



**COMMUNITY MINDED**

Farmers' markets at the garden centers become a community gathering spot at Bachman's in Minnesota.

## EVENT MARKETING BRINGS SUCCESS

➤ How do you connect with your customers in the community? At Bachman's Inc. in Minneapolis, Minnesota, event marketing provides that connection — and leads to sales. "Event marketing really helps us be that experiential retailer," said Susan Bachman West, president. "It's more than just coming in and purchasing something, the experience draws customers back."

Bachman's operates six floral, home and garden centers in the Twin Cities, and each maintains a calendar of events, which help build the customer base, store traffic and sales. "We look to events as a way to gain new customers," Bachman West said. "For example, we saw the trend in green plants and listened to our customers, who said they wanted to learn more about green plants."

That spurred Plant-Oberfest, a fall event that's all about green plants. Seminars cover the basics: how to care for indoor tropical foliage plants, how to decorate with plants and benefits that plants provide. Beer, pretzels and a real

oom-pah-pah band complete the fall festival ambiance.

### Creative Events Score

Market research drives event topics, along with old-fashioned brainstorming. Through their Purple Perks customer loyalty program, Bachman's tracks what customers are purchasing. "We also worked with a digital media research company to learn the demographics of our customer and their behavior online," Bachman West said. "We understand our customers love our product line, but what else interests them?"

Learning about customers' interests led to pet adoption events, held eight times a year — a great way to drive traffic during the shoulder seasons. "We partner with a nonprofit for these events," Bachman West said. "Pet adoption day brings in a lot of families. Everyone goes crazy when the puppies come." Weekly farmers' markets also strengthen community ties.

The most popular events, drawing 450 people, are Inspiration Nights, held four times a year. "At these events, seminars and displays give inspirational ideas to guests based on time of year," Bachman West explained. Spring is garden related, fall focuses on transitioning an outdoor room to inside the home, and holidays offer decorating ideas.

"With these events, our goal is giving customers inspirational — yet attainable — ideas they can do in their own spaces," Bachman West said. Visual displays are often built using seasonal décor trends, green and blooming plants, as well as repurposed, vintage pieces. For example, existing flameless candles

can be wrapped with on-trend ribbon to update the look and feel.

### Metrics Are Key

To measure success, Bachman's tracks metrics for every event. "We set goals for ourselves and gauge against that," Bachman West said. Events require tickets, which enable attendance counts. A coupon associated with each event lets Bachman's track purchases.

"Events are a great way to drive traffic into the stores," Bachman West said. The four annual Inspiration Nights occur on Tuesday or Thursday evenings. "On a normal weeknight we don't have 450 people shopping in our store," Bachman West said. "What you can't measure—unless you're in the store looking—is whether or not these people are repeat customers. That's where we look to our Purple Perks loyalty program.

"The loyalty program allows us to build a better relationship with our customer based on their purchase history and frequency," she added. "We are able to glean insights into how our customers are transitioning their homes and gardens from season to season. The data also offers trends and opportunities to pilot new events." 🌿

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### QUICK TAKE

**The company:** Bachman's

**Locations:** 6 garden centers around Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota

**Garden center events:** 50 per calendar year

**Garden center employees:** 43 full-time staff + 130 seasonal

[bachmans.com](http://bachmans.com)

### GO DEEPER

Find out how to make events work at your business with more advice from the Bachman's team at [safnow.org/moreonline](http://safnow.org/moreonline).