

fear of missing out

If you haven't heard of the term FOMO, popularized largely by millennials as a fear of missing out, I'm here to tell you that it could be beneficial to your garden center.

FOMO was added to the Oxford English Dictionary in 2013, and the phenomena continues to become more commonplace among all age groups. Studies show that social media largely provokes this anxiety about missing out on what others are doing.

While talking to Will Heeman of Heeman's in Ontario, Canada, for this month's Event Central column (see page 54), Will mentioned he subscribes to a maximize-FOMO model for the garden center.

Will and his team don't do many events, but for the ones they do put on, bigger is better.

"We want to bring in the crowds of 1,000 people minimum because it's the same amount of effort and headache as those small workshops and seminars," Will says.

This means that more than 1,000 people are tagging themselves on Facebook at your garden center, posting photos on Instagram or Tweeting a play-by-play of the day's activities.

I see some of my favorite retailers get caught up in offering the same promotion over and over or scheduling the same workshop week after week because it must work well. The downside to this is that I no longer feel compelled to join in on the fun because I know there will be the same opportunity again shortly.

be cool

Another thing Will mentioned in our conversation is that "some businesses are cool and some businesses are not cool but could be cool because you're selling things that people want."

Will was referencing food trucks as being inherently cool, but their garden center is also branding themselves as cool with the events they do, the companies they align themselves with and the products they offer.

I asked a few friends what businesses they'd consider "cool," and here are some responses I received: fancy workout gyms, microbreweries, tech companies and record stores.

With the exception of tech companies, these businesses are all reinventing things that have been around for years.

Exercising is nothing new, but add an upscale feel and structured classes, and you have something cool. People have been drinking beer for ages, but produce small amounts of beer in an independently owned operation, and it's cool again. Vinyl records are decades old, but reposition listening to them as a communal activity and an art form, and you guessed it, it's cool.

As we all know, the million-dollar question is how we can make plants cool again.

Flip to page 12 to discover some plants you may have never thought of for targeting the 20 and 30 somethings who want an attractive, "cool" product without a lot of work.

Also, flip to page 18 to read about Calgo Gardens, a garden center in New Jersey that has aligned itself with like-minded businesses that up the "cool factor" — think aquaponics, yoga and farm-to-table food.

I think plants are one of the coolest categories out there, but the challenge is to excite people about our products and stores, whether they're into gardening or not (yet).



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