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floral agement THE FLORAL BUSINESS AUTHORIT DECEMBER 2015 | VOLUME 32 | NUMBER 10



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MATCH MADE IN (PR) HEAVEN

A Chicago-based retailer and wholesaler hook-up nets big-league publicity for the industry — and a PR playbook enterprising marketers can steal.

#DELIGHTED

SAF's feel-good Petal It Forward campaign inspired industry members to launch dozens of smaller events around the country — to the delight of reporters and consumers.

FENDING OFF HOLIDAY GRINCHES

Don't let too-early markdowns and high labor costs eat into holiday profits.

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Viewpoint BY HAHNS O

floral management

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DECEMBER 2015 | VOLUME 32 | NUMBER 10

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WE WELCOME YOUR FEEDBACK ON THE MAGAZINE. PLEASE SEND YOUR OPINIONS AND SUGGESTIONS TO: FMEDITOR@SAFNOW.ORG.

PETALING SMILES

> A simple smile. Living day to day and moment to moment in New York City, I often find myself scanning the sea of unfamiliar faces for a simple smile. A smile from a random stranger, in particular, although momentary and fleeting, has the magic of conveying the sense that all is good in the world, despite the worries that weigh us down. A smile is a gift of goodwill. It is a random act of kindness that asks for nothing in return and resonates powerfully beyond its initial moments.

It seems a bit odd to me that with all the information available to us on the numerous and profound benefits of smiling, we still find it difficult or tedious to break out of our comfort zones. For as mindful as we are, or try to be, about eating right and staying mentally and emotionally healthy, it's ironic and sometimes a bit sad that we overlook the simple and effective act of smiling. Smiles are free, unlimited in supply and effortless to pass on — and yet they remain elusive.

And so I woke up full of anticipation on October 7, the day of SAF's Petal It Forward campaign here in NYC. As a volunteer on the "street team," my day would be full of opportunities to offer people a reason to smile. I would be able to casually, confidently and randomly approach anyone on the street to offer a smile and a bouquet of flowers to brighten his or her day. Even better, every recipient could also become a participant and go on his or her way equipped with an extra bouquet and the happy assignment of passing it on. It would be an epic day of contagious smiles flowing throughout the city.

I observed the whole gamut of reactions from people on that day. Some people were so engaged in their own thoughts and routines that they would not even look up to notice a gift coming their way. Then there were others who were on the verge of tears, grateful to exchange a moment of encouragement and kindness with a stranger.

One particular moment stayed with me long after the campaign had passed. A man was sitting on the steps at the entrance to a park, and I approached him with a smile and two bouquets. He looked at me skeptically and at first

refused the flowers, saying that he had no place to keep them. And so I looked around the area and pointed to several people at the park who



could use some cheering up. I explained that the campaign was an effort to give back in appreciation to the community and to encourage random acts of kindness. I asked him if he would mind helping me to brighten someone else's day by taking the bouquets and gifting them to anyone he felt needed a reason to smile. Immediately, his eyes lit up and his face broke into a huge, gorgeous smile. Whereas the thought of receiving flowers for himself had not interested him, he was absolutely thrilled to get involved in actively spreading positivity with a gift and a smile.

The experience rekindled my appreciation for two things.

One is that at the core, we all share the desire to be happy and influence happiness in others. In an evolving society, I feel it is nature's course that we gravitate more and more toward healthier social interactions involving plenty of beaming smiles, even amongst strangers. A random smile from a stranger should not feel strange at all.

The other is how lucky I am to work in an industry where, whether consciously or not, we are a hub for generating smiles. A bouquet of flowers may beautify a space, but the smiles that follow it beautify our very existence. It's a thought to smile about — and these days, couldn't we all use a reason to smile more?

Hahns O works at Starbright Floral Design in New York City. He was part of the team of volunteers who gathered in Times Square to pass out flowers (smiles) for SAF's Petal It Forward Campaign, detailed in the articles on p. 20 and 32. Hans@starbrightnyc.com

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PERSONNEL AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AS WELL AS FRESH PRODUCT, SUPPLY AND ECONOMIC TRENDS.

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What Inspires Us

> You might say SAF just one-upped Coca-Cola in the PR stunt category. The beverage giant's much talked-about invisible vending machine made the "best PR stunt" lists in 2014, when a seemingly innocuous urban wall turned into a giant talking vending machine (thanks to a video projection) whenever a couple would pass it by. Much to the surprise and delight of the couples, it would ask their names and then produce personalized cans of Coca-Cola.

Coca-Cola executive David Campbell said he wanted to inspire people to "create and share happy moments every day." (That's code for: think, drink and talk about Coca-Cola.) Indeed, the couples laughed, hugged and told their friends about it. And the videos have gotten more than 300,000 views on YouTube.

But when it comes to inspiring people to create and share happy moments, SAF's Petal It Forward campaign (p. 20 and 32), which took place on October 7 in New York City and in dozens of markets

> around the country, out-does Coca-Cola's stunt on every level. Sharing is at the heart of the campaign more than a mere giveaway, Petal It Forward had floral industry members sharing flowers with

unsuspecting individuals, who were asked to do the same. Said sharing had an undeniably joyful effect, bringing smiles to individuals who clearly needed it (patients in a cancer ward) and tears of happiness to random pedestrians who, for less obvious reasons, needed it too (read about those stories, on p. 32).

SAF Vice President of Marketing Jenni Sparks, who introduced the campaign to the industry in September, during SAF Amelia Island 2015, will tell you that a PR campaign is only as good as its reach. We're confident SAF's Petal It Forward campaign did pretty well in that regard, too. In addition to the irresistible premise behind the event — the "pay it forward" flower giving — Rutgers University research proving flowers make people happy gave some teeth to the psychological impact of the gesture.

That combination factored into the impressive pickup of the event in both the traditional and social media. The hosts of the morning television show "Fox & Friends" talked about the event live on the morning of SAF's Petal It Forward event in New York City (29 million viewers), and that segment was picked up by MSN.com, Yahoo! (including Canada and Taiwan). Social media pickup was equally as impressive, with nearly a half million social media impressions. Total impressions for the campaign to date: 131,215,551.



Sparks is quick to add that, beyond the reach of the message, it's the quality of those messages that makes this effort extraordinary: "Being able to visually show genuine consumer reaction to flowers that played out the research that flowers make you happy is invaluable. The messages we heard from the media and consumers gives our message credibility beyond any advertisement we could run." (Search #petalitforward on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to see those messages.)

One byproduct of the effort that Sparks may not have anticipated: The floral industry pride the campaign has created in many of its employees, such as Hahs O and Christina Colemen (pictured), of Starbright Floral Design in NYC. Hahns shares the impact the event had on him, personally, and how he regards his new profession, in this month's Viewpoint, p. 2. Enthusiastic and passionate employees? Now that's a reaction the floral industry can take to the bank.

Kate Penn kpenn@safnow.org

More Online Additional Resources on www.safnow.org





PETALING PHOTOS

SAF's Petal It Forward event in New York City was a sight to behold. Fortunately, we had a photographer on hand to capture lots of those happy, glowing flower exchanges and fantastic video coverage for florists to share in social media. Safnow.org/moreonline.



GET IN PRIME SHAPE

This month's cover story arms you with some key strategies for drumming up publicity for your shop. Once the holidays are behind you, check out SAF's extensive guidance for getting a campaign started, just in time for a Valentine's Day media blitz. safnow.org/pr-bootcamp



CARNATIONS GALORE

Dianthus breeders are a prolific bunch, and Floral Management met several — along with some of their newest specimens - while at Proflora. Check out some snapshots of gorgeous carnations that could be coming to the U.S. soon. safnow.org/moreonline



MYRA MADE THE **VIDEO STAR**

Tim Galea's willingness to work with the government on its pilot myRA program (Industry News, p. 38) drew the attention of the Treasury Department, which sent a crew to his shop and made him the subject of a video promoting the program. safnow.org/moreonline

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6



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RAVE REVIEWS

More comments about SAF Amelia Island 2015.

> I attend a lot of educational industry programs throughout the year. By far, the SAF convention is the most outstanding. It's so valuable that I have started a program in my shop that will include financial incentives for key employees to attend next year in Maui. Dirk Lorenz, Fremont Flowers, Fremont, California

> There is no other event with the potential for networking and interacting with different participants from the whole chain of the industry.

Joaquin de la Torre, Ball SB Central and South America

> SAF Amelia Island 2015 helped rejuvenate and motivate me! Just the refresh that I needed!

Zoe Gallina, Botanica International Tampa, Florida

> SAF is the only place where I can connect with more then one wholesaler and grower at a time. If you have questions on how to be a better florist, SAF is where you need to be.

Jessica Consentino's Florist Auburn, New York

> You can't beat the networking opportunities provided by SAF! It's obvious the amount of time and effort they put into a great convention.

Traci Dooley, Hortica Insurance, Co. Edwardsville, Illinois

> As a first time attendee ...my goal was to learn, understand the industry better and come out with great new connections — all of my goals were met! I look forward to continuing relationships I cultivated at SAF and becoming a member of such a great group!

Laura Mazzola, Quick Candles & Quick Décor, Piedmont, South Carolina

> There were so many takeaways that I can implement right away in my shop. If you are in the floral industry, this is a "can't miss" event!

Maris Angolia, AAF, Karin's Florist, Vienna, Virginia 👭

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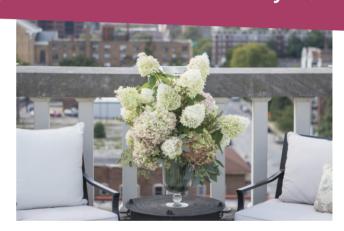
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The American Floral Endowment (AFE) is an independent nonprofit organization that funds research, scholarships and internships in floriculture and environmental horticulture for the benefit of growers, wholesalers, retailers, allied industry organizations and the general public.



MORE DETAILS AT ENDOWMENT.ORG/BIZ

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SAF in Action

WHAT HAVE WE DONE FOR YOU LATELY? SAF'S TOP 10 FOR 2015

1. PETAL IT FORWARD — 131 MILLION IMPRESSIONS



FRIENDS OF FLOWERS SAF netted extensive coverage for the Petal It Forward campaign when it delivered bouquets to the hosts of "FOX & Friends" on Oct. 7.

