

Florist in Anytown, USA



Avas Anytown florist  
[AvasFlowers.com/anytown](http://AvasFlowers.com/anytown)

Florists in Anytown - Same Day Hand Delivery Guaranteed  
[www.JustFlowers.com/Local\\_Florist](http://www.JustFlowers.com/Local_Florist)

Local Anytown Flowers  
[www.FlowerShopping.com/anytown](http://www.FlowerShopping.com/anytown)

**Your Flower Shop**  
[www.yourflowershop.com](http://www.yourflowershop.com)

Frank's Anytown Florist  
[www.conflor.com](http://www.conflor.com)

Visit Bloom! Fresh Flowers  
[www.bloomfreshflowers.com](http://www.bloomfreshflowers.com)

The Enchanted Florist  
[www.enchantedfloristanytown.com](http://www.enchantedfloristanytown.com)

Anytown Florist  
[www.anytownflorist.com](http://www.anytownflorist.com)

Local Florist Anytown  
[www.localfloristanytown.com](http://www.localfloristanytown.com)

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[www.localfloristanytownusa.com](http://www.localfloristanytownusa.com)

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**Feel like your business is swimming in the vast ocean of the Internet? SAF connects with Google executive Loren Hudziak to help florists find their way to the surface.**

BY RENATO SOGUECO

# SEARCH and RESCUE

In the time it takes you to read this sentence, about 12 million searches will have been initiated on Google. Tech industry experts now estimate that Google processes roughly 2 million searches every *second*. Of course, the majority of these searches have nothing to do with your business, but what about the searches that do matter?

The woman looking for a wedding florist?

The executive in need of a thank you gift?

The grieving family in search of a fitting tribute?

Given the continued importance of search and the rise of mobile as a de facto consumer tool for researching purchases, floral businesses must continue to practice essential search engine optimization on their websites, use effective inbound marketing practices to drive website visits and deploy a solid mobile strategy to ensure their presence on the Web is mobile friendly.

Developing a practical approach to dealing with these challenges isn't easy. Google and its competitors continue to be a mystery to many business owners because of their complicated, proprietary algorithms. Consequently, SEO can make a business owner feel as if she is floating alone in the sea. Choosing the right social media, references, review websites, email marketing and other inbound marketing tools is just as intimidating. Mobile is more clear cut on the surface — you need to be mobile friendly — but what's truly the right strategy before you commit hard-earned dollars revising your website? Or developing an app?

What's a small-business owner to do — particularly one who never aspired to navigate the choppy waters of online marketing?

This month, SAF has leveraged its unique relationship with Loren Hudziak, solutions architect at Google, to dive into the mysterious world of search and find real, applicable and floral industry-specific tips on best practices. With the help of Hudziak, we provide the insight you need to climb to the top of search results and capture more customers.

80%

More than 80 percent of shoppers started their retail quest using a search engine — 60 percent of those people directly visited the retailer website and 42 percent consulted review sites to find information and other consumers' opinions on a product, brand and retailer.

Source: Synchrony Financial's Third Annual Major Purchase Consumer Study, 2014.

**ADRIFT: LOAD UP ON REPETITIVE KEYWORDS WITHOUT CONTEXT**

**ASHORE: MEANINGFUL KEYWORDS WITH CONTEXT**

Let's start our conversation where it should end: with a sale, directly from your website. Social media, blogs and online reviews may be hot topics in Internet marketing, but the main purpose of these online references is to drive inbound traffic to your site. Until those platforms become capable of generating consistent commerce, your primary focus needs to be your website.

How do you generate that traffic? Ten years ago, you used a mix of traditional print, radio and (if you could afford it) TV ads emblazoned with the shop URL, plus email marketing. That usually was good enough, so investing in online ads was optional.

Nowadays, many florists devote more of that print ad budget to online ads, such as Adwords and Facebook ads. They also allot more staff resources to

building a social media presence and monitoring online references to ensure a steady flow of visits (building email databases continues to be a priority).

This adjusted landscape means different rules. Search is king, yes, but there are caveats. For instance, only current or local customers familiar with your business are likely to use your business name in searches. To most of the world, you are only a "florist" in "Fairfax, Virginia" or a vendor who may supply "funeral flowers" in "Cleveland, Ohio." Your brand doesn't exist to most Web surfers. So, essentially, these are the keywords that describe your business to the customers that don't know you.

Hudziak confirmed that you don't need to overload keywords in strategic places within your HTML code. "Google regularly tweaks its algorithms to root out keyword abuse," Hudziak explains. Remember the common tricks that companies used to employ, such as text that appears in white or hidden or pages that are loaded down with meta code? Google algorithms now carefully measure the use of words as they appear in context; the system even takes into account font characteristics (bold, italics, size, etc.), according to Hudziak.

