



Wolfgang Engelmann is active in all aspects of his company's product development and marketing programs. (Photos: Hermann Engelmann Greenhouses)

An Angelic Marketing Program

The marketing efforts at Hermann Engelmann Greenhouses continue to deliver heavenly results for the Exotic Angel product line.

By Tim Hodson

Most people in the green industry understand that marketing is both an art and a science. Hermann Engelmann Greenhouses in Apopka, Fla., recognizes this and has created an enduring yet continually innovative marketing program for its Exotic Angel product line. By finding the right balance between marketing art and science, the 35-year-old company continues to re-invigorate itself. The company's marketing programs also stay true to Hermann Engelmann's founding principles: quality, quantity, consistency, availability and innovation.

In recognition of these innovative efforts, Hermann Engelmann Greenhouses has been awarded the 2006 GPN/John Henry Company Creative Marketing Award.

The Company

Born in Germany in the 1930s, Hermann Engelmann moved to the United States in 1971 when he saw an ad for a 10,000-sq.ft. nursery in Apopka, founding his namesake company. Today, Hermann continues to serve as CEO while his son, Wolfgang, is president and COO. Wolfgang is the fifth generation of Engelmanns to be in the floriculture business.

The company has nine different locations in the Apopka area with approximately 2.8 million sq.ft. of greenhouses and a staff of 250 permanent employees. Currently, Hermann Engelmann Greenhouses is offering more than 400 "unique foliage varieties" for indoor use — from the aglaonema 'Maria' to the zebra plant.

The company's signature product line is Exotic Angel. The name is derived from the German-to-English translation of Engelmann, which means man of angels or angel man. Hermann created the product line when he started his business.

From the beginning, Hermann had a very good understanding of branding and marketing. His definition of a brand was "a promise

for an emotional guarantee for the same exact experience each time it is encountered." He said for the retailers, this meant exceptional product quality and profitability. For consumers, it meant they could expect a unique, healthy, beautiful plant every time.

This philosophy is still at the core of the company's marketing message. ♦



Hermann Engelmann Greenhouses is comprised of nearly 2.8 million sq.ft. of greenhouses in nine locations in the Apopka, Fla. area.

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Hermann Engelmann Greenhouses employees are always aware of how important the customer is.

Marketing Creatively

Wolfgang Engelmann recently spoke with *GPN* to explain how the company integrates marketing into all aspects of its operations to promote and sell the Exotic Angel line.

"We are really trying to do an all-around approach" when it comes to marketing the company's products, he commented. "We have tried to set up [the company's plants] so when our customers open up the box, they go 'WOW!' not 'oh.'" He said this involves everything from the look of the plant itself to the company's vibrantly colored pots to the way the information is presented on the tag. "[All of the employees] really put their hearts into making our products."

"We always try to keep our promise for superior product quality, exotic varieties and mass-market availability," Wolfgang said. "We also have consistently focused on innovation. We travel abroad to collect new ideas. We observe activities from other industries. Then, we also stay educated on the latest consumer trends."

"We continue to reinvent our variety mix and our packaging, and we always try to enhance the basic message of what our company is about," added Wolfgang. "Staying close to our marketplace allows us to quickly react to emerging trends, to adjust our product mix and marketing message in the most appropriate way."

This kind of communication with the retailer and the consumer is key to the marketing program's success. "We continue to dig deeper to understand the end-consumer and help them become even more successful with their plants," Wolfgang said.

He said the Exotic Angel marketing program has to be targeted to a wide audience of retailers and consumers because the company sells to such a broad base — literally from one case to a flower shop to thousands of cases to a home center.

When asked why he thought the Exotic Angel program had been so successful for so long, Wolfgang said, "I guess it is the consistency of our promise. If we don't keep the consumer happy, nothing else matters. That is the bottom line. Our retailers really trust our integrity and program execution," Wolfgang added. "The end-consumers can always expect to receive the best value when they see that little red angel" on the plants.

Keys To Success

Hermann Engelmann Greenhouses recognizes how tough it is to survive in today's retail market and is continuously working on a number of different programs to help retailers be more successful in the business of houseplants.

Wolfgang believes the sale of indoor foliage plants is heavily driven by impulse purchases. "This is the reason why we place so much attention on how our product looks," he said. From the plant itself, to the pot, to the tag — Herman Engelmann Greenhouses puts a lot of care into the company's product.

"What we have tried to do is take very exotic plants and produce them so they have quality root systems and good soil so they hold up [for the retailer who can then] make them available to the mass markets," Wolfgang added.