> SAF's Petal It Forward national public relations campaign prompted more than 131 million positive impressions about flowers in less than two weeks. "The campaign's goal was to generate traditional and social media coverage highlighting the impact flowers have on our work productivity and emotional state," said Jennifer Sparks, SAF's vice president of marketing. Read more about the campaign on p. 20 and 32.



VIRAL SMILE This Petal It Forward recipient's post to SAF's Aboutflowers Facebook wall went viral, reaching more than 100,000 Facebook users.

2. SAFNOW.ORG GOES MOBILE

SAF's new mobile-responsive website debuted in October. "As the number of mobile users continues to grow, SAF needs to be ready," said SAF Chief Information Officer Renato Sogueco. About a third of the website's visitors are already accessing the site via a mobile device.

Drawing on member feedback to reorganize content, the site now features news and business-building tips high on the home page. It's also easier to see the full scope of SAF member benefits.



LOOKIN' GOOD Like all websites, the new safnow.org will continue to evolve. Send comments and suggestions to kpenn@safnow.org.

3. ACTIONABLE LEARNING AT FOUR LIVE EVENTS

Industry members from 45 states and four foreign countries took advantage of the education sessions at SAF's live events this year.

"We reviewed [our notes] on the drive home, made up lists Sunday, presented [ideas] to our staff and started implementing on Monday," said Ed Hampton of Oviedo Florist in Oviedo, Florida, after SAF Amelia Island 2015. "We estimate the ideas (we took home) will easily raise two to three times the cost of convention in increased revenue."



SMART START Nearly 450 people, including a record-breaking 104 first-time participants, attended SAF's 131st Annual Convention at Amelia Island Florida in September SAF chairman Shirley Lyons AAF, PFCI (second from left), gave a warm welcome to these newcomers (from left): Cathy Clark of Clark's House of Flowers in Staten Island, New York; (need id); and Tony Baradhi of Flower Station in Somerset, New Jersey.

Cathy Seeliger, of Roses and Rice in East Quogue, New York, got her money's worth after SAF Retail Growth Solutions. She headed home focused on collecting cell phone numbers after retail expert Jim Dion explained the impact of mobile marketing. "All this time, I thought I was doing so well getting tons of email addresses," Seeliger reflected.

Keith Hill remembered "why SAF membership is such a great thing" during the SAF 1-Day Profit Blast. After attending the January program in Seattle, Hill, the owner of Beaverton Florists in Beaverton, Oregon, said, "This program should be held more often and in more places." SAF took Hill's advice and scheduled a Profit Blast for Nov. 14 in Des Moines, Iowa, and Feb. 27 in Austin, Texas.

4. SUPPLIER EXPO EXPANDS CONVENTION NETWORKING



WORD SAF convention attendees who found a "secret word" at Supplier Expo booths could enter a drawing for a free registration to SAF Maui 2016.

This year, the packed SAF convention schedule included a new Supplier Expo — two hours on Thursday afternoon where conventiongoers could network, chat with suppliers and see what's out there in the marketplace.

"Our members had been asking us for something like this," said SAF CEO Peter Moran. "We were pleased to be able to offer it at SAF Amelia Island 2015."

5. ACTION PUT "STARS" **BEFORE CONGRESS**

Clarifying "seasonal worker" definitions in the Affordable Care Act was one of the central issues raised during Congressional Action Days 2015 as 90 growers, wholesalers, retailers and

SAF in Action

suppliers made their rounds on Capitol Hill. Ongoing pressure from a multi-industry coalition, led by SAF, helped put versions of the STARS Act before the House and Senate. Getting that legislation passed is likely to top the agenda at the next Congressional Action Days, March 14-15, 2016.



MOMENTUM The success of SAF lobbying efforts prompted Cheryl Denham (shown in a meeting on Capitol Hill) of Arizona Family Florist in Phoenix to push for more CAD participation in 2016. "Can you imagine the impact we could make on Capitol Hill?" said Denham, who was one of 18 first-timers at CAD this year.

6. SWEET DEAL ON WHEELS

Time to replace your ride? You can save some serious dough with this SAF member benefit — a \$500 cash allowance on the lease or purchase of most Chrysler, Dodge, FIAT, Jeep or Ram models. The vehicle discount, offered by FCA US LLC, is "stackable" - meaning you can combine it with most local and national retail incentives. There's also an "On the Job" incentive for SAF members and member employees.

Visit the website for details: safnow.org/member-benefits/ business-discounts/#FCA



CASH IN SAF members have been taking advantage of the new vehicle discount program.

7. NEW LOCAL MARKETING KITS

SAF's newest marketing kit — sent free to all members — included two gorgeous posters promoting the power of flowers to impact emotions and the role of centerpieces at celebrations of all sizes. Members also received tips for creating coordinated campaigns with exclusive matching graphics they could download free.



PERFECT TOUCH

One of two posters included in SAE's local marketing kit this vear. Members can purchase matching postcards and statement stuffers at deep discounts.

8. SAF FIRES BACK AT FLOWER BASHERS

A decrease in incidences of negative advertising that began in 2013 continued this year, said SAF Director of Marketing and Communications Jenny Scala. SAF responded to just 16 Valentine's Day instances and 10 around Mother's Day. Nonetheless, vigilance is critical. SAF action caused a change of heart by several Valentine's Day flower bashers. Moran also sent a strong response to The Washington Post about "blatant exaggerations and misinformation" in a pre-Mother's Day essay about flowers.



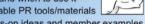
ON GUARD Thanks in part to eagleeyed members, SAF's vigilance is helping to reduce the number of negative ads.

9. FAST, FREE ONLINE LEARNING

SAF's webinars and Web blasts put practical training at members' fingertips with programs such as "PR Boot Camp — Capture Media Attention for Valentine's Day & Beyond," the "Mobile Madness" series, "Five Questions to Ask Your Team the Week After Mother's Day," "The Power of Pricing" and "Is Your Workplace Drug Free?"

Today's Goal Intensive session focusing on key areas:

Value of PR: Why do it? How and when to use it Available PR tools/materials



- Hands-on ideas and member examples Be a media resource
- Contacting the media Interview do's and don't's

FREE Watch your email for announcements about upcoming online programs from SAF. They're free for members.

10. 50 YEARS OF PFCI

Professional Floral Communicators - International (PFCI) gathered a starstudded panel to celebrate its 50th anniversary in July. "Rise & Shine: 50 Years of Talking," featured some of PFCI's top presenters. "We asked our best and brightest the mentors who inspired us to grow, as well as the new voices of today — to share their favorite tips for a successful presentation," said PFCI Chair Lisa Weddel, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, of L. Weddel Design in Highlands Ranch, Colorado. \$\square\$



CELEBRATION PFCI speakers marked the first 50 years with top tips and a toast at the AIFD National Symposium in Denver.

SAF DUES ANNOUNCEMENT

The SAF Board of Directors approved a 3 percent increase in dues for 2016 so SAF can continue to provide the quality content and practical products and services members value and expect. Dues are not tax-deductible as a charitable contribution but may be reported as an ordinary and necessary business expense (except 16 percent, since it constitutes SAF's direct expense for lobbying activities). Questions? Contact Brian Walrath, (800) 336-4743, ext. 231 or info@safnow.org.

The magazine of the Society of American Florists (SAF)

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Hands On

TIPS. TRENDS AND TACTICS FOR THE SAVVY RETAILER

FIRST HAND ACCOUNT

D.C. SHOP CONNECTS WITH REALITY TV FOR GLAMOUR, POSITIVE PR



PARTY TIME hundreds of 20-somethings turned up for a glam cocktail party hosted by "Bachelor in Paradise" cast member Ashley Iaconetti. Palace Florists donated 200 roses for the event — and became part of the buzz on social media.

> Like just about every flower shop in the country, Palace Florists, in Washington, D.C., gets more than its share of reguests for donations and charitable contributions — particularly around Christmas. But last fall, they got an offer they couldn't refuse, when a former reality TV star asked them to be part of her high-profile philanthropic efforts.

In October, former "Bachelor in Paradise" cast member and Northern Virginia native Ashley Iaconetti reached out to Beth and Lee Herman about a cocktail party at Velocity Five, a hip venue in Centerville, Virginia. The event featured a silent auction of cast members' personal belongings, as well as a special "Bachelorinspired" rose ceremony. (On both the long-running "Bachelor" and the spin-off "Bachelor in Paradise," the bachelor hands out coveted roses to the women who make the cut that episode.)

In addition to laconetti, a number of other popular cast members were set to be in attendance, making the party a potential hit on social media among key demographic of millennials, said Beth Herman. In fact, throughout the night laconetti and her cast members took pictures and posted them across platforms, tagging Palace Florists in several shots. "They were posting and tweeting," Beth said. "It was a lot of fun and a sold-out crowd," meaning Palace Florists got to be part of a hot party among hundreds of affluent 20-somethings — in other words, potential wedding clients in the not-too-distant future.

More than that, however, the Hermans, who eventually donated 200 roses for the rose ceremony, said they were attracted to the philanthropic angle: The party raised about \$20,000 for two local charities, the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's National Capital Area chapter and the INOVA Fairfax Hospital Child Life Services.

"The fact that it was a national celebrity attracted us to the event," Lee said. "But we always try to support local charities and causes that mean something to us or to our employees. So that was a big factor, too."

In fact, the shop maintains a year-round campaign, Petals for a Cause, to help raise awareness about neurofibromatosis, an umbrella term for three genetic disorders. A portion of sales for select bouquets benefits NF Midatlantic Inc., a nonprofit involved in research for the disorders. That's another cause close to the Hermans' heart, Lee said.

For charitable contributions, "we set a budget every year and we stick to that," Lee said. "There are some causes that we always give to, and we factor those in first. With the rest, we can support other events, like the cocktail party. But we try to use those factors to decide who to support: Is it local? Does the cause mean something to us?"

Read about one florist who came up with a streamlined application form for donation requests, at safnow.org/moreonline. \$\square\$

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floral **SAF** management

SOCIAL MEDIA LIFT THE CURTAIN



TESTIMONIAL. When Pugh's Flowers highlights its team members on social media, the shop includes a quote and a nice photo. Wedding coordinator Laura Carter was the subject of one such post this fall.

> To promote its annual line of 2015 holiday Keepsake ornaments, Hallmark launched a microsite that highlights the artists behind each of the 400 designs. The move is in line with a major trend among American consumers: the desire to buy products that have a story behind them, and things created by real people, rather than machines.