So this means you should write content for your customer, not a search engine: complete sentences using correct grammar. Bold certain keywords, such as names of venues, flower varieties or flower care phrases, such as "flower care packet." Link these words to other pages within your website that provide deeper explanations.

**ADRIFT: LIST EVERY POSSIBLE ZIP CODE AND CITY WITHIN A 100-MILE RADIUS**

**ASHORE: THINK LOCAL**

Hudziak confirmed that local references on Web pages are important, because Google tries to deliver local results in searches. That's why you'll want to take a look at headlines on your sub pages. For instance, "Renato's Flowers, the Preferred Wedding Florist at Fairfax Country Clubs" would be a strong headline for my (imaginary) retail shop, along with a line of text that follows such as: "More than 100 satisfied brides trusted our floral design experts for their wedding reception flowers at Chantilly National Golf and Country Club and River Creek Country Club."

Naming local venues is a smart practice because people will Google those names. When you attach your name to those venues, you'll also have relevant, and, most important, local references, right there in your page. And local has been Google's focus for the last few years, especially with the rise of mobile.

How do you start implementing this advice? A good practice is to sit down with staff and establish your business taxonomy. Brainstorm the keywords that may be used to describe your business and its services, starting from the general ("Fairfax, Virginia, florist") to the specific ("St. Leo's Catholic Church," "International Country Club," "Money and King Funeral Home"). Incorporate them as much as possible in all of the content within your site in the structure we recommend (click on my video, in More Online, p. 6). ("Fairfax, Virginia, florist") to the specific ("St. Leo's Catholic Church," "Money and King Funeral Home") and then incorporating them as much as possible in all the content within your site.



**MEANINGFUL SUBPAGES** Griffins' Floral Design takes its subpages seriously, and, consequently, ranks no. 1 in an organic search for "funeral flowers in Columbus." The key: the headline and text on its sympathy subpages give specific context for the page — and, right out of Hudziak's playbook: they apply boldface strategically (Columbus Funeral Flowers).



SAF's collaboration with Google continues as we've invited Hudziak to deliver a keynote address at SAF Amelia Island 2015. He'll also speak with me at a break out session on best practices using Google Adwords and Analytics.

— R. S.



ADAM DONOHUE GALLERY/D PHOTOGRAPHY

**CAPTAIN YOUR SHIP** Rising to the top of search results is less about "tricking" Google's algorithm and more about updating content in a strategic, consistent way, according to Loren Hudziak, solutions architect at Google. (And working at Google is less about suits and more about the work, as clearly stated in a doorway at the Google office in Washington, D.C.)

### ADRIFT: UPDATE CONTENT ONCE EVERY TWO WEEKS

### ASHORE: CHANGE CONTENT DAILY

Another tactic to consider is how often you change content. We used to recommend you change once every two weeks, based on the conventional wisdom that Google indexes check websites for changes every two weeks. It's not quite as simple as that.

"There's not necessarily a regular frequency (for when sites are indexed)," Hudziak said. "The algorithm checks back more frequently with sites that change." So, if the content didn't change for five consecutive visits by the algo-

rithm, the site will get bumped down in search results — or up, if it changes.

What's an ideal frequency? Daily for some; every few days for others. "Google will always weigh fresh content higher than stale content," Hudziak said. "Check your results regularly and update and make sure your content stays relevant, interesting."

To keep content updates manageable, don't think in terms of changing paragraphs, but rather about tweaking a sentence or two and, posting a photo or a video. Better still? Post the video on YouTube, which Google owns, and place photos on Google+, which of course, is Google's own social network. Your website's weddings or events pages provide weekly or even daily opportunities for updates.

## TOP 5 'SEARCH' LIFE BOATS

Google provides lots of tools, mostly free, in order for you to boost your business's online presence. Here are Loren Hudziak's favorites:

### **gybo.com**

The first thing to do if you haven't already done so is log in to claim your business. Next, check and recheck that your business information is 100 percent accurate. Consider this your opportunity to tell Google who you are exactly and what you offer.

### **google.com/webmasters**

Webmaster Tools is like a mechanic shop that allows you to check your website's moving parts and notifies you if anything needs to be fixed. Submit your website and let this simple, yet amazing tool alert you to potential problems with your website, search queries including keywords used, inbound links, mobile usability, potential security issues and more.

### **google.com/analytics**

Google Analytics is a step up from Webmaster Tools. This tool slices and dices all the traffic coming into your website, how they got there, what they looked at and, most important, whether they bought something or not (conversion).

### **google.com/adwords/express**

Adwords Express lets you track online paid advertising through Analytics and is tailor-made for the business looking to increase local sales. Adwords Express is designed to target ads geographically — city or state — while Adwords is a tool for global reach. As the name implies, setup takes less time with more automated management.

