

A SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE

FOR FLORAL RETAILERS AND WHOLESALERS

Case Study: English Gardens

English Gardens started in 1954 with one retail garden center in Dearborn Heights, Michigan. This second-generation-owned seven-location independent garden center also offers landscape design and installation. Consistently ranked as one of Detroit's Best (by The Detroit News) and with their award-winning designs (by the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association), the company has grown to become a mainstay in the horticulture industry in eastern Michigan. We sat down with Jennifer Youngquest, Marketing Director, to talk about EG use of social media. EG philosophy is to be the place where people come to furnish their outside living spaces including their patios, waterfall, and kitchens. EG also furnishes some indoor spaces with fresh flowers, tropical plants, flowering plants, and Christmas decorations. EG puts the finishing touch on the home.

Social Media Use

Jennifer says, "Social media has gained much traction. People are using it as a way to get connected to each other and more people are embracing and using it."

She uses it personally and professionally. If a business doesn't use it, they will be left behind. She personally used it before she used it professionally. Initially, she kept up with family only, and then she added friends but

wanted to keep it personally at first. She now connects on her personal FB with companies to see how they are using social media. She looks at all of the updates from the companies she's requested updates from. She mainly looks at the information from the company she is personally interested in and sees how that might be adapted to EG.



EG updates the content on their website weekly during this busy season. They focus on specials and other promotions. They also want to let customers know

that *Inspirations* magazine is there and to encourage the purchase of gift cards. EG did this for a Mother's Day promotion and featured the purchase of online gift cards. They also provide a means for customers to sign up for Twitter and FB.

EG takes a different approach with wanting a call to action from the use of SM, but not necessarily come and see us and buy something. EG wants to create a community and keep EG top of mind. A month ago, it was National Chocolate Chip Cookie Day. Jennifer posted something on FB about cookies. EG talks a lot about the weather. When weather is the focus of a FB conversation, they get the most likes and comments. EG has 1535 FB fans and over 60,000 people on their email blast, both are used to drive customers to the store and specials.

EG doesn't always blast their promotions on FB, but Jennifer tries to post 3 times per day. Jennifer doesn't Tweet a lot due to time, mainly because there isn't as much interaction on Twitter. Some people don't like or comment on Twitter; they read it and that's it. The engagement isn't there on Twitter. She did a little this summer or spring with 'such and such product has arrived.' She has to be careful that it has arrived in all 7 stores or she tweets that it's arrived in West Bloomfield but adds, "other stores arriving shortly." EG is taking their message to everyone through this new channel. They have a lot of foreign visitors who are attracted by the name and think about the magazine or British gardens; a lot of fans from England.

The two things they use which are posted in separate places are the "contact us" and "ask us". Someone asked what EG return policy was, which is posted on the website, but they asked that question. They wanted to know when tomatoes arrive. What is this, a weed? How do I take care of this? She gets a lot of plant care questions, and answers them all. It is a way for EG to connect with the customer. They don't have a lot of questions on Facebook, but people will post photos.

Only Jennifer and the graphic designer can post on FB, but none of the store managers or buyers. She did give one buyer permission to tweet, because he was already Tweeting new arrivals. She has been working towards having key employees to commit to a blog. Her goal is to have a daily blog posting by different people, so it would disperse the responsibility. She wants to blog on kid's gardening, about plants, and what she did in her garden. She has a few volunteers, but only one person who took the time to do a blog entry. Jennifer



Need to add a little fall color to your garden? Join us Saturday for a free presentation at 10 a.m.: Fall Collor in Containers; and then stay for the Make It & Take It Workshop to make your own Fall Porch Pot to take home. Sign up on-line at www.EnglishGardens.com.











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want oversight to be sure it fits with EG philosophy. She believes it needs to be done daily to be done right.

EG uses Google Analytics, but doesn't look at them often. The measure of success is at the cash register, not in friends or traffic.