A retail flower shop is filled with precisely these types of stories, and that's part of the reason Pugh's Flowers launched a series of Facebook posts introducing team members. Doing so helps set the Memphis, Tennessee store apart from the competition — reminding people that the shop is a local brick and mortar with real people behind its designs.

Each post includes a photo of the team member, a brief explanation of his or her role in the business and a quote. The series also helps boost morale: Employees love getting the spotlight and love on the shop's Facebook page.

BENCHMARK

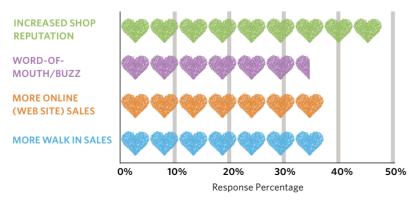
VALENTINE'S DAY 2016: SUNDAY SLOWDOWN?

> Valentine's Day falls on a Sunday this year, followed by a holiday Monday, President's Day. Traditionally, that combination poses a big challenge to florists, who have to compete with weekend getaways while losing out on the "wow" factor of an office delivery. The last time the holiday fell on a Sunday, in 2010, about 59 percent of respondents to an SAF holiday survey reported a drop in sales.

One strategy many florists use to avoid the Sunday drop? Promote early orders and early deliveries. That seems to have been a strategy used by many florists who experienced a sales increase in 2010: About 28 percent said 10 percent or fewer of their Valentine's Day orders were delivered on Sunday.

Secrets to Sunday Valentine's Sales?

Top four growth factors cited by the 21 percent of florists whose sales increased for Valentine's Day 2010, the last time it fell on a Sunday.



Source: SAF's Valentines Day 2010 Survey; 630 respondents. Response rate: 16 percent.

LIFE AT WORK **EDUCATION FOR EVERYONE**



> Looking for ways to keep employees happy and productive through the holiday season? One key motivator won't cost you a dime, says Glenna Hecht of Humanistic Consulting and a speaker at SAF Amelia Island 2015. "A great way to keep employees engaged is to offer opportunities for them to learn something new," she said.

Too often, owners and managers pick up new tips or trends — at events or in publications — and fail to pass on the information (or provide space and time to absorb the info). The desire to learn something new is especially true of younger generations, but everyone on your staff can benefit from ongoing education. Some ideas to try:

Be consistent. "Set aside time every month to introduce an idea" or technique, or to simply encourage sharing among employees, Hecht suggests. That way, such exchanges become part of the routine for everyone. Keep an ongoing file of ideas. Each month, pick one idea and expand on it.

Be open. Encourage your employees to bring in their own ideas. Empower them to brainstorm solutions to common problems around the shop. Doing so will boost morale, and it may help you identify new roles for existing team members. (Who knew Johnny knew so much about Instagram?)

Be encouraging. If you can afford to bring staff members to industry conferences or training sessions, bring them. As a pair, you'll cover more ground and get more out of your investment. Consider setting up a small area for staff members to peruse articles (or YouTube design videos). Make it clear that staying updated is part of the job.

Find out about upcoming SAF free webinars at www.safnow.org/webinars.

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On My To-Do List



JANUARY 2016 Fruitter, Facebook posts Calls to b-days, anniversaries Change website products to reflect buying trends Attend networking event



I RECOMMEND: ROCKING OUT

Congres-

sional Action Days http://ow.ly/UQQXU

Joe Barnes, Manager, New Business Development, Kennicott Brothers Company, Chicago (featured in this month's cover story)



Outside of work I'm a rock concert fanatic. The bands I like most including Airbourne, Danko Jones, Volbeat and the now-defunct Pride Tiger — don't have synth, auto-tune and electro-nonsense, just guitar riffs and gnarly vocals. Loud guitars and amps turned up to 11 is therapeutic for me. I wouldn't last five minutes at a concert where the headliner is a guy scratching records and wearing headphones. I'd rather sit in the parking lot and listen to Zeppelin on the radio. The best

concert I ever went to was around 2001: Metallica at the Aragon, a small venue in Chicago. They only played rare tracks and B-sides, no hits, so it was a special night. It was the ultimate set list for a fan who had already seen them a lot in concert, and I was about 10 feet from the stage. Last summer I was inside Wrigley Field, watching my favorite band, AC/DC. My wife, Allison, and 13-year-old daughter, Natalie, don't share my passion for the band, but my 5-year-old daughter, Samantha, may yet carry the torch.

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"We owe it to our future generations to invest the time to personally address the issues that will affect them long term."

Cheryl Denham, Arizona Family Florist





MARCH 14-15, 2016 WASHINGTON, D.C.

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SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FLORISTS

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Dear Tim...

HELP ME PUT POINSETTIAS ON A PEDASTAL

Customers complain to my staff about poinsettia prices, claiming that they can get "the same plant for a lot less at the big box stores." What's the best way to deal with this? BRIDGETTE MILLS ARNOLD | OWNER | POSEY PEDDLER | JONESBORO, ARKANSAS

Florists just "jack up" the prices on the same plants, right? Sadly, many customers think this way. Even sadder: The typical florist's response is to squirm and apologize. But not this year!

Here are some plans to help change customer perception and empower your staff to educate customers instead of kowtowing to them.

Dress for Success

Too many florists unload the paperwrapped poinsettias from the wholesaler and place them on the floor — maybe, just maybe in a speed cover. If a customer comes to your store, then he or she expects something more interesting than what you were selling back in 1995.

I have seen successful florists present their plants in stylish baskets and add branches (glittering or otherwise), pinecones on picks and more. And yes, they charge considerably more than a customer would ever pay at a big box store. What's the hook? Simple: Those smart florists are offering customers a unique gift choice that's only available at a flower shop, and they are not afraid to charge for their creativity and labor. Customers will spend more if you just let them! If they wanted a plain poinsettia, they would have gone to a grocery store — make them happy about choosing to shop at your store!

Dare to Be Different

Beyond dressing up your plants, don't be afraid to try the newer, more unusual varieties. I've seen them in wholesale houses that I've visited and have asked why I don't see more of them in the retail shops. The gist of what I've been told: Florists fear that customers won't pay a

premium price, and they'll get stuck trying to sell "Valentine bushes." What kind of business would knowingly not offer its customers more options, choices and reasons to shop at its store? Call your wholesaler today and ask what new, exciting and different poinsettia options are available to WOW your shoppers this holiday season.

Educate, Don't Apologize

Even with the razzle-dazzle elements added to your base poinsettias, some customers will still view them as the same plant being sold where they buy their paint and tools. Look at this as an opportunity to educate shoppers: "We have great new options this year, including our 'Holiday Splendor Poinsettia.' We add holly branches and pinecones to the plant and present it in handwoven basket." Remind them: "Our poinsettias, artfully decorated by our designers, really make a statement!" More ammunition for the price-shopper mentality: "Our poinsettias aren't just the plants you see everywhere, we add (mention embellishments) so they are truly a holiday gift!" 🥼



Tim Huckabee is the president of FloralStrategies, which provides sales, service and POS system training. Tim has spent the last 17

years traveling the globe and educating florists of all sizes to engage customers in bold new ways while learning how these successful shops operate on all levels. tim@floralstrategies.com

> Got a sales or service challenge? Tell Tim about it, and he'll tackle it in an upcoming column. Email tim@floral strategies.com, or call him, (800) 983-6184.





Fresh Choices TREND-SETTING TIPS FOR BUYING FRESH CUT FLOWERS AND GREENS

CARNATIONS: BACK IN STYLE

> "Carnations are cool again," said Philadelphia-based floral designer Kristine Kratt, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, during the 2016 Floral Trends Preview, which she presented at SAF Amelia Island 2015 with her husband and business partner, Bill Schaeffer, AAF, AIFD, PFCI. "I'm serious!" she added when the room of 400-plus floral industry professionals giggled. "Twenty-fiveyear-olds are too young to remember when society decided carnations were 'common,' so they're looking at them with fresh eyes. To them, carnations are like palazzo pants or bell-bottom jeans — 'new' and exciting!"

J Schwanke, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, couldn't be happier to see carnations rise in popularity. The host of Fun with Flowers and J on uBloom. com has a longstanding affection for them that is part nostalgic (four generations of his family have grown them and his father has worn one on his lapel nearly every day) and part reverence for their incredible longevity (14 to 21 days). He likes to arrange them in a pavé design (cut short and placed close together) with rows of different colors. It looks "yummy" — like Italian ices — and it lasts for ages because the compact design helps the blooms share water, he said.

Here's a sampling of the latest carnation varieties, guaranteed to make a millennial smile.

Katie Hendrick katiehendrick@gmail.com



'BABYLON' Esprit Miami



'EXTASIS' Esprit Miami



'HURRICANE' Esprit Miami



'HYPNOSIS' Esprit Miami



'MERLOTTO CRIMSON' Esprit Miami



'NOBBIO VIOLET' Esprit Miami



'PUTOMAYO' Esprit Miami



'UVALUX' Esprit Miami

floral



Fresh Choices











'NATHALIA' Flores Funza





'MOONAQUA' Florigene





'GIOIA' Serrezuela Flowers

Florigene

'LION KING' Jet Fresh Floral Distributors

Golden Flowers

'RED MAGIC' Golden Flowers



A Chicago-based retailer and wholesaler hook-up nets big-league publicity for the industry — and a playbook enterprising marketers can steal.

BY MARY WESTBROOK

The magazine of the Society of American Florists (SAF)



PACKAGED GOODS All of the 350 bouquets and 1,500 roses (wrapped in groups of three) handed out by Ashland Addison included tags specially created for Petal It Forward. Bridget Carlson ensured the language used on the promo materials complemented SAF's New York City giveaway.



GO AHEAD, MAKE MY DAY Katie Kennicott found no shortage of willing flower recipients near Wrigley field on what ended up being a major game day for the Cubs.

While sitting in a ballroom on Sept. 11 during SAF Amelia Island 2015, Bridget Carlson, AAF, had a lightbulb moment.

On the stage was Jennifer Sparks, vice president of marketing for the Society of American Florists, who had just given the crowd a sneak preview of SAF's soon-to-launch public relations campaign, Petal It Forward, aimed at capitalizing on popular payit-forward initiatives and designed to create and promote good feelings about flowers.

