
- Specialties, skills and capabilities
- Experience
- Accomplishments
- Educational background: degrees, certifications, etc.

Creating or updating your bios – on your website or social media sites – is an example of one of the many small, but smart, self-promotion steps you can take.

## Nothing is Too Small

When it comes to selling yourself, little stuff counts.

Little stuff is linking your email signature to your bio, updating your voicemail message and revising your personal commercial to include the word “only,” as in, “I’m the only local garden center owner with a horticulture degree.”

Little stuff is networking at a meeting of local property managers, or sharing your expertise on Google Plus, Pinterest, Vine, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

And little stuff is writing a blog post or contacting the local media about writing a column or hosting a show.

## Media Matters

Garden center retailers can get quoted and promoted in the media simply by making themselves available as interview sources on topics such as drought-resistant plants, insect control, hanging baskets, composting and a whole lot more.

“No amount of advertising will ever build the credibility of one well-positioned article



or presentation,” says Tony Bass, a national landscape business consultant. Adds Marty Grunder, a green industry marketing guru: “Once a month you should go after some kind of free publicity.”

Sharing insights in the media doesn’t just boost your visibility and credibility. It boosts your

business as well.

Ask Mike Spencer, the owner of Spencer’s Lawn and Garden Centers in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He appeared in a news segment on a local TV station during a drought years ago and mentioned a soil nutrient product.

Within a few days his center sold more than

300 bags of that product.

“Being on TV gives you the credentials,” Spencer notes. He ended up doing news spots for the 5:30 p.m. news show at the station for 20 years, a role which he says resulted in a considerable amount of business for his center.

Garden center representatives have what local TV producers desperately need: highly visual and timely stories to tell. But they need to go on local stations to share those stories. They can then distribute their own videos

A simple camera, a nice backdrop and some interesting props (plants and pots for example) are all it takes for a garden center retailer to create worthwhile YouTube videos. The return on the investment of time in developing those videos is excellent, considering the amount of traffic and sales garden centers trace to their videos.

In addition, the videos can lead to speaking opportunities, some of the most effective self-promotion strategies for garden center managers.

Presenting programs – live or online – to garden clubs, homeowner associations, charitable and philanthropic organizations, service clubs and other groups enables those managers to establish their expertise and differentiate themselves from competitors in general – and big box stores in particular.

“Anyone can sell a customer a plant, but not everyone can teach their customer to be a successful gardener,” remarks Chris Cordrey, co-owner of East Coast Garden Center in Millsboro, Delaware.

Speaking, video and TV appearances and writing are just some of the many ways that garden center professionals can sell themselves as well as their products.

Ask Wheat why he is so passionate about making that sale – and about blowing his horn and tooting his flute – and he has a practical, yet powerful answer: “If I don’t sell myself, who will?” **LGR**

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