

## MASTER'S DEGREE: ENCOURAGING PRODUCT PULL THROUGH

The third article in a six-part series explores a crucial element in successful retail programs—getting the buyer to buy.

*Editor's Note: As a Green Profit subscriber, you read the first article of this series, "So You Want to Create a Program" in the July issue. You may be wondering why this article is titled Part 3. The reason is simple: Part 2 ran in the August issue of our sister magazine GrowerTalks. There's a very easy way to ensure you receive all the compelling stories Ball Publishing has to offer. Subscribe now! Visit [www.growertalks.com](http://www.growertalks.com) to begin receiving the magazine that's been serving our industry since 1937.*

Print it and they will come. I can see it now—buyers for big boxes and independent garden centers slowly emerging from the proverbial corn field, magically drawn to the tags, color-coordinated pots, matching signs and posters and bench tape for your awesome new merchandising campaign. It'll be an out-of-the-park success.

Snapping back to reality, selling your new merchandising program to the grower and garden center retail buyer is a key step in the journey from the program's conception to its retail success. You have conducted the consumer research, worked side-by-side with your printing and marketing experts, and now have a merchandising program ready for growers and garden centers to implement. You believe in it. They should believe in it. Shouldn't they?

### Getting Them Onboard Early

As we learned in the previous Master's Degree installment, some growers in the process of developing a merchandising program opt to approach their larger customers for feedback on design and overall concept.

The Home Depot is one of the larger customers for Marty Roth, president of Worldwide Orchids in Apopka, Florida. "We were tasked by The Home Depot to come up with some creative promotional materials to make plants more attractive and consumer friendly," Roth says. When developing the



Check out some of the point-of-purchase elements for the OrchidÉcor program from Worldwide Orchids. Notice the consistent message and marketing feel.

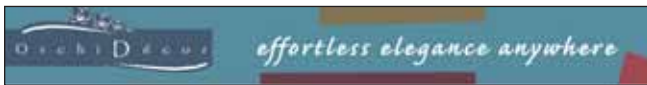
Photos courtesy of MasterTag

OrchiDÉcor program, Worldwide Orchids kept The Home Depot buyers informed of their progress. "We brought draft concepts to them a few times just to see if they were comfortable with the direction we were going and we made a couple of tweaks after that. Once the design was finished we ran it past them again and they liked what they saw." If The Home Depot had had any specific objections to the direction in which Worldwide Orchids was proceeding, Roth notes, they would have been more than open to working with them to make the OrchidÉcor program meet the needs of both companies.

### It's in the Sell

"As a salesperson, the main thing is to believe in it (the program)," says Karen Franck, from Greenheart Farms in Arroyo Grande, California. Franck is speaking of Greenheart's new Table To Garden miniature rose program, whose tags and posters encourage consumers to plant the mini roses into their gardens once the blooms fade.

Franck says the belief that the miniature pot rose is a disposable product is prevalent not only with consumers but with the retailers, as well. "Table To Garden is sometimes a hard concept to get across," Franck says. "At trade shows when we are dis-



playing our product, even garden retailers will say ‘miniature roses, I kill those.’ That’s where our challenge lies, to change the thinking of not only the consumer but the trade as well. That’s where the tags and POP come in.”

The concept, whether it’s Table To Garden or cool-season plants or hummingbird plants, needs to be sold to the customer (the retailer), so they can, in turn, sell it to their customer (the end consumer). Selling buyers on the product takes more than just a sales pitch. It takes an effort to educate them about the benefits of the product and the program. Franck says Table To Garden is a reinvention of a product that’s been on the market for years. “The key is showing the grower the how-tos of it,” she says. “Show them what you can do with the product and how you can represent it in the marketplace.”

**Getting It Out There**

Thanks to The Home Depot, Worldwide Orchids has a large buyer for their OrchidDécor program. But the program has met with positive responses from dozens of other buyers, too. “The overall response has been exceptionally positive,” Roth says. “We have picked up some customers who saw the new materials at trade shows, and they thought it was compelling enough to try it at their stores.” Roth is also getting some visibility for the OrchidDécor program with limited advertisements in the industry trade magazines.

The Plants at Work in the Home program, which debuted in 2005, got its name out there through the industry trade magazines. “At the very beginning of the program, about a year ago, we distributed a series of press releases about the program,” says Pamela Nelly, media relations for Plants at Work. The magazines and online newslet-

ters picked up the Plants at Work in the Home story and so far the program has appeared in six publications. Nelly says they have received lots of positive feedback and inquiries from that exposure. Plants at Work also sends out industry updates to their growing mailing list.

Plants at Work in the Home has turned its focus toward industry trade shows, according to Nelly. The program debuted to the industry at the 2006 Tropical Plant Industry Exhibition (TPIE), and has also participated in the OFA Short Course. There, Plants at Work’s partner MasterTag set up a full Plants at Work in the Home POP display, and Plants at Work made tags and ordering information available at its own educational table. “At OFA we had several garden centers interested in incorporating the POP displays at retail,” Nelly says. “It’s still at the beginning stages where we are slowly starting to get more and more enthusiasm built around it.”

Franck believes that getting the program out there and keeping it out there helps to keep the product in the forefront of buyers’ minds. Table to Garden is in its first year, and is just beginning its trek to industry recognition. But she’ll be employing some concepts that she learned from working with another product, Terrazza roses. “We kept advertising for a year, and people know the name now,” Franck says. “They may not



have bought it but at least they know the name, so they are then open to trying it.” Franck says there is a misconception with advertising, where producers think once a name has recognition, they can stop getting the name out there. Case in point: Proven Winners. “Even though everyone knows who they are, they keep putting their name out there,” Franck says.

**More Than a Pretty Package**

Roth reminds us that a merchandising program is more than its pretty package—it’s a combination of factors. Packaging and how it might assist the end retail is certainly key. “You have to have a complete package—good product, the type of plants they are interested in, you have to maintain quality, and you have to have availability,” he says. “There is not one simple solution. It’s not a matter of putting a new label on the plant and it is going to sell. You have to come to market with all of your ducks in a row.”

To discuss merchandising strategies to keep your business growing, contact the experts at MasterTag. Call (800) 253-0439 or visit [www.mastertag.com](http://www.mastertag.com).

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