As Sparks described it, on the morning of Oct. 7, a team of SAF volunteers would take to Union Square and Times Square in New York City and hand out 4,000 bouguets of flowers to morning commuters and passersby — giving each person one bouquet to keep and one bouquet to hand off to someone else. The flowers would include tags branding the event, and recipients of the goodwill bouquets would be encouraged to share their experience on social media with a designated hashtag (#petalitforward). While SAF's efforts would focus on New York, Sparks encouraged audience members to consider participating from their hometowns, with giveaways of their own.

Sitting in the audience, Carlson could hardly believe the serendipity of the presentation. The element of surprise, the goodwill and the made-for social-media moments sounded a lot like what Carlson had been doing back at Ashland Addison Florist Company in Chicago. As director of marketing, PR, promotions and advertising, she'd spearheaded the shop's weekly Random of Acts of Kindness initiative, something the owners began 15 years earlier. The more Sparks told convention attendees about the new campaign and encouraged them to copy SAF's efforts back home, the more Carlson recognized the similarities between the two — and one stark, undeniable difference: Petal It Forward had a youthful glow, and Sparks couldn't help but convey that electricity to the crowd. Meanwhile, Random of Acts of Kindness had grown tired, and Carlson suspected, had run its course.

Carlson, who worked on public relations for FTD for four years before joining Ashland Addison about a decade ago, loved the branding and the idea of working off of SAF's larger effort. The question became how to do that, and how to do it well.

She didn't have to wonder long. As the presentation ended and SAF members spilled out of the room, Red Kennicott, AAF, of Kennicott Brothers Company in Chicago, appeared in the crowd, his sights set on Carlson. He made a beeline for her.

"We have to do this together, right?" he asked. For the second time that morning, Carlson thought, "Hey, that's my idea," and loved that great minds were thinking alike.

What followed that serendipitous moment was a wildly successful campaign that generated hundreds of shares, likes and comments — and a level of excitement and interest around Chicagoland that all the money in the world couldn't buy.

In the spirit of paying it forward, we've gathered the granular and bigpicture details of how they made that PR magic happen. Just in time for Valentine's Day planning, we have an outline of how Ashland Addison and Kennicott worked together, and tips on how you can use some of their best tactics.

PR NO: SPEND A LOT OF MONEY PR PRO: SHARE RESOURCES

After Carlson returned to Chicago, she connected with Joe Barnes, Kennicott's new business development manager. Each of them has about 20 years of PR and marketing experience, and there was one thing they knew for sure from the get-go: They weren't going to spend a fortune on the campaign.

Their biggest cost? Product. Sourcing flowers in a cost-effective way became the first item on their shared agenda.

Barnes asked Kennicott's buyer, Gary Gardiner, about reaching out to growers for help. Both The Sun Valley Floral Group, in Arcata, California, and The Queen's Flowers, out of Miami, offered to donate pre-made bouquets to the effort — 350 bouquets for Kennicott to hand out (with stickers that read, "Support Your Local Retail Florists!") and 350 for Ashland Addison to dispense. Barnes also gave another 700 bouquets to two other retail shops, City Scents Flowers & Gifts and Bunches, participating in Petal It Forward with their own giveaways.

When it comes to asking for a favor like this, history helps, Barnes said. Kennicott looks at growers as "partners," meaning they stick with each other and remain loyal to each other, and Gardiner "has spent years cultivating positive relationships with many of the industry's top growers," Barnes said. That made it easier to ask for a big favor — a point Carlson underscores.

In addition to the Kennicott donation, Ashland Addison purchased 1,500 roses from another vendor, wrapping them in groups of three.

"We were able to access product so quickly, and in such a cost-effective way, because of our strong relationships with Kennicott and our growers," said Carlson, who began working with Barnes and other suppliers just 10 days after the SAF convention presentation.

Beyond product, labor costs can skyrocket in a drawn-out, multistage, multi-location PR campaign. With its



LIVE TWEET After an interview with Red Kennicott, AAF, of Kennicott Brothers, and Jonas Zimmerman, a designer at Ashland Addison, reporter Joanie Lum tweeted several messages of support — to which Bridget Carlson and Joe Barnes quickly responded.



THREE STEPS TO A MEDIA OUTREACH PLAN

The Internet can be a distracting place with so many places to promote your business; however, if you try to be everywhere at once and reach every media outlet, the results will be disappointing, according to Jordani Sarreal, CEO of Zebra Social, a PR and marketing agency in Tacoma, Washington. He offered these tips for small business owners:

1. Lots of small potatoes > one big potato.

While getting your business or product featured in a national publication is a wonderful thing, don't pass up opportunities to focus on smaller niche blogs or press. The readers of these publications are smaller in number, but greater in their focused attention on the subject. It's also much easier to get into these smaller publications to build your brand name, so you can be featured in several places rather than one big spot for one month to a general readership.

2. You don't need to be everywhere at once.

When it comes to marketing your business on social media, do not try to be on every platform. Our general recommendation is to start with Facebook and Instagram. Maybe your business is a more in-the-moment service, or is constantly moving. If so, Twitter might be best. Whatever platform you choose, master it before moving on. If you're spread too thin across every platform, you will lose the ability to engage with your audience on each site, and in the end, be less effective than if you were to focus on a couple of social media platforms.

3. Know your customers.

Besides the typical customer profile or avatar, really get to know your customers. Find out what they're reading, what they're listening to, the TV shows they watch ... these are all important bits of information that can be used to create compelling social media content and accurate media relations efforts. If you know your customers tend to tune in every Sunday evening to watch "The Good Wife," watch it with them and live tweet, or create a Facebook post integrating the latest episode. Be your customers' buddy and share in these experiences with them. It may seem unrelated to your business, but don't forget that business is all about relationships. The more you understand your customers, the more they trust you, and their need to look elsewhere for a similar service or product is diminished.

- M.W.

floral & SAF management



STOP HERE Wrigleyville, the area surrounding the Cubs' stadium, became a central Petal It Forward giveaway point in Chicago.



MEET THE PR PROS

Kennicott Brothers Company, Chicago

- Number of players: More than a dozen team members participated in the giveaway. The entire Chicago fresh sales and production team — 15-20 people — processed and prepped 1,400 bouquets.
- **Favorite campaign moment:** A photographer from Getty Images ran after a Kennicott team, asking to take their photo.
- Results: Organic reach for Facebook posts that day spiked by over 2,000 percent.

Ashland Addison Florist Company,

- **Number of players:** 13 team members participated in the giveaway; all hands were on deck, including the design team and sales team, to prep 350 bouquets and 1,500 roses in the days leading up to the event.
- **Favorite campaign moment:** Fox affiliate reporter (and avid social media user) Joanie Lum tweeted about "flower power" after an early morning interview on Oct. 7.
- **Results:** Organic impressions on Facebook were 10 times higher than an average day.

one-day rollout, Petal It Forward spoke to Carlson's desire to keep the budget and stress low. It was a contained, onetime event that wouldn't require overtime or excessive staff prep.

Still, she admits, getting her shop's bouquets ready and tagged with Petal It Forward branding was "an all-handson-deck affair" in the days leading up to the giveaway.

"We had teams of Ashland Addison staff working hard at tagging and wrapping the bouquets the day before the event, as well as that morning," Carlson said. "Everyone was pitching in — our sales director, processing team, designers, owners - everyone."

At Kennicott, there was a similar flurry of activity, Barnes said. "Our entire Chicago fresh sales and production team (about 15 to 20 people) took time out of their day to process, sticker and tie Cubs ribbon onto the 1,400 bouquets," he explained.

Yet another reason Carlson liked Petal It Forward: The event fell on a weekday, in mid-fall, when things are relatively slow (slower, at least, than Mother's Day, Valentine's Day or a busy wedding weekend). The shop's sales director acted as a traffic manager, pulling staff away from Petal It Forward prep as needed to complete other tasks. Having that oversight was important, Carlson said.

"We had to stay ahead of everything," she explained. "It's not like we didn't have all of our usual orders that day."

The sharing-is-caring ethos extended to PR materials. SAF already had free Petal It Forward resources available to members. Carlson used some of those tools, including the layout for bouquet tags, and both she and Barnes logged time reading all of SAF's materials, to make sure their language was consistent as they began to pitch the event to the media and promote it on social media. (SAF provided a bevy of helpful talking points, including university research on the positive benefit of getting and receiving flowers.)





ÜBERMATTE" / JUST FOR FLOWERS" / PREMIUM METALS / MODERN METALS / COLORTOOL SPRAYS







and color tools that give artists OPTIONS and FLEXIBILITY to design with no limits.



> MATCH MADE IN (PR) HEAVEN



When a reporter contacted Joe Barnes and Bridget Carlson for a last-minute interview the morning of their Petal It Forward giveaways, both had to hustle to find an available spokesperson, but neither worried about how their team members would perform. That's because they have spent time thinking about what makes a good spokesperson and training people to be interviewed on camera.

Here are some of their tips on identifying and prepping people for interviews:

- **Ditch the hierarchy.** While Red Kennicott, AAF, the company president, makes an ideal spokesman, don't assume that the head honcho is the best talking head. The skills that make a person a top-notch head honcho aren't always the things that make a person look comfortable on camera. "It's not easy to be interviewed," Barnes said. "People think it will be exciting, but the lights come on and they just stammer. You have to find someone who isn't thrown." That takes practice — and time.
- Consider the story. Carlson often serves as the spokeswoman for Ashland Addison, particularly on stories about the local economy and its effect on area businesses (a popular topic for reporters). But when a story centers on design, she bows out. "I can't create those beautiful flower designs," she said with a laugh. Instead, she has two to three designers who she can call on to talk about design styles and trends.
- Pull your weight. "I never assume that the words 'Ashland Addison' will appear on screen," Carlson said. That's why every person who appears on camera must wear a logo. She also practices incorporating the shop name into responses: Rather than saying, "We have a large selection of gift items," Carlson and her team invariably say, "We at Ashland Addison have ..."
- M.W.



GOOD BUDS The Petal It Forward campaign involved encouraging recipients to share the flower love, not only with people who received flowers, but also on social media. Hash tags, including #petalitforward, #chicago, and #wrigleyville, helped Ashland Addison and Kennicott track and engage with people, even after they'd left giveaway sites.