Jennifer is the SM and website manager by default. The top three executives see the value professionally because everyone else is doing it, but aren't active participants. EG has an IT person who does some work on the website, but they are mostly dedicated to keeping the computers running in the stores, POS and network. The website is on their list of responsibilities and they do basic updates. Approximately a third of a person from IT works on the website. EG subcontracts with a web provider. Jennifer decides what the content will be; the graphic designer creates the look and then passes it on to the web provider. One eighth of her job is the website. Promotional content needs to be adapted for the web and that would be the extent of her time. EG does all the work, and the contractor posts it. The frequency of which they update the website makes it more cost effective to go to a provider. The contractor has the expertise and must stay current, whereas the IT folks may not be as up to date. The content is updated weekly, but now they are refreshing content. They repurpose content and don't generate a lot of new content. When they first started a few years ago, she spent (seasonally) 3 days per week to generating this new content. That was the greater challenge. The SM component takes a few hours per week. She and the graphic designer meet weekly on Wednesday afternoon. They lay out the upcoming specials and events for the next two weeks in a grid. They coordinate what will be done (FB posting) and talk about when that should be done. They also have the spontaneous postings about beautiful roses or this looks great. The majority is focused or planned. They haven't posted since Saturday (today is Monday) on FB.

Upcoming Events - Past Events	
 Free In-Store Presentation: Fall Color in Containers Saturday at 10:00am	7 retail locations
 MAKE IT & TAKE IT WORKSHOP: Fall Porch Pot Saturday at 11:30am	7 retail locations
 Free In-Store Presentation: Fall Lawn Care Saturday, September 15, 2012 at 10:00am	7 retail locations
 Free In-Store Presentation: Planting Spring-Flowering Bulbs Saturday, September 22, 2012 at 10:00am	7 retail locations
 Free In-store Presentation: The Basics of Landscape Design Saturday, September 29, 2012 at 10:00am	7 retail locations
 Free In-store Presentation: Plant Care: Tips on Pruning Saturday, October 6, 2012 at 10:00am	7 retail locations
 Free In-store Presentation: Seasonal Indoor Decorating Ideas Saturday, October 13, 2012 at 10:00am	7 retail locations
 Free In-store Presentation: Putting Your Garden to Bed Saturday, October 20, 2012 at 10:00am	7 retail locations

Does anyone manage or handle the community or does that happen naturally? EG is letting the community grow naturally. This summer, they hired a SM intern. One of her jobs is to identify influential people within Twitter, FB, and garden bloggers that they should connect with. They want to be sure they are following the influentials and they are following EG. All of the online garden directories, we want to be sure EG is listed. All of our vendors, we want to be sure we are listed on their website. She looked at every single product label in the store for a website and cataloged those websites so we can be sure we are listed there. Her goal is to find other ways to leverage their presence on their website. EG

has never done and FB or website advertising. She gets a lot of SEO emails and lots of email requests to advertise.

Any not failures but things that didn't work out the way she thought. EG doesn't do any campaigns. Things that EG did that she thought would be more well received but weren't. Tell us your favorite story about your mom and the garden. Maybe people didn't want to work that hard. EG asked about posting favorite photos and they did. They had EG designers make different floral arrangements and FB fans voted for their favorites.

Commenting policy? How do you handle negative comments? In the employee handbook, EG states their policy that employees are prohibited from using EG name in any way or discussion or providing information of any kind about EG, its employees or its customers. Associates are responsible for acting in a manner that is consistent with company values. Associates are expected to be courteous, respectful, and thoughtful about how other employees may be affected by postings.

Privacy policies? They take photos at Ladies Night events, but asked the people in the photo if it was okay. They have a series of childrens events during the day this summer. They want to be very careful and ask permission from parents if it's okay to post the photos online. They have a privacy policy with email that EG won't share or rent the lists.

How much time do you spend on website and SM? It took several months to assemble the content. Now, overall Jennifer spends about a day a week per year on the website. The checking is integrated into daily activities. Once the several months were invested, was the next leap to SM as steep? She spends an hour a week doing posts. She reads emails about FB and Twitter after hours. There is a lot of content. She says, "If you're not on for a few hours, you miss a lot of content."

Next steps for SM? Immediate is LinkedIn EG corporate page. That's the goal of our intern before she leaves at the end of summer. Then the blog (daily posts) which will require a lot of Jennifer's time to write the posts and get it up and going. This points more to building community and fosters the conversation. The blog will be attached to the website. The blog gives EG one post per day. Sometimes Jennifer thinks it is almost easier in a smaller business because you are 'right there' whereas Jennifer is removed some from the customers and products. One CT garden center has 6500 FB followers. What are we not doing to engage them?

Suggestions to starters? Consistency and start with your website. Make a commitment to keep the content fresh and then move up from there. Master one thing. How mobile ready is the EG website? Not yet, but working on that and should be completed by the end of 2012.