"The process of how we decide how our marketing vehicles need to look

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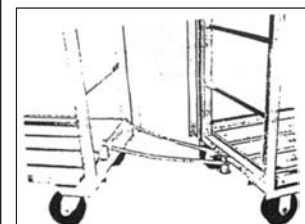


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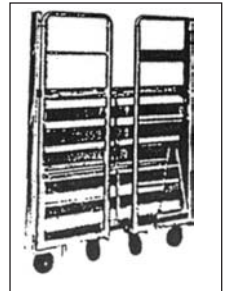
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is teamwork" between senior management, marketing and some operations-level employees. "We really try to do things together as a team," Wolfgang stated.

He said they make sure they really think things out when it comes to marketing. "We are reasonably quick to market, but we are not rash," explained Wolfgang.

Recent Initiatives

According to Bisser Georgiev, Hermann Engelmann Greenhouses' director of marketing, the company's product line has a true mass-marketing focus. The goal is to customize the product mix according to the needs of the customer.

"Everything we do has to be reasonably priced and high impact," Wolfgang added. "Every customer is important" no matter how big or small.

To create these types of plants and programs, Hermann Engelmann Greenhouses continually introduces new initiatives like its Living Elegance Collection and the Soft Stone Collection. The Living Elegance Collection presents the company's unique plants in a hand-crafted, heavy copper pot while the Soft Stone Collection features a new pot design with a marble swirl look that can bring a warm and sophisticated feel to home décor. The pot design and plant complement each other, making it an attractive purchase for the consumer.

The company also recently redesigned its line of 4.4 and 5.5 Colorama pots for the Exotic Angel Collection. The new design is a subtle change with a porcelain look that still maintains the price point and practicality of plastic. The new pot colors were selected to meet the latest consumer color trends. The company's research has shown these are the types of things today's shoppers want.

Wolfgang and Georgiev also acknowledged that female shoppers purchase the majority of their products, but Wolfgang said they always make sure the company's marketing message and its products are accessible to all consumers. "We try to hit everybody," explained Wolfgang. "We try to get something really beautiful, unique and different out there at affordable prices for regular customers."

Innovative POP signage, newly designed product tags, a Web site re-launch and a newsletter are just some of the other marketing tools that Hermann Engelmann Greenhouses uses to deliver its marketing message to retailers and consumers.

Reinventing The Tag

Hermann Engelmann knew when he first started using printed tags that the red angel logo would be a highly visible symbol of the brand's message. Making sure the consumer and the retailer have



Top: Multi-lingual POP helps reinforce the Exotic Angel brand while promoting additional product benefits. **Bottom:** Hermann Engelmann Greenhouses knows that appealing to the consumer is crucial. That is why the Soft Stone Collection was designed to create a warm, sophisticated look for the home.



the right information on each plant tag has always been a priority.

Wolfgang talked about how, in the early days of the company, his father would write hundreds of care labels by hand each night and how he would have to glue them to floral picks the next day when he got home from school.

The company continues to deliver this kind of care information along with the red angel logo on its tags, but with a little more automation. Wolfgang said the company recently "reinvented" its labeling system to include even more information. The new tags will cost the company more money, but Wolfgang said the investment is definitely worthwhile because they are producing a lot better label that is full of useful information.

Georgiev said the Creative Labeling System has more than 1,500 label types in inventory, color-coded light requirements, botanical name and common name, care instructions, country of origin and collector ID numbers. The new labels will also list information in English and Spanish and have simple icons with quick and easy care information.

Georgiev said another addition to the label marketing program is the Exotic Angel Club labels that identify the firm's two main groups of plants — Simple to Grow and Fun to Collect. The Simple to Grow group consists of varieties that are great for any level of growing expertise. The Fun to Collect products are aimed at the more serious gardener who is interested in new and rare varieties.

Using The Web

Hermann Engelmann Greenhouses is planning a re-launch of its Web site (www.exoticangel.com)

Bonzi® tip of the month

Bonzi Spray Applications On Perennials

Perennials are grown from a wide array of plant genetics; many of which are naturally tall or have not been in mainstream production very long. To reduce plant height and improve the quality characteristics of their perennials, many perennial producers are turning to Bonzi. Perennials receiving Bonzi applications can produce thicker stems that withstand the rigors of shipping and handling and exhibit an increased shelf life (up to three weeks) at retail sites and in the greenhouse.

Growers often prefer to make spray applications using Bonzi to control plant height. When used properly, spray applications effectively control height without providing excessive levels of height reduction or significantly delaying flower development.

The best results are achieved when Bonzi is applied throughout the growing season to "regulate" plant development as opposed to attempting to stop elongation just prior to shipping. Bonzi has the greatest effect on young, actively growing plant tissues; plants that are maturing or becoming reproductive are less responsive. Applications made late in the crop cycle also have a greater tendency to delay flowering compared to early season applications.

Growers should evaluate the need for height control on each perennial variety weekly. Applications should be made immediately if height control is necessary, allowing 7-10 days between Bonzi applications. Applying low rates frequently provides better height control than using single applications at higher rates.