PR NO. FXTFND AN INVITE PR PRO: GO FIND THE ACTION

Once Carlson and Barnes knew how much product they had to give away, the next step was to divide and conquer Chicago the day of the giveaway, Oct. 7.

Carlson had about 13 team members for the shop's giveaway and divvied them among four sites. (The team included two drivers; two to three staff members manned each site.) Each of the sites had to be within the shop's delivery area and in a high-traffic area, to take advantage of the evening rush hour — and the fact that SAF was doing its push in New York that morning. (Ashland Addison specifically launched its effort on Oct. 7 to feed off SAF's PR buzz. Other participating shops held events throughout the week. Read more about how your shop can still participate in the feel-good bonanza on p. 28.)

"We knew that SAF would make a really big impact on social media in New York," Carlson explained. Since New York is an hour head of Chicago, to piggyback on that event, she created scheduled posts on Facebook and Twitter, announcing where her teams would be.

"That helped us tap into the excitement already generated through the [Petal It Forward] hashtag," she explained. "Our goal was to reach the highest-impact area ... our customers, along with consumers we see as future customers, and people who would participate in the event and share it."

Planning posts is a must, according to Jordani Sarreal, CEO of Zebra Social, a PR and marketing agency in Tacoma, Washington. "It's important to get the buzz going early," he said. "Keep a calendar that gives you key actions to take daily. Your social media campaign shouldn't be executed on a whim."

The 12-member Kennicott team took a similar approach, concentrating on high-density areas, such as Chicago's Magnificent Mile shopping area, and high-profile venues, including in front of the local NBC affiliate's office. "The reporters looked out their windows, and





TARGET-RICH ENVIRONMENT Wrigleyville, the area surrounding the Chicago Cubs' stadium, proved to be prime stomping grounds for finding happy flower recipients. Thanks to a wild-card game where the Cubs had their first post-season victory since 2003, every major media outlet was on site.

there we were, giving away flowers," Barnes said. And soon enough, there were those reporters, giving away free publicity — or at least doing a segment on the campaign during the noon broadcast

Both companies also sent employees to Wrigleyville, the area surrounding the Chicago Cubs' stadium. Here, they happened into some good luck and good timing: A wild-card game scheduled for that evening turned out to be a major home game for the Cubs, their first postseason victory since 2003. Every major media outlet was on site, and just about every PR dream was coming true for Barnes and Carlson as they fielded questions from reporters and photographers.

"A photographer from the Chicago Tribune came up!" Carlson said. "I've been trying to get their attention for years. Suddenly, there he was, asking me for help."

Likewise, earlier in the day, Barnes had seen a photographer trailing one of his teams as they handed out bouquets on a busy street. "Turns out he was with

Getty Images," Barnes said of one of the country's largest photo-distribution services. (At press time, Barnes hadn't seen those photos turn up yet, but the act of being trailed by a photographer was exciting for staff.)

Barnes and Carlson agree that the outcome of the wild-card game was the stuff of PR dreams, but they insist that even if they don't have a high-stakes sports game in their midst, florists can pull from their deep knowledge of a local community to go where the action is, or might be. Map out your giveaway zone and plan your get-attention strategy. Ask yourself: Where do people gather and at what time? In urban areas, mass transit hubs can be an ideal spot during morning and evening commutes, and mealtimes are prime pitching-to-people places in all areas. What are the popular coffee shops and lunch spots? Any big local sports events (high school homecomings, college rivalries) coming up? Do restaurants and spas do impressive Valentine's Day events?

PR NO: SEND A PRESS RELEASE. WAIT. PR PRO: PESTER **POLITELY**

As Oct. 7 neared, Barnes and Carlson compared their media lists and started reaching out to contacts with press releases, media advisories and friendly calls. Over the past few years, the media landscape has changed so much that it's no longer enough to send a single email or release, though, cautioned Carlson.

"A huge part of PR and media outreach is just being sensitive to reporters' deadlines and showing appreciation for them," she said. "I'll call them and say, 'Hi, this is Bridget! I know that you're really busy but I'm super-excited about this event. Do you think you can fit us in?""

Like Carlson, Barnes likes a strategy of friendliness and flexibility. "Often, with a feature story, rather than a hard news story, a reporter will say, 'I'll let you know if we can work you in," Barnes said. "That means

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> MATCH MADE IN (PR) HEAVEN



FEEL GOOD EFFORT The Petal It Forward campaign centered on a simple idea: Give people two bouquets. One to keep. One to pass along.



PETAL IT FORWARD ... AGAIN?

Disappointed that you missed out on the chance to be part of Petal It Forward? Don't be, says SAF Vice President of Marketing Jennifer Sparks. You can still put together a similar event in your city, any time of year, and the materials and advice SAF have to offer are still available to members at safnow. org/petalitforward.

"Petal It Forward is flexible and adaptable," Sparks said. "Members can put whatever twist on the event that they want, but the key element should always be to give recipients the opportunity to 'petal it forward' — get one, give one. Otherwise, it's just a flower giveaway, which has less substance."

But Sparks cautions against doing it too many times in one market. "If you over-saturate the effort, you lose the randomness of it, or lose momentum," she said. And that's precisely why SAF, which is considering doing another Petal it Forward event in 2016, is not going to designate a specific, recurring date for the event. "The media are very wary of what they perceive as 'manufacturered' holidays," Sparks said. "It's the randomness of an event like this that makes it press-worthy."

— M.W.

they'll be coming last minute and you have to be willing and able to hop to it. I made dozens of follow-up phone calls at the eleventh hour. The key is to be persistent but not overbearing."

And don't expect reporters to get the gist of your story on their own. They're inundated with releases and often read many of them as "give me

"HAVE AN ANGLE AND **EXAGGERATE IT IN YOUR** APPROACH, MAKE IT VERY OBVIOUS TO THE MEDIA WHY YOUR NEWS IS NEWSWORTHY."

-Jordani Sarreal, Zebra Social

publicity." You need to make clear what you're giving them — a fun, unique, feel-good piece loaded with visuals, and a perfect antidote to global crises and campaign mudslinging.

"Sales aren't news. Neither is a new product these days. Do all the work for the journalists," Sarreal said. "Have an angle and exaggerate it in your approach. Make it very obvious to the media why your news is newsworthy."

That approach paid off on the morning of Oct. 7, when a reporter with the local Fox affiliate called Barnes around 6 a.m. with a question: Was anyone available for a live interview at 7:45 a.m.? (One rule of PR: Never say no to a feel-good interview, no matter how early.)

Barnes quickly tracked down Red Kennicott, who was ready to go live. Carlson, however, was miles from the action and unable to get to the interview spot on time. She eventually tracked down Jonas Zimmerman, a designer with great camera chops and a bit more flexibility in his morning schedule. He made a pit stop at the store to pick up flowers, and was smiling beside Red, gamely talking about Petal It Forward, about an hour later. (For tips on choosing a company spokesperson, see sidebar, p. 26.)

Charmelia ?

Prepare to be charmed by this exciting brand new product available at your local wholesaler exclusively from

Gardens *America

Ask for it by name. Availability is limited and you will want to be the first designer in town working with this new charmer.

Visit our website for more great products from Gardens America www.gardensamerica.com (305) 640-2390 info@gardensamerica.com



Gardens America



> MATCH MADE IN (PR) HEAVEN

PR NO. FXTFND AN INVITE PR PRO: GO FIND THE ACTION

Much of the success of the Petal It Forward campaign rested on the fact that participants could easily snap selfies and share their experiences. But simply asking people to post doesn't cut it. Responding to posts, commenting on Instagram photos, retweeting — this is how buzz builds. Going viral takes lots of contact. You have to be the main agent of spreading the buzz and keeping your news circulating.

That includes the media. After her early morning Fox interview, the reporter, Joanie Lum, posted a photo on Twitter with the words "Flower is power." Carlson saw it and responded right away with an upbeat message of thanks. (Lum, an avid social media user, posted a number of positive messages that morning about the campaign.)

"To have her respond back like that is priceless," Carlson said.

Both Carlson and Barnes also took time to respond to and thank consumers who posted on Facebook and Twitter using the Petal It Forward hashtag and the handles for each business. Don't underestimate the need for those hashtags, by the way — they are crucial if you want to track and be part of conversations on social media. (And you want to do both of those things, said Barnes and Carlson.)

While PR results can be harder to track than sales event returns, it's clear the campaign drove up activity across the social media platforms of both businesses. By the end of the day, for instance, Ashland Addison's Facebook organic impressions had increased 10 times above an average day. "Our likes/ comments/shares were also 10 times more than usual," Carlson said.

At Kennicott, "our organic reach for our Facebook posts spiked by over 2,000 percent compared to our normal, day-to-day Facebook engagement," Barnes said. "The [#petalitforward] hashtag campaign really worked."

In fact, a key part of PR through social media should be personalization, said Sarreal.

"Engaging on an individual level in social media is absolutely vital to your online success," he said. "The precaution with this is not to come off as a robot. Don't respond to everybody with the same 'Thanks!' after every comment. Use this one-on-one opportunity to maybe start a conversation, or at least personalize it as best you can."

The payoff for the effort is real engagement, Carlson explained. "That was a really fun part of the day," Carlson said. "In this business, it's always about the reaction that we get back from the consumer, when they smile and you know your name is associated with that feeling, from a PR perspective, that's all I can hope for. It doesn't translate into increased sales for that day, but I hope it's what keeps us around for another 83 years."

Mary Westbrook is a contributing editor for the Society of American Florists. mwestbrook@safnow.org.



GO DEEPER:

Brothers' efforts and SAF's Petal It Forward campaign at safnow.org/moreonline. Ready to dive deeper into PR? SAF's PR Boot Camp can also help you get started. **safnow.org/pr-bootcamp**, too.



LET'S CHAT Engaging with consumers and reporters in real time and online was a "really fun part of the day," said Bridget Carlson, center, outside Wrigley Field with Red Kennicott, AAF.



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#Delighted BY MARY WESTBROOK

SAF's feel-good Petal It Forward campaign inspired dozens of smaller events around the country — to the delight of reporters and consumers.

