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SAF's Social Media Guide: How to Build Your Online Visibility

Social media marketing is growing and has become an invaluable tool to helping business grow and retain customers. Simply put, if you are not active in that conversation with your clients and in your industry, you are going to be left behind. Here is an overview of social media platforms, tips on how to use them effectively and a list of SAF resources to help you optimize your social media marketing efforts.

SOCIAL MEDIA ESSENTIALS

Identifying the right networks for you: Creative social media strategies will help spread the word about the benefits of flowers and buying them from you, all while putting a smile on peoples' faces. There are a lot of social media networks so it is important to understand their capabilities to see which is best suited for your business. The following are some of the most popular networks and quick summaries of how to use them to further your business.

Facebook

Facebook is a great platform to build communities with Gen X-ers, Gen Y-ers and Millennials while showcasing your flower shop's unique offerings. Digital showrooms (photo albums) and statuses provide your flower shop business with free marketing. 72% of women and 62% of men in the U.S. have active Facebook profiles. In addition, 86% of users are between 18-29 years of age while 73% are between the ages of 30 and 49. (mediabistro.com, March 2013)

Tips for posts:

- Do not over post: Limit your posting to about 5 times per week. This will prevent your followers from un-following your page due to information overload.
- Facebook users respond well to images. Whenever possible, include captivating images in posts (luckily you have beautiful arrangements to help with this!)

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Example: Bloomtastic Florist (<https://www.facebook.com/bloomtasticohio>) uses Facebook to offer weekly deals to their page's fans. They also use contests to help spread awareness and increase follower engagement. Highlighting recent flower arrangements on your page can help spark customer interest, especially around major holidays.



Twitter

Twitter facilitates open dialogue by allowing you to interact directly with current and prospective customers. It provides a way for customers to share with you their flower questions, concerns and more, within 140 characters. For more information, including how to sign up for Twitter, see <https://support.twitter.com/articles/215585>.

Tips for tweets:

- Be sure to include links to your website or at least a way for potential customers to get in touch.
- Follow flower-related Twitter handles (@FlowerFactor, for example) and retweet relevant posts to your followers.
- Use popular industry or event hashtags to attract users (e.g. #FlowerFact, #MothersDay)
- Twitter conversations typically occur in real time, making for a short post lifespan. As a result, it is encouraged to post more often on this channel than you would on Facebook.

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Examples: DFW Flowers (<https://twitter.com/DFWFlowers>) posts #flowerfacts while Flowers on Square (<https://twitter.com/FlowersOnSquare>) posts #flowertips.



YouTube

Show how to put together a creative bouquet with a short clip on your YouTube channel! YouTube is great for customers to see your work live and to get to know you and your employees better. Many florist shops use this channel to demonstrate their own work and to post how-to videos. YouTube will help give your flower shop personality and it is extremely shareable across most social channels. For more information on how to sign up for YouTube, see <http://www.youtube.com/yt/about/getting-started.html>.

Tips for video posts:

- Keep your videos brief. Anywhere from 30 seconds to 2 minutes is a good length.
- Help your viewers learn by providing them with videos on how to care for their flowers or arrangements.
- “Favorite” and comment on the videos of your followers.
- Tag your videos with key words to optimize them for search.
- For more practical tips, see “The Dos and Don’ts of Making a Video” (http://www.safnow.org/sites/safcms.memberfuse.com/saf/files/PFCI/Seminars/Handout-YoureOn-Video_tips.pdf) by SAF’s Professional Floral Communicators – International (PFCI).

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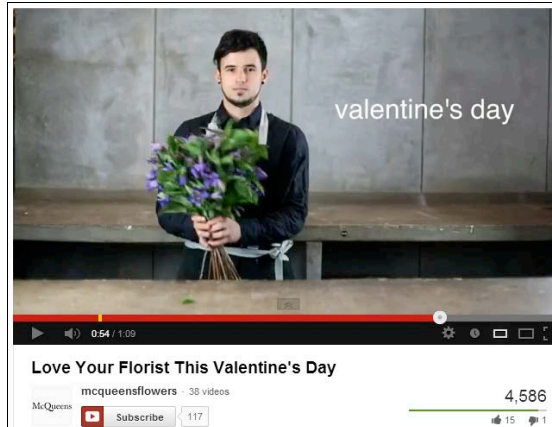
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Examples: McQueens Flowers (<http://youtu.be/c9FcmDiCqM>) created a cute Valentine's Day promotional video to promote their flowers and brand personality. During Mother's Day, Gillespie Florists (<http://youtu.be/IHXj-LKnxic>) posted a video of their employees talking about how their moms' influenced them.



