
Council News

Floral Seminar Keynote Address

Lucky Stores Accelerating Floral Marketing Effort

Beverlin 89

By Karen Beverlin

Although it is virtually the last Southern California chain to get into the floral marketing business, Lucky Stores is moving full steam ahead, according to the vice president of produce marketing.

The afternoon agenda of the 1989 Fresh Produce Council Floral Sales Southern California Style Part II was concluded with the feature presentation by Larry Cox. A staunch floral industry supporter, Cox began his retail career in 1958 as a produce clerk. From this humble beginning, he worked his way through the ranks and is currently vice president of produce marketing at Lucky Stores.

Cox, who has been with Lucky's for a relatively short time, was instrumental in bringing floral products to this chain.

In his presentation, Cox acknowledged the progress the industry has seen in supermarket floral departments. During the past decade these departments have enjoyed better location within the store, more space, improved fixtures, and cut

flower coolers. The addition of full service along with greater product variety, new plant and flower varieties and colors of blooming plants, and an international supply of fresh cut flowers, has also helped floral become more important to supermarket customers.

Cox views these changes and the current climate as a winning situation—positive momentum that can be continued. But the floraculture industry cannot rest on its laurels, or pothos, or ficus. Identifying and acting upon opportunities is essential if this momentum is to continue.

There are, according to Cox, certain elements that are essential to the continued success of supermarket floral.

A 12-month advertising/promotional calendar is vital because it "allows for an orderly flow of high quality product through the distribution system," said Cox. This calendar also establishes a partnership between the grower and the retailer.

"Growers can plan bench space effectively, keeping costs in line while producing superior quality. Retailers can plan the correct amount of product for each store, eliminating the dreaded scramble," he continued.

Regarding advertising and promotion, Cox suggested that the floral industry "take a page out of the produce book and build aggressive presentations." But, if the business is to continue its present course, the product must meet the resulting expectations.

Cox suggested that warehouse facilities have a "separate area for plants and flowers and proper refrigeration/humidity for cut flowers." Also, quality control in these facilities must be improved to reach the same level as produce quality control.

In light of the consumer's changing lifestyle and increasing disposable income, "the potential for decorated plants

(Continued on page 28)



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Council News

Cox

(Continued from page 26)

and case-ready gift type floral packages will increase," but many retail operations, including Lucky Stores, are not consistent throughout the year in their decorating. Cox sees decoration at the grower/shipper level as the answer for maximizing results.

Unlimited potential is how Cox described the cut flower market segment. "Our future depends on our ability to give our retail customers consistent freshness and extended enjoyment," he said. "Anyone involved in the business who doesn't work intensely, giving attention to detail, is on a short-term program and will not survive."

To establish a higher degree of confidence in supermarket floral products, Cox recommends specific care tags on potted plants and care tags with a packet of freshness extender on every bouquet sold. "We have to do a better job of providing consumer information."

Cox predicts that the floral industry will continue to evolve. He concluded by stating that floral will remain a consumer-driven market demanding high quality, variety, and fashion in products and those involved in floral must be alert and focus on the future to position the industry correctly and successfully.



Above, Sue Briggs stands with her husband, Walter, (right), president of L.A. Seed Company, as he accepts the 2nd annual Southern California Floral Achievement Award from Don Bonebrake, Ralphs Grocery Company, event chairman and master of ceremonies. Below, Roger Schroeder and Sam Wada, both of Hughes Markets, talk during one of the seminar breaks.



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