SPIRITED COMMUNITY Nearly 50 floral industry businesses participated in SAF's Petal It Forward campaign on a local level, including (clockwise from top left) Kim Wood, Ali Wood and Ashley Wood, of Patti's Petals Florist, Gardens and Gifts in Denton, Maryland; Katy Domingue, Annie Taylor, Jamie Smith and Cassie Dasilva Dimmick of Leona Sue's Florist in Scott, Louisiana; Dave and Laura Gaul of DWF in Denver; Lori Wheat, AAF, and Brian Wheat (center), Jessica Beard and Sandi Yoshihara-Sniff, AAF, AIFD, of Lafayette Florist, Gift Shop and Garden Center in Lafayette, Colorado; Rio Roses (Raul Marrero, shown), which partnered with the IM Able Foundation; and the team at Washington D.C.'s Palace Florists, including Donna Dolgoff, Andrea Luts and Beth Herman.







When Karen Flanders put out a call for volunteers to help support her Petal It Forward event, she wasn't exactly sure what she — or her volunteers — was signing up for. The owner of Lady Slipper Creations in Chester, New Hampshire, planned to give out about 600 roses to strangers, including patients and medical professionals at nearby medical facilities. And while she expected the experience to be positive, she wasn't prepared for just how emotional the day would become.

"The response was incredible," Flanders said. Many of the recipients were cancer patients undergoing chemo and other forms of treatment. Flanders' volunteers were allowed inside the facility to hand out flowers to family members and patients; one woman told the team that receiving the flower gave her a reason to smile — the first reason she'd had all day.

Hundreds of miles away in Scott, Louisiana, Annie Taylor of Leona Sue's Florist had a similarly emotional moment during her Petal It Forward event, when a bouquet recipient was so overwhelmed, she sat in her car and cried. "We have no idea what she was going through, but she said, 'Thank you,'" said Taylor.

These stories — among many, many others like them — help capture the experience of the nearly 50 floral industry businesses who participated at the local level in SAF's Petal It Forward PR event. In New York City on Oct. 7, SAF capitalized on popular pay-it-forward initiatives by randomly giving two bouquets each to passersby in Times Square and Union Square. SAF members were encouraged to promote their own complementary events — and many who participated pulled out all the stops.

Smiles Galore

Tim and Michael Pugh of Pugh's Flowers proved that the feel-good event didn't require much time away from the shop: They distributed 100 bouquets in a lightning-fast lunchtime giveaway in a busy restaurant district in Memphis, Tennessee. To keep the love going, they later posted a short video of the effort to their Facebook page.

Katrina Heimberger and two employees also used the lunchtime crowd to their advantage, passing out 400 carnations in downtown Wooster, Ohio.

Lorrie Anderson, of Country Florist in Waldorf, Maryland, handed out 75 bouquets to a weekly network meeting, and then 50 additional bouquets later in the day at a Chamber of Commerce meeting. She extended the giveaway through Friday at her store — to the obvious delight of her customers. "People truly enjoyed getting the flowers." she said.

Palace Florists in Washington, D.C., handed out 1,000 roses and interacted with about 500 people in a two-hour window.

Radebaugh Florist and Greenhouses in Towson, Maryland, handed out a total of 200 bouquets at a local coffee shop and, later in the day, at the city center. "There were so many wonderful reactions," said Kaitlin Radebaugh. "The best was watching someone hand off the bouquet to someone else and seeing that person's reaction to a pure act of kindness from a stranger."

Leona Sue's Florist went all in for its Petal It Forward event, promoting the giveaway heavily on social media and alerting the press before taking over three sides of a popular intersection to hand out 300 wrapped roses. Team members carried signs with hashtags for Petal It Forward and the shop name.

Georgianne Vinicombe of Monday Morning Flower and Balloon Co. said her shop gave out 200 daisy bouquets along a busy street in downtown Princeton, New Jersey. They even surprised a bus filled with tourists from Japan who were eager to see Princeton University. Vinicombe and her staff made full use of social media to promote the event — tweeting, posting and even creating a Periscope video of the event.

Productive Partnerships

Many industry members partnered with other businesses and groups to plan and promote their events. (Read about another partnership on the day, between Kennicott Brothers Company and Ashland Addison Florist Company, both in Chicago, on p. 20.)

Along with California flower growers Dramm and Echter, the Sun Valley Group, Kitayama Brothers and Repetto Florist and Nursery, and local colleges and design students, the San Francisco Flower Mart distributed about 620 bouquets

GOING SOCIAL Florists spread the word about their respective Petal It Forward events on social media.













floral & SAF management

> #DELIGHTED







RECEIVING END The response to local giveaways was uniformly positive. From left, Irene Gomez of Lafavette Florist Gift Shop and Garden Center in Lafayette, Colorado, hands out a bouquet; two Washington, D.C., recipients pose with flowers from Palace Florists; a parking enforcement officer tucked a carnation from Wooster Floral in Wooster, Ohio, into her belt.

— an event a news crew from KTVU, the local Fox affiliate, captured live.

Rio Roses partnered with the IM Able Foundation for a giveaway at Zoo Miami. That effort, held on Oct. 3, also helped raise funds for the nonprofit, which supports individuals with disabilities.

In Lafayette, Colorado, DWF donated product to help Lori Wheat, AAF, and Brian Wheat offset costs at Lafayette Florist, Gift Shop and Garden Center. The Wheats turned a potential headache (construction in front of their main store) into a party with a street giveaway. "It was a great opportunity to talk to people as they were stopped in their cars," Lori said. The shop also gave away flowers at its satellite location at Good Samaritan Medical Center. The Wheats made sure to get the full bang for their PR buck by delivering bouquets, a poster and press releases before the event to city hall, a popular rec center and the Chamber of Commerce.

Post, Share, Repeat

The campaign itself was made for the digital, share-happy age. Participating SAF members and flower recipients were encouraged to share their experiences on social media with the hashtag #petalitforward. The response online was overwhelming — and overwhelmingly positive, said florist after florist.

Chester's Flower Shop & Greenhouses in Utica, New York, gave out about 750 bunches of flowers — and landed on WKTV's news lineup in the process. "I am glad we were part of this event," said owner Bill Waszkiewicz.

ABC affiliate KATC in Acadiana, Louisiana, sent a news crew out to interview Annie Taylor about Leona Sue's Florist's giveaway. "We're just spreading good news and good feelings," she told a news crew.

The Star Democrat covered Patti's Petals Florist, Gardens and Gifts giveaway in Denton, Maryland. Patti Wood, co-owner, and her three daughters, Kim Wood, Alison Wood and Ashley Wood, walked through downtown Denton, passing out carnations and daisies on the street. "We got smiles from everybody," said Wood.

After the event in Lafayette, Colorado, a customer came into Lafayette Florist, Gift Shop and Garden Center, placed an order and complimented Lori Wheat on

IMPRESSED: PETAL IT FORWARD RESULTS

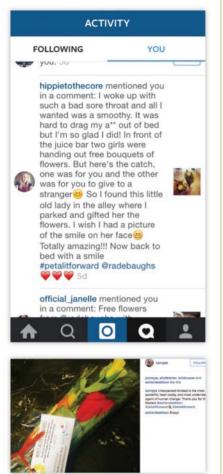
When SAF took to the streets of New York City for Petal It Forward, the goal was to expose people — directly and through traditional and social media to the benefits and joys of flowers.

Mission accomplished, said SAF Vice President of Marketing Jennifer Sparks. To date, SAF's Petal It Forward campaign in New York City has generated **more than 131 million impressions,** the number of times people have been exposed to the Petal It Forward message, according to statistics from Ogilvy Public Relations. That number includes the results of high-profile exposure on shows such as "Fox & Friends," as well as placement on MSN. com, Yahoo!, Yahoo! News Canada and Yahoo Movil (Taiwan).

"This campaign proves that strategic public relations works in getting the floral message out to consumers," said Sparks, adding a big thanks to the following companies for their generosity in helping make SAF's NYC Petal It Forward event happen:

- **Donation/coordination of product:** Dramm & Echter, Dos Gringos, Flores El Capiro, Holland American Flowers, Floral Trade Distribution, Universal Greens;
- Assembly of 4,000 bouquets: Holland America Flowers
- **■** Transportation and onsite delivery/coordination of bouquets: Delaware Valley Floral Group
- On-site flower giveaway: : Starbright Floral Design
- Funding for enhanced social media: Asocolflores
- Funding for consumer video: Asocolflores





Petal It Forward. "We are so lucky to have you in the community," she said. And for Wheat, that was gold: "That was the best reward ever."

Former SAF President Shirley Lyons, AAF, PFCI, coordinated giveaways in Eugene, Oregon - home of Dandelions Flowers & Gifts — and Roseburg, Oregon, site of the recent community college shooting. There, they visited with first responders, many of whom had seen press coverage of the giveaway. "It was astounding," Lyons said. "Every single person in Roseburg said, "You are the flower ladies we saw on TV that were coming here. Thank you! We have never experienced anything like it."

Mary Westbrook is a contributing writer and editor for the Society of American Florists. mwestbrook@safnow.org





EDITORS' NOTE Paul Goodman, CPA, PFCI, and Derrick Myers, CPA, CFP, love a good financial management challenge, however big or small. Send your questions to fmeditor@safnow.org, and we'll challenge the experts to tackle them in an upcoming article.





Q: How much should I mark down my holiday gift items?

> Holiday gifts can be a big drain on your cash flow, especially if you pack up unsold items year after year and put them in storage, tying up large amounts of cash in inventory. It's important to convert as much of that inventory into cash at the end of each season as possible, so you have the funds to get you through the slow times of the year as well as to buy those "hot" new gift items for the upcoming year.

Consumers have been trained to purchase goods when they are on sale. Some florists worry that offering sales cheapens their brand, but that's just not true. Try to think of a major retailer that does not offer sales. Consumers expect those same discounts from you.

The trick, however, is knowing when and how much to mark down your products. Before you offer attractive discounts, such as 20 percent, 30 percent

or even 50 percent off, you must make sure that your markup is sufficient. Historically, florists have targeted a 50 percent cost of goods sold on gift items, meaning they double the cost to get to the sale price. (And remember that your cost includes freight and handling for items.) Many shops now mark up "holiday gift items" at least three times, knowing that they will chop the prices in half and still make a profit.

Consider this example: Let's say I buy a Santa Claus candle that cost the shop \$10. I mark it up three times to \$30 and sell it. That's a 200 percent profit. If I later reduce the price to \$15 and sell another candle, I still make a profit of \$5 or 50 percent of the original cost. Although I didn't hit my COGS target on gifts (\$10 cost/\$15 sale price = 67 percent COGS), I still made a healthy profit.