The exact rates to apply vary greatly between plant species, and by geographic location and season. The beginning rate for most perennial applications in Northern climates is 30 ppm (perennials sensitive to Bonzi require starting with 10-15 ppm). Southern growers typically increase Northern rates by 50-100 percent, depending on their locations. Also, as the summer season approaches and temperatures increase, it is often necessary to increase application rates by 25-50 percent to achieve sufficient levels of control. Keep in mind the rates provided here are intended for multiple applications and for use as a starting point. We'll provide the science and you provide the artistic touch.

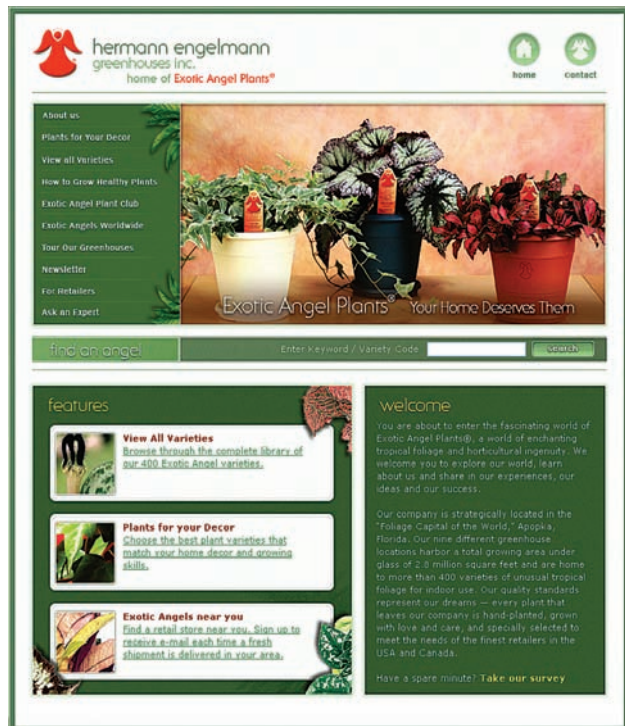
The most important aspect of using Bonzi is to understand the "volume effect." The volume of solution applied has a greater effect on the results than the concentration of the solution. Unsatisfactory results will be obtained if volumes less than 2 qts. per 100 sq.ft. (the labeled recommendation) are applied. The appropriate volume must be applied uniformly, thoroughly covering the crops' leaves and stems.

Following these guidelines will help growers be more successful with their Bonzi applications and become more comfortable using this height control tool.

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Hermann Engelmann Greenhouses' multifaceted Web site provides consumers with information and allows the company to collect important market data.

in 2006. Georgiev said the "new" Web site will have many different interactive tools that will allow consumers "a place to play and self-express their own desires" on how they would like their plants to look in their own homes.

It will also have an area for members of the Exotic Angel Club to sign up to receive notification when a new shipment of plants will be delivered to their area. "This serves as a very nice service for the retailers, too," Wolfgang said.

The redesigned Web site will have an area where customers can tell others about their experiences with Exotic Angel products. "We have conducted research that shows people really love stories," Georgiev said. "The more interesting the stories, the more value to the product."

The Web site also allows the company to collect market research data that can be used to help enhance and improve its product offerings. The site contains a detailed survey where the company can find out about consumer purchasing trends, brand awareness, customer satisfaction and how the plants will be used.

What's On The Horizon

Wolfgang is very excited about the future for

Hermann Engelmann Greenhouses. "We are really building a good future," he said. "We have built a good team" of employees in a variety of age groups. "One of the biggest things in this business is to have a really tremendous staff," said Wolfgang, "and we have one of the best staffs in the country."

"When my father started this company, he never thought he'd have a big business. He did it because he loved it!" Wolfgang declared. "I was fortunate enough to grow up in the business because I love it, too."

And the tradition will be carried on Wolfgang said. His son, (Andrew) plans to enter the business too — making the sixth generation of Engelmanns in the floriculture business. **GPN**

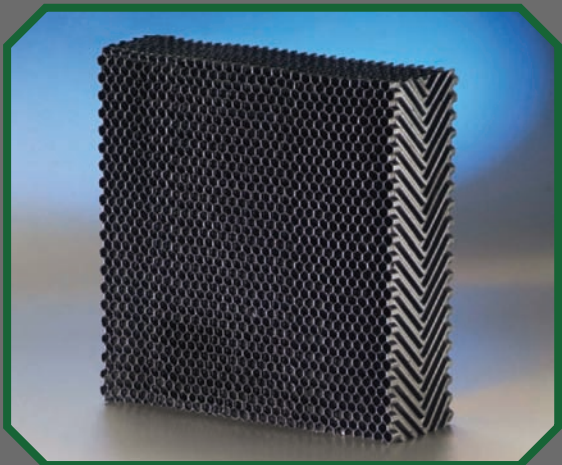
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