“Almost all unplanned buying is a result of touching, hearing, smelling or tasting something on the premises of a store – which is why merchandising can be more powerful than marketing, and why the Internet, catalogs and home shopping on TV will complement but never seriously challenge real live stores.”

This is a statement from Paco Underhill from the book, Why We Buy. Life is full of sensory experiences and emotion, so why not use it as a powerful sales tool? Today’s customer is impulse driven, and emotion is a motivating stimulus to buy. Make sure that merchandise can be touched, smelled and checked over. The ability to handle merchandise gives hard evidence to quality and value.

Many nursery and greenhouse retailers sell to an upscale market. The growing two paycheck affluence may be the reason for the changing look of the retail store. High end merchandise such as brass, crystal, quartz, custom engraving, exotic fountains, lamps, candles, silk plants, decorative watering cans, framed art as well as other home decoration items are being added to the traditional staples of fertilizer, chemicals and soil amendments.

Lifestyle philosophies are being carried out throughout the store. Fresh cut flowers greet the customer, saying “we are different, and we cared enough to pay attention to the details.” Research has shown that the amount of time a customer spends shopping in your store is the determining factor of how much they will buy. In addition to time spent, there is a direct relationship between shopper and employee contact. There is emotion in the friendliness and the warmth of the personalized service; calling customers by name, showing recognition and giving compliments that add value to customer contacts. Add a touch of nostalgia, a reminder that comes with smells and touch of past pleasant experiences. Give the shopper not only what he needs but what he wants. Create an atmosphere that appeals to lifestyle traits. There is no stronger emotion than that which enhances self image. Customers believe that quality products and services are part of their identities. As prices increase, emotion should play a more decisive role in merchandising.

The retail store can demonstrate its uniqueness by jazzing up store image. Take a fresh look this spring at the climate in the store. Stay away from drab, generic colors. Light, reflective, bright colors add excitement to displays. Complement the store basics with adjacent, complementary merchandise and add on to those sales.

Change displays frequently, and give your store a new look to keep shoppers returning. The goal is to get more shoppers in the store more often. Remember, most buying decisions are made at the store, and are unplanned purchases. The way you merchandise will affect the way the customer buys.

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