Q: When, should I mark down my products?

One of the best strategies I have seen goes like this: Start selling your Christmas items in November at full price. After Thanksgiving, offer a discount (only on those items you marked up by three times or more) of 20 percent. Two weeks before Christmas go to 30 percent, and then the week of Christmas discount to 50 percent. This approach will help entice your customers to buy those items. In addition, having the sale prices (and appropriate signage) in your store will generate excitement and give your customers the green light to buy more. An after-Christmas sale at cost can also help convert more inventory back to cash. It's better to have the cash in your hands and available to you all year than to have it packed in boxes in storage.

If you follow this program, you'll sell the same item at different price points throughout the holiday. You'll be surprised at the profit these items generate. You'll also pack up less after the holiday for storage and have more cash back in the bank.

Q: How do I figure out how to staff correctly for holiday crunch times?

In a retail flower shop, Valentine's Day and Mother's Day require all hands on deck the week leading up to the holiday. In these cases, your biggest goal is controlling overtime. Make sure you have enough trained members on your team to spread the workload. Plan your work schedule so only indispensable people have overtime. Prepping arrangements a full week ahead can help you even out the workload, making it easier to accomplish your sales goals without blowing your overtime budget.

Christmas is usually the exception to this one-week madness. Here, we have a real opportunity to schedule our staff for peak performance. The first step in laying out a schedule is to know your sales trends. Look at your December sales, day by day for the last two or three years. Determine what percentage each day represents of the month, and then look closer to see which days of the week are your busiest days. Those are the days you need to schedule a larger work force.

When planning your schedule, look at the anticipated inventory sales (exclude fees and non-inventory sales such as outgoing wire orders) you expect for the day. Your designer wages should not exceed 15 percent of the day's sales, sales and administrative wages should not exceed 5 percent, and driver wages should cap at 5 percent. This formula will give you a total labor cost (excluding owners) of 25 percent of your inventory sales for the day. By multiplying the anticipated day's sales by the above percentages, you now have a daily budget for each payroll category.

Next, divide the budget amount by the corresponding hourly rate for the employees in that category (if you have multiple people in a wage class, average the wage or calculate each until you have exhausted the budget). Once you have a schedule based on the estimated sales of each day, monitor your actual sales and make adjustments to your schedule. If sales are running higher than anticipated, increase some employees' hours. If the sales are less than anticipated, send someone home early.

Derrick P. Myers, CPA, CFP, PFCI, is president of Crockett, Myers & Associates, Inc., a financial management and accounting firm that has been working with florists for more than three decades. Derrick@crockettmyers.com

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Industry News

MICHIGAN FLORIST BECOMES FACE OF NEW RETIREMENT PROGRAM

> Thanks to a connection forged by the Society of American Florists, a longtime retail flower shop is at the forefront of a new effort to encourage more Americans to save for retirement. Norton's Flowers & Gifts, in Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor, Michigan, is the first florist in the country to participate in the U.S. Treasury Department's new myRA program.

Billed as a "starter account" to encourage retirement savings, the program lets workers automatically deduct up to \$5,500 a year (\$6,500 if they are 50 or older) from their paychecks, with a maximum total of \$15,000. (MyRA is short for My Retirement Account.) They also can contribute to the accounts directly using electronic transfers from a checking or savings account and withdraw their contributions tax-free and without a penalty, so the money can be used for emergencies.

"It costs us nothing to participate, and, from an administrative perspective, it's as simple as a payroll deduction — that's all we have to do," said Tim Galea, president of Norton's.

Galea first heard about the program through SAF. Two years ago, the Treasury Department was on the hunt for business owners to participate in myRA's pilot program, and representatives reached out to SAF and other trade groups.

As employers, "it makes us look like a hero," he explained. "From the employee's perspective, it's a benefit, but it's a benefit that doesn't cost us anything. It's crazy not to look at this and consider offering it to your team." Find out more at myra.gov



A SAVING FACE Tim Galea of Norton's Flowers & Gifts, enrolled in the myRA program in the spring and, at press time, about six of his 21 employees were participating in the program. Norton is featured in a video being used by the Treasury Department to promote the program. (See More Online, p. 6.)

AFE RESEARCH AIMS TO PROTECT GERBERA FROM POWDERY MILDEW

> A University of Florida research team has discovered a way to prevent one of the more damaging and common diseases found in the much beloved gerbera: powdery mildew. Funded by the American Floral Endowment, researchers Dr. Zhanao Deng, Zhonglin Mou and Natalia A. Peres have concluded that powdery mildew sensitivity can be overcome by transferring defense-related genes from non-crop plants to crop plants.

Results showed that genes from other plants can be transferred into gerbera crops to increase their resistance to powdery mildew. Regenerated plants had few mildew symptoms and better mildew resistance.

This information can not only help gerbera breeding programs but also may be used to help develop disease-resistant varieties in other floriculture crops and for other diseases.

Visit **Endowment.org** for the full report and to access more than 150 free research reports. *****

YOSHIMI SHIBATA: JAN. 25, 1916-OCT. 31, 2015

> Yoshimi Shibata, a floral industry pioneer and beloved former president of Mt. Eden Floral Company in San Jose, California, died peacefully in his sleep on October 31.

"He was at home, with family present," said Robert Shibata, one of "Shimi's" sons and the current president of Mt. Eden. "We are grateful that he had a distinguished and fulfilling career in the flower industry that he loved so much."

Shibata was born in Oakland, California, to Zenjuro and Koyuri Shibata. In 1918, his father, Zenjuro, purchased the Mt. Eden property. Shibata attended both UC Berkeley and Ohio State, but after the attacks on Pearl Harbor, his family relocated to Marysville to avoid internment.

Among his many professional accomplishments, Shibata started the Salinas Greenhouse Company in 1963 with eight partners from Kagoshima Prefecture. The 540,000 square feet of greenhouse was built for the cultivation of carnations and mini-carnations. He was elected president of WF&FSA in 1972 and planned the organization's first trade show the following year.

Shibata, who became active in the Civil Rights Defense Union after his honorable discharge from the Army, received many lifetime honors, including the Order of the Rising Sun, Fourth Class in 1987 from the Japanese government. It is the highest civilian award given by the Japanese government. This year, he was awarded the CalFlowers 2015 Distinguished Service Award. Honorees of this award are recognized for the highest levels of leadership, strategic thinking, and contributions to the floral industry in California.

Shibata is survived by his wife, Grace; his sister, Yayoi; his three children, six grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

-By Mary Westbrook



YOSHIMI SHIBATA A floral industry pioneer and beloved former president of Mt. Eden Floral Company in San Jose, California

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Vital Industry Knowledge

- Floral Management magazine
- 2. Wednesday E-Brief
- 3. Washington Week in Review
- Saturday Sales Wake-Up

Sales Builders

- Listing in NationalFloristDirectory.com
- Web graphics and floral photography
- Wedding Flower Calculator
- Customizable press releases and talking points for media interviews
- Discounts on SAF products from statement stuffers to skillbuilding DVDs
- 10. SAF Fund for Nationwide Public Relations raises floral awareness

Bottom Line Improvement

- 11. Retail Pricing Worksheet
- **12.** Customizable employee handbook
- 13. Discounts on FedEx shipping, Paychex payroll management services, Ford Fleet Vehicles and more, and access to Association Health Care Insurance Plans administered by Hortica **Insurance & Employee Benefits**

Education & Networking

- 14. 1-Day Profit Blast
- 15. Retail Growth Solutions
- **16.** Annual Convention

Expert Consultations

- 17. Contact SAF staff for advice on technology, marketing and more
- 18. Free 15-minute legal consultation with attorney Paula A. Calimafde with law firm Paley Rothman

Industry Watchdog

- **19.** Negative floral publicity response
- **20.** Government advocacy

This is just scratching the surface!













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Plugged In BY RENATO CRUZ SOGUECO

FAST-TRACK WEB SHOPPERS

> How do people shop nowadays? You already know the first process because you probably do it yourself: A staggering 81 percent of consumers begin researching potential buys by conducting an online search, according to Retailing Today.

From the results page, a shopper's next option is to scroll to click on the organic listings. If you've focused on search engine optimization (SEO) and expanding your presence through social media, you should be the top listing. If you've invested in Google AdWords or Bing Ads, customers may also click on your pay-per-click (PPC) ad above these listings or to the right side of them.

Feeling good about dominating the search screen and increasing the likelihood of making a sale? Not so fast. This month, we explore another compelling way marketers are reaching their customers right on the search page: product listing ads, an offering in the merchant centers of both Google and Bing.

How It Works

While both Google and Bing have merchant centers, Google has a much larger search market share (64 percent), so we'll stick with them for our example.

First, search Google for "get-well flower arrangements." If you're on a desktop, look to the right side of results, or the top if you're on a mobile device (see graphic).

As you'll see, you'll find product photos, brief descriptions and prices within sponsored boxes. Hover the mouse over any listing and you get a pop-up box with full descriptions. Click on any one and

you'll be taken straight to the product page on the relevant company's website.

What's the true value of this service? It stops customers from scrolling to the organic links and saves them a few clicks by taking them straight to the product page. That can translate into better conversion rates. Yes, this method bypasses your site's home page, but it creates a direct beeline for your customers to where you ultimately want them to be: your shopping cart.

Speaking of clicks, this is how Google makes its money. Product listing ads managed through the Google Merchant Center are essentially another variant of ads within a Google AdWords campaign. You're only charged for the ad if a customer clicks on it.

Opportunity for the **Local Florist**

You may notice some familiar — and big - names selling their wares through this method. But before you raise your hands in virtual defeat and conclude you can't compete with those companies, let's talk about an opportunity available to you, a small retail florist.

Try a new search using the same keywords ("get-well flower arrangements") — but this time, add your local delivery area such as "Fairfax, VA." You'll probably get no result at all — no sponsored box. Think of it: Because this is a relatively new offering, it's likely that no one — including you, your local competition or even the big companies — is participating in this type of advertising at the local level. As AdWords veterans



will tell you, if you bid on these keywords tied with local information, you will likely be the only advertiser. The result is a low-cost, high-exposure advertising opportunity.

Get Started

Launching this campaign can be technical, so recruit the help of your website developer and be sure you have claimed your website through Google's Webmaster Tools.