Pinterest

With virtual “pinboards,” Pinterest is a social bookmarking tool that lets you collect and arrange images that are often linked to a web page for more information. You can also post your own pictures to your Pinterest boards. Customers can follow you and you can follow them. It is an aspirational environment primarily for women, to collect items they are interested in. For more information on how to sign up for Pinterest, see <http://about.pinterest.com/basics/>.

Tips for pins and pinboards:

- While you can pin images from your own site, it is also good to pin pictures from other sources.
- You can tweet or share your pins to Twitter and Facebook to help expand your network across all three platforms.
- Be sure to tweet and “Like” other users’ pins, which shares the item on Twitter or as an image on your Facebook timeline. Sharing helps increase online WOM recommendations for specific products, and maximizes the potential of getting in front of a new audience in a more authentic way.
- Consider other lifestyle extensions of your florist boutique. Recipes and food-related items are popular on Pinterest; consider making an edible flower recipe board. Similarly, because women’s apparel and hairstyles are often quite popular, consider a board of floral clothing prints or one of flower head pieces.

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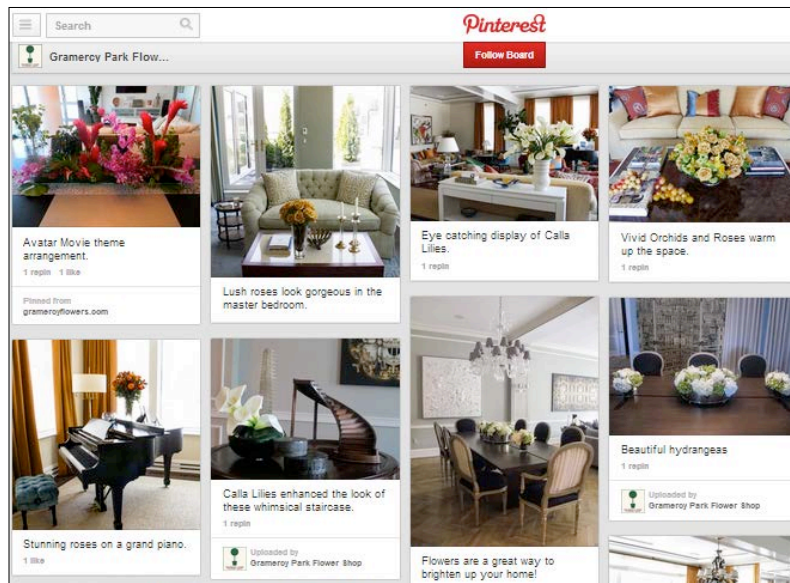
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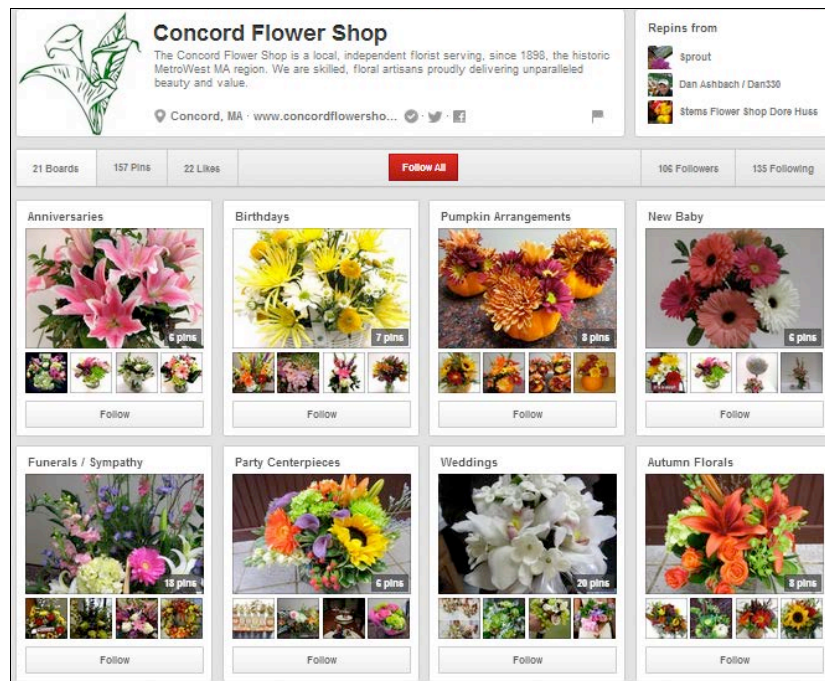
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- Add a home decorations board of how flowers enhance different rooms. For example, <http://pinterest.com/gpkflowers/>:



