

## **Not Quite Ready? No Problem**

*A young California woman dips her toes into the family business.*

Jacqueline Ow, 24, grew up helping around J. Miller Flowers and Gifts in Oakland, California — her grandmother started the business and, today, her aunt and mother own it. That family-friendly backstory means Jacqueline has a lot in common with other floral industry members.

Here's something that sets her apart: After college, Jacqueline headed for Wall Street.

Jacqueline worked happily for corporate America for several years before her firm shut down, in the summer of 2016. At loose ends, Jacqueline returned — happily — to her family's business and, rather than wallowing in pity, she got to work.

“My mom and my aunt are both so talented, but I immediately saw ways to modernize things,” Jacqueline said. She turned her attention both to processes (getting the shop more active on Facebook and Instagram) and products (including a high-end candle line that was popular with her sorority sisters in college).

“I was trying to help bring in a different perspective,” she explained. “A little younger.”

Jacqueline also took the lead on organizing events that drew young professionals to the shop, including a Junior League of San Francisco hands-on workshop that attracted 45 women — all of them in their 20s and 30s with disposable income to spend on flowers (and major life events, including weddings and anniversaries on the horizon).

Valerie Ow, Jacqueline's mother, said that her daughter's ability to tap into the millennial set has been a huge asset.

“I see Jacqueline's biggest strength as connecting with her generation, the millennials, in terms of style, varieties of flowers and new items to carry in store.”

While she was working on the shop, Jacqueline also attended SAF Maui 2016, the Society of American Florists' annual convention, where she networked and attended educational sessions, and helped the business with a number of community-minded events, including SAF's Petal It Forward.

Still, when a tech company offered Jacqueline a job last fall, she couldn't turn it down. She's since started working full-time for that company but remains a close consultant to her family particularly on merchandise, an area where she has a passion and a solid instinct — those lux candles have turned out to be a bestseller and a relatively easy add-on sale, giving the business a bump in sales. She still helps around the holidays and has no plans to sever her professional ties completely.

“The flower shop has been a guiding light for me and very influential,” Jacqueline said. “I have learned how to be a smart business woman, keep clients delighted, and cultivate

a culture where employees feel like family.”

For her part, Valerie said she’s delighted by the current set-up.

“I love the idea that she is outside of the family business getting experience in finance and business,” she said. “It allows her to meet many people in a professional setting and learn what it takes to run a company and the dedication necessary each and every day.”