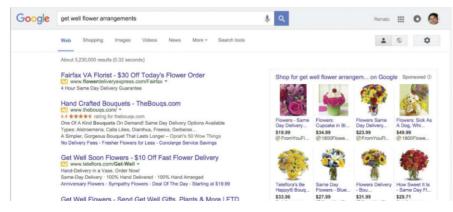
You may also need technical help in claiming your website in the merchant center, which requires you to have administrative access through your website's site admin tool or FTP or shell access to your website. As previously mentioned, an AdWords account is also required. Get one started at google.

com/adwords.

Fortunately, Google provides clear, short video tutorials on setting up your Merchant Account, getting your products uploaded, managing products and managing the campaign:

- Guide to Google Shopping: Set up your Merchant Center account youtu.be/apXuW7Qex7k
- Guide to Google Shopping: Upload your products with a data feed (small inventory) youtu.be/dq2VIBbqTL4
- Guide to Google Shopping: Upload your products with a data feed (large inventory) youtube/AkXPArO3fgo
- Create Shopping Campaign youtu.be/FLZdoeCv5o4

Renato Cruz Sogueco is SAF's chief information officer and the floral industry's go-to guy for all things tech. rsogueco@safnow.org



BEE-LINE TO BUY Search "get well flower arrangements" on Google or Bing, and you'll see how product listing ads are taking consumers directly to the product page of websites.

40





25 years building an Elite company

Over 600 hectares of production, 700 million stems per year.

Our work force consists of over 9,000 employees

4 facilities in the United States accounting for over 350,000 sq ft

We grow over 25 different products encompassing more than 600 varieties

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Business of Design

SEASONAL SENSATIONS

> Grab and go. That's what residents in historic Old Town Alexandria, Virginia, are game for during the holiday season, according to Rachel Gang, owner of Helen Olivia.

To make sure she grabs as much yuletide business as possible, Gang stocks the cooler with plenty of options in a range of price points. "Our cooler has at least five different styles of arrangements available for grab-and-go purchases, which are huge with both party guests and hosts," she said.

One of her most profitable add-ons for the season: Ribbon. And she has plenty of it, more than 100 options on hand. "Not only does it enhance a design, but it's also a very popular decorating tool," she said. She trains her staff to pitch customers a full roll so they can match their home décor with their flowers. "It's such an easy upsell!"

In the spirit of the season, Gang shared a few of her best-selling holiday designs with Floral Management readers. **

Katie Hendrick khendrick@safnow.org

Find complete recipes and sourcing material at safnow.org/moreonline.



LONG LASTING LUXURY Customers always value a long vase life, but this quality is especially prized at the holidays. "A lot of people decorate right after Thanksgiving and want it to hold through New Year's Eve," Gang said. This design is chock-full of product that can survive the long haul, such as dried apples, cinnamon sticks, seeded eucalyptus and Christmas greens. "I tell customers to just pluck out the roses and hypericum berries when they go — there's plenty left to enjoy, " she said. Design time: 20 to 30 minutes. Wholesale costs: \$38. Retail price: \$145.



LET IT SNOW "We like to have a different spin on the traditional red and green holiday theme," Gang said. This white and blue design "sells like hotcakes every year." Anemones, recognized as trendy and sophisticated, immediately raise the perceived value, as does viburnum, by "adding darkness and depth," she said. Design time: 15 minutes. Wholesale costs: \$18. Retail price: \$65.

PIXEL PERFECT ELEMENT IN FLORAL DESIGNS

NEW TYPE OF CHRYSANTHEMUM INTRODUCED BY DELIFLOR CHRYSANTEN



Pixel™ enriches the flower industry. No larger than a penny and full-flowering with over 25 flowers per branch. This chrysanthemum is especially suitable in combination with other varieties of its kind.

A 'penny for your thoughts'; allow them free rein and add a new dimension to your chrysanthemum arrangement. Pixel™ constitutes the perfect element for a cheerful bouquet which lets the consumer enjoy chrysanthemums even longer.

"An indispensable element in any modern floral design", is how Deliflor Chrysanthemums describes this new introduction.

Pixel™ is already available in three key colours:

- Pixel[™] Cotton (white)
- Pixel™ Candy (pink)
- Pixel[™] Tesoro (yellow)

More varieties will be added to the Pixel™ series in the near future

More information is available through:

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www.deliflor.com info@deliflor.com

ROMANTIC TOUCHES



ROOM FOR TWO

Towering at 33 inches tall, this cute balloon couple makes a bold statement. It's an image of genuine affection that will make any customer smile — or maybe even tear up. \geq **Betallic.com**



XOXO

Customers in search of a small, sentimental gift will swoon for these delicate necklaces with playful expressions in finely crafted lettering. This charming keepsake is perfect for a host of occasions, whether a first date, Valentine's Day or an anniversary. > Brevity.com



CUPID'S QUILL

Fashionistas will covet this necklace that screams, "love struck"! A pendant of Cupid's arrows, in mixed metals, rests at the end of a 35-inch chain. It's available in both silver and gold. > Splendidiris.com



TRUE TO YOU

Help customers show their love with these clever polygraph-themed letterpress cards. Illustrated by hand and printed on recycled paper, the card is blank inside to include a personal message. > PapillonLetterPress.com



BREAKIN' HEARTS ALL AROUND TOWN

This heart-adorned duffle bag puts the fun in functional. The heavyweight cotton canvas bag holds up well, whether its owner is toting it to the gym, the beach or on a cross-country vacation. This stylish bag will be a cinch to spot in baggage claim and is sure to generate zillions of compliments. > ShopBanDo.com



CHIC CHANGE

These simple coin purses, adorned with various terms of endearment, offer customers a stylish way to keep their stuff organized. The bag can hold change, business cards and even a phone. Let the gift speak for itself, or market it as an attachment to a romantic arrangement. > TwosCompany.com



UNBEAR-ABLY CUTE

Is anything more loveable than a plush bear bearing his heart? We think not. Customers will love cuddling up with this soft bear on a cold winter day. The collection is available in the following colors: Mocha, Vanilla and Strawberry Latte. Sizes range from 12 to 30 inches. > AuroraGift.com



KEY TO YOUR HEART

This curated collection of limited-edition heart sculptures offers artistic ways to express love. Each heart features a colorful illustration expressing sentiments of love, friendship, celebration and thoughtfulness. Packaged in a special, highquality window gift box and designed to hang or stand using the ornamental key included. > DEMDACO.com

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Contact Laura Weaver, (800-336-4743, ext. 221) or meetings@safnow.org

Care and Handling





SEEING IS BELIEVING Flowers treated with silver thiosulfate (EthylGuard 100), shown at right, open and last longer than non-treated flowers.

SUPPORT FOR A STAPLE

> Long valued as cut flowers that look great even after extended storage, carnations now show up with dramatic new forms, textures and colors. As a result, retailers are taking a second look at the versatility of standard and spray carnations. Though carnations are considered a "tough as nails" cut flower, their vase life can nevertheless be compromised if you don't follow simple steps after harvest.

Edge Out Ethylene

Carnations are extremely sensitive to ethylene, a colorless and odorless gas. When exposed to ethylene, they get "sleepy" — flowers fail to open and petals wilt rapidly. Dead and decaying flowers, fruits and vegetables generate ethylene, but it's also present in exhaust fumes from vehicles or propanepowered floor cleaners. Since plant cells weaken with age, carnations are even more sensitive to ethylene after extended storage. Flowers damaged by ethylene may also be more sensitive to infection by botrytis or gray mold.

Ethylene is recognized as a so-called wound hormone. Carnations produce ethylene when exposed to stress during transportation and shipping through factors such as high temps, dehydration and vibration. It is not unusual for temperatures to increase during transport, or for damage to occur as flower boxes move through airports or are loaded on ships and trucks.

Silver thiosulfate (STS) or 1-MCP (anti-ethylene products) prevent flowers from producing ethylene internally and protect flowers from ethylene gas in the air. Proper protection with these products is like placing armor around the entire ethylene system in the flowers.

Generally, growers treat carnations immediately after harvest by placing flowers in STS solutions that are absorbed through the stems. Alternatively, individual boxes or entire trucks can be treated with 1-MCP. Many floral importers treat entire trucks with 1-MCP to assure optimum protection for flowers.

Food, Glorious Food

Retail florists often ask whether flower food is really needed. The answer is absolutely. Flower food, properly mixed, will help carnations to open fully and last longer.

Carnations cannot store enough sugar prior to harvest to achieve maximum flower life, and additional cells cannot be produced after the stem is cut. Sugar in flower foods provides the energy needed to move water up the stem and into the flower, where cells in the petals are, in effect, "plumped up," enabling them to expand and open.

Flower foods promote water uptake by reducing pH and using wetting agents to promote water uptake. Lower pH and biocides in the flower foods also minimize growth of microbes, keeping the stems open so the flowers can drink all the water they need. Water absorbed by the flowers must equal or exceed the water lost or flowers will die prematurely. In most cases, flowers on spray carnations will not all open without

MAXIMIZE VASE LIFE IN FIVE STEPS

- Buy carnations pretreated with anti-ethylene products (STS or 1-MCP).
- Wash flower buckets with a disinfectant. Use fresh, clean water.
- Cut stems (1 2 inches), immediately place stems into flower food solution, and chill.
- Maintain flowers at 34 - 38 F and a humidity of 70 - 80 percent.
- Provide flower food packets to make one quart of solution with bouquets and arrangements.

flower food, since the younger buds need a continuous flow of water and energy.

Take care to mix flower food properly to provide the right balance. Using halfstrength flower food will not give you the best results, shortening vase life by up to five days. Flower foods are an inexpensive way to ensure long-lasting flowers and satisfied customers, who are more likely to return to buy more! \$\square\$

Terril Nell, Ph.D., AAF, PFCI,

is a professor emeritus from the University of Florida, a consultant to the floral industry and was recently appointed as research coordinator for the American Floral Endowment. terrilnell@gmail.com



When Wesley Berry Flowers opened its doors sixty nine years ago, our family lived in the back of the shop—putting our customers needs first. From these humble beginnings we've grown into five brick and mortar shops located throughout Metropolitan Detroit, and we're proud to say our commitment to customer service is still top priority, and by working with our fellow florists to delight customers from coast-to-coast we have become one of the largest florists in the nation. We're Wesley Berry Flowers, delivering excellence everyday.



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