Example: Some florists have Pinterest boards that reflect their brands' essence, design, inspiration for products and services, or company culture. Customers "pin" pictures from florists' boards to their own, sharing the beautiful creations with their friends. Take a look at <http://pinterest.com/concordflorist/>:



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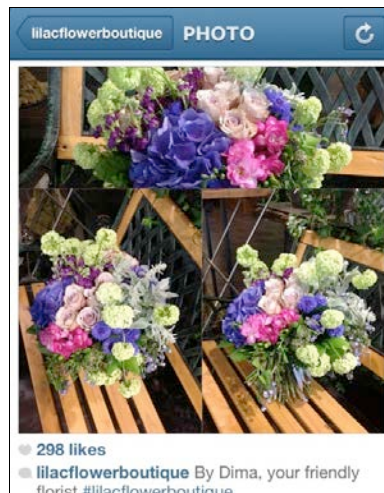
Instagram

Instagram is a great platform where you can post pictures of your creative flower arrangements for your current and prospective customers to see. On this social channel, you can take pictures directly on the mobile application and enhance the picture by using one of many different filters to choose from. You can gain followers and follow other people's Instagram pages. In addition, you are able to "like" and comment on your own pictures as well as other people's pictures. Instagram's core age demographic is 18-30 (67%) and 20% of users are between 12-17 years of age, so it's a perfect channel for sharing homecoming, prom, wedding and party flowers images to this younger demographic. For more information on how to sign up for Instagram, visit <http://help.instagram.com/>.

Tips for posts:

- Like Facebook, do not over post. Keep it to about once per day.
- Use appropriate hashtags to gain new followers (e.g. #flowers, #mothersday #valentinesday).
- "Like" and comment on your followers pictures.

Example: Lilac Flower Boutique (<http://instagram.com/lilacflowerboutique>) has its designers post their own arrangements from the shop's Instagram handle.



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Tumblr

Tumblr is a very visual medium where you can post photos, videos, audio files and text with the click of a button. Florists can thrive here because their work is so visual and creative. It is an attractive social networking community to add to a comprehensive social media strategy. Tumblr is more popular among Millennials; 40% of users are between the ages of 18 and 24 while 30% of users are between the ages of 25 and 34. Photos are usually more popular than long pieces of text, because information moves quickly on the site. This does not mean that you should only have a photo blog. A good mix of photos, tutorials, interesting videos, and humor seems to work for most business Tumblrs. For more information on how to sign up for Tumblr, use this link: <http://www.tumblr.com/tips>.

Tips: Common Practices

- Spark conversations; use the Tumblr question post to ask about favorite flowers, or if anyone has ever seen a specific exotic species, or what tutorials they'd like to see, without actually trying to sell anything from your business.
- Actively post about your new designs, specials, coupons and other updates that offer value to your followers.

Example: A wide variety of flower boutiques use Tumblr to display the arrangements they have created, especially flowers they put together for major events like proms and weddings. You can also use Tumblr to promote in-store events. For example, Flower Girl NYC (<http://flowergirlnyc.tumblr.com/>) posted a picture that promoted a head wreath-making event that she was hosting for kids at her shop.



