

GCA aims to answer why shoppers buy

19 January 2016, by Matthew Appleby, [Be the first to comment](#)

Consumer and shopper behaviouralist Ken Hughes is speaking at the 2016 Garden Centre Association's (GCA) annual conference next week (January 24 until 27, 2016) to talk about the customer of the future.



Ken Hughes

He blends expertise in consumer psychology, social anthropology, behavioural economics and neuromarketing to answer the question: Why do shoppers buy and how can we make them buy more?

He says: "The digital native of today is 35, has children and a garden. These are not pre-family urbanites and they make up more and more of a garden centre's core target every day.

"The technology shifts are of course interesting, but they are only the catalysts for what is really happening. There is a new shopper and consumer DNA emerging, fundamentally different from anything that has come before. The future of the garden centre business is in the hands of this consumer generation, with all other life-stages also heavily influenced by digital interaction.

"These consumers are hard-wired differently. They will not react to the same stimulus that has worked for the previous generations. It is time to future proof and understand what this will mean for your industry and for your very survival as a business.

"Using a blend of social, cultural and digital anthropology, retail futurology and global consumer behaviour shifts, it's time to examine where this could all be heading. If your shopper DNA is changing, don't you think it makes sense to examine this new blueprint to truly understand the implications to your business?"

The chief executive of Glacier Consulting added: "Most organisations put the focus of an omnichannel strategy too heavily on the available technologies – the tablets and smartphones, the apps and social media. But technology is only ever an enabler for us to build better connections with our shoppers and consumers. Technology itself is never what we should be focusing on.

"The real change is taking place in the global shifts within social and cultural norms. There are huge differences in expectations between consumers born Before Google (BG) and After Google (AG). As these Digital Natives (born in the 1980s) are now entering their 30s, we are set to witness one of the biggest shifts in global consumer behaviour, perhaps since the invention of the teenager in the US during the 1950s.

"What do this generation expect from life, relationships, brands and retailers? What will they demand from a consumption and purchase experience? And most importantly how we must prepare to meet these needs in the house, home and garden centre business."

The event begins on 24 January with the Greenfingers Challenge, the annual fundraising competition between garden centre suppliers and retailers.

The Garden Centre Association AGM is at 8:55am on 25 January, followed by the four GCA inspectors giving a round-up of the best of British garden centre retailing and sharing with us the highlights of their visits to all our members in spring 2015. There will also be a presentation from Roger Crookes to announce the winners of the Ruxley Rose Competition and discuss plant areas.

Andy Campbell will be sharing the innovative ideas and inspiring displays he saw when judging the Christmas Competition before presenting the winners with their trophies. After lunch, the afternoon will kick off with a short presentation from David Domoney with his ideas on how we can promote gardening to our consumers. We will also see six of the best young retailers from GCA members who will be competing for this year's title of 'Rising Star'. Members will be asked to vote for the candidate that should, in their opinion be the winner.

In the afternoon, EDRA general secretary John Herbert and Ken Hughes will speak, followed by the Associates Evening.

On 26 January, Martin Vander Weyer, business editor of the Spectator will be looking at the economic outlook. Lucy Adams, former HR director at the BBC, will then speak on leadership, employee engagement and management organisation.

After lunch, Magnus Lindkvist, a trendspotter and an active member of TED - the trends forum, will speak. Then hurdler Roger Black MBE will talk about how to be a champion. At 4.00pm, there is the Associates' Exhibition, then the annual dinner and awards, celebrating the GCA's 50th anniversary and presenting the Garden Centre and Destination Garden Centre of the Year awards.