### **google.com/think/multiscreen**

This resource includes a couple of white papers for building websites for various screen sizes, best practices for mobile design and several case studies. It also includes links to a few mobile vendors.



ADAM DONOHUE GALLERY/D PHOTOGRAPHY

**CHARTING A COURSE** As more consumers shop on the go, business owners need to ensure their sites are mobile responsive, according to SAF CIO Renato Sogueco and Google executive Loren Hudziak. The pair will continue their discussion of top tech trends in September, during SAF Ameila Island 2015.

**ADRIFT: BLOG IF YOU HAVE TIME**

**ASHORE: BLOG OR BUST**

Many SEO folks strongly believed in the past that content, particularly if posted on your website, was priority No. 1 — with blogs as an afterthought. Given our previous revelation that changes on your website don't have to be huge, just relevant, why not take some of that creative energy you were putting into those regular Web updates and instead direct more creative writing energy at a blog. "It will provide a source for new content about your business and another quality inbound link," Hudziak said.

Remember, though, that in order for this to be a strong inbound link, your shop blog (or blogs) must change often. As in, every day!

“If you're looking to get yourself exposure, [LinkedIn is] the place to do it. It comes up high in thesearch engine. It can do your job for you.”

- Loren Hudziak

Speaking of links, keep in mind that creating intrasite links (linking words in your text to other pages within your website) is a good practice to adopt when creating content. Doing so provides users with ample opportunity to click and linger within your site and confirms you have lots of expertise already found within the website.

64%

Google accounted for more than 64 percent of searches conducted, followed by Microsoft search sites such as Bing at 20 percent and Yahoo at 12 percent.

Source: ComSore, March 2015

**ADRIFT: DO ALL SOCIAL MEDIA (OR JUST FACEBOOK)**

**ASHORE: BE STRATEGIC (AND DON'T IGNORE LINKEDIN)**

Google of course indexes content on its own Google+ social network, so this should be on the top of the list.

The next social media on Hudziak's must-do list may surprise you: LinkedIn.

The site, he says, is updated frequently, and people are always adding new connections. "If you're looking to get yourself exposure, that's the place to do it. It comes up high in the search engine," Hudziak said. "It can do your job for you."

As a shop owner, you should absolutely create an account on LinkedIn touting your role in your business and include that precious link to your shop website. Make sure your shop manager and weddings team do the same.

Next on the social media hit list? Twitter, which recently announced that all its tweets will be fully indexed by Google and other search engines. Feel that you have no time to tweet but still want to engage in the social network? Best practice is to have posts from other social media — think Facebook and Instagram in particular, automatically post submissions to Twitter. Don't forget to add suitable #hashtag.

There is no denying Facebook's on-line clout. With more than 1 billion users, the site is rated as the No. 1 website as of March 2015 by SimilarWeb (no. 2 by Alexa with Google holding the top spot) and is the No. 1 app on both Google's Android and Apple iOS.



### BLOG AWAY

A regularly updated blog with search-worthy posts peppered with links to helpful information — as exemplified by [bergeronsflowers.com/blog](http://bergeronsflowers.com/blog) — will dramatically improve inbound links to your website.

Sign up for a mobile-ready website using a service such as: [dudamobile.com/mobile-website](http://dudamobile.com/mobile-website), while you start the process to switch to a mobile-responsive version.

and tablets. A mobile-responsive site should be your ultimate goal, but Google will at least credit the businesses that are mobile ready.

What's the difference? If you go mobile-ready, you are making a separate version of your website for mobile devices. When the Web server detects a smartphone or tablet is trying to access the website, it serves up the appropriate version. This is a temporary Band-Aid fix.

We recommend planning for the long-term by going mobile responsive. Mobile responsive websites also detect the device but differ from mobile-ready in that it serves enough information to be displayed by the device. It adds more data to view if it detects a larger screen, such as an iPad or laptop, all the way up to a large desktop screen. So, on a mobile-responsive site, a smartphone would see your logo and menus in a vertical order, a tablet may see menus plus some text. A laptop or desktop would get the full website experience.

Google didn't give a time frame of when it would start penalizing websites for being mobile unfriendly, but now is always a good time to start. 🌱

**Renato Cruz Sogueco** is SAF's Chief Information Officer and the floral industry's go-to guy on everything tech. [rsogueco@safnow.org](mailto:rsogueco@safnow.org)

Because Facebook is truly its own special version of the Internet, it doesn't necessarily need to collaborate with anyone else, including Google, which can't consistently index Facebook posts, or Pages. This may be due to a variety of reasons; restrictive privacy settings, the lack of fans for a particular page.. Regardless, even if you or the search engine sorts it all out, Facebook often changes the rules on its own random prerogative.

You could test this yourself logging completely out of Facebook (as the user who manages