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Foursquare

Foursquare is a location-based social networking website, software for mobile devices, and also a game. Users would be able to "check-in" at your flower shop using text messaging or a device specific application. They are then awarded points and sometimes "badges." As a mobile social network, Foursquare is an urban exploration application that can serve as a way to lure in new customers while encouraging loyalty. For more information on how to sign up for Foursquare, use this link: <http://support.foursquare.com/home>.

Tips: Common Practices

- Be creative with Foursquare deals. While offering a percent off discount on a bill is now standard, you can make your flower shop stand out with a more creative Foursquare deal, such as offering a free flower when making an in-store purchase.
- Encourage satisfied customers to leave Foursquare tips. A small sign at the register or on the door to request a Foursquare tip can be a positive addition to your Foursquare presence.
- Highlight specials and promotions in the tips section.
- Set up a reward for every check-in.

CREATE COMPELLING CONTENT FOR YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

Content is the core of any social media strategy.

Voice

- **Your brand personality** – People have personalities and are interested to know more about your company if it has a personality, too. Do not talk at them, talk to them. What you post on your personal profiles is the same. It is a scrapbook of your brand's "life," not a snapshot. In addition, it is not a media channel solely for promotions, but a friend, too, so get to know your followers.
- **Authenticity** – In order to engage in honest conversation you must be authentic when you post on social media. Your messages should connect with your followers and add value to them. Brand stories need to be real. Audiences are much savvier now, and they do not want to be sold anything. They want to believe that they came to these decisions themselves, and if brands lie or deny who they are, audiences will see through it.
- **Consistency** – Use a voice that is consistent throughout your social media sites and is in a genuine and engaging tone of voice. Have a

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seamless presence across all social platforms with content and interaction. Your audience will get to know and trust you when you do this.

Content types

- **Original content** – When developing any social media content, you want to make sure that it is interesting, valuable and relevant to the audience.
- **Engagement** – Keep your audience engaged with a continuous stream of interesting and memorable content. Invite them to answer open-ended questions and participate in polls.
- **Shareability** – Make sure your content is “snackable,” so good that people feel compelled to share it. It cannot be too big and it must be easy to share. Sweepstakes, competitions, videos, and pictures help increase reach and follower engagement. When followers share your posts on their own social accounts, they market your product for you and help drive follower acquisition growth.
- **User-generated content** – Researchers have found that today’s consumer is less influenced by owned media, and more swayed by real people. Let your consumers do the talking on social media by inviting them to submit pictures of their bouquets and discuss their experiences at your flower shop.
- **Third-party content** – Positive mentions in social networks, blogs, forums and micro blogs drive increased sales and long-term customer value for small businesses. Compelling and relevant social content paired with influential third-party endorsements will significantly improve social network results. For example, when a blogger shares a video from your YouTube page, on his or her blog.
- **The power of pictures** – Standing out in followers’ newsfeeds has never been harder than it is today—but visuals have proven to have an engagement that is 120% higher than any other on Facebook. Boring product shots do not provide value to you or your followers. Pictures must be relevant to your audience. For example, post pictures of unique flower arrangements to further promote your store’s offerings.

Content planning

- **Content themes** – Synthesizing messages and content into a small set of stories or story themes that can be expressed many ways over time. You want to tell consistent stories more than simply stay “on message” and focus on “ownable” topics that support the business.
- **Content calendars** – Use tools such as Google Docs and Google Calendars to create a calendar of your posts. You can reschedule posting dates by easy drag-and-drop. Using Google Docs allows you to create different views of your calendar to get a deeper understanding of what you

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are posting, when and why. Content calendars are great because you can have posts around major holidays prepared and in the calendar, at least a month in advance. You can also integrate occasional Facebook posts and tweets into content calendars that highlight specific Pinterest boards (e.g. Easter or wedding flowers).

BUILD A HEALTHY FAN BASE

Point of purchase

Once you have set up pages on different social media channels, make sure your customers know about them.

- Remind customers to “Like” your page on Facebook and to “Follow” you on Twitter with signs in your store.
- Have links to your pages printed on your business cards and on receipts. You can also include these links in your signature on business emails.
- Distribute handouts and other print collateral to promote your channel. For example, printing the URLs of your social sites on the boxes and wrappers of your flower arrangements.
- Provide incentives. For example, only inform people about deals on your social media platforms instead of in the store, encouraging current and potential customers to visit your pages.

Website

Integrate your online social presences in your website by including links to your social media pages. The addition of these links will help make your communication strategy more cohesive and useful. In addition, you could integrate social feeds on your website so your customers can see in real time what you post on Facebook or tweet on Twitter. This brings attention to these channels and may encourage them to follow you.

WOM

Creative messaging on social media encourages Word of Mouth marketing. 84% of peers and colleagues are influenced to make a purchase by WOM. Florists must stimulate WOM throughout the sales and marketing process and into the customer relation management cycle by offering them something new to talk about and reminding them to spread the word. Hosting a contest or handing out coupons from your shop are great ways to produce WOM marketing.

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Paid media

- **Facebook standard ads** – Ads on Facebook drive a select target audience back to your page to increase the likelihood that users will elect to 'like' the page. For more information, see <https://www.facebook.com/advertising>.
- **Facebook promoted posts** – Promoted posts on Facebook are used to drive higher engagement with your messaging. This tactic can be used to promote your posts to select target audiences, friends of fans, and current fans. Promoted posts tend to amplify engagement of specific posts but do not necessarily translate into 'likes' for the page, which can be best achieved by Facebook Standard Ads. For more information, see <http://www.facebook.com/help/promote>.
- **Twitter promoted accounts** – Promoted accounts on Twitter can help grow your follower base by placing your Twitter handle in the target audience's "Who to follow" recommendations. For more information, see <https://business.twitter.com/products/promoted-accounts-self-service>.
- **Twitter promoted tweets** – Promoted tweets deliver a specific tweet or a series of tweets to current followers or to a specific audience outside of the follower base. The tweet shows up in the target audience's "tweets" feed to help increase visibility and engagement. For more information, see <https://support.twitter.com/articles/215585>.

AVAILABLE SAF RESOURCES

Bolster Your Efforts Using SAF's Social Media Tools

SAF has robust social media profiles geared toward the public that are great resources for you to use. Follow SAF on Facebook and Twitter, and feel free to share our posts and content with your customers. Interacting with SAF's social media channels is an easy way to advertise your business, establish yourself as a floral expert and become a frequent part of your customer's life. This will encourage your audience to think about incorporating flowers more often into their lives, and to come to you to do it! Use SAF resources to engage your customers:

- AboutFlowersBlog.com features conversational-style posts to inspire flower power and promote the expertise of local florists. Comment on posts, identify yourself as a florist and include a link to your website. You also can use the content or ideas for your own blog or e-newsletter, just include a link back to aboutflowersblog.com.
- "Like" Facebook.com/AboutFlowers and comment and share posts. Your followers will see your engagement with us, demonstrating your professionalism and expertise.

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- Follow [Twitter.com/FlowerFactor](https://twitter.com/FlowerFactor). Retweeting and replying to @FlowerFactor is an easy way to be part of a national conversation, establish yourself as an expert and drive traffic to your website and shop.
- Help educate your audience by embedding videos from [YouTube.com/SAFAboutFlowers](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvXj1w1w1w1w1w1w1w1w1w1) on your website, Facebook and Twitter. Choose from more than a dozen video clips touting flowers in entertaining, decorating and enhancing relationships.
- Share floral photography from [Flickr.com/FlowerFactor](https://www.flickr.com/photos/flowerfactor/) and [Pinterest.com/AboutFlowers](https://www.pinterest.com/aboutflowers/). The Flickr gallery includes SAF's professional photos as well as pictures from member florists, and the Pinterest images link to SAF's consumer websites with information about the emotional benefits of flowers.
- [Aboutflowers.com](http://aboutflowers.com) has great research information on the benefits of flowers and a wealth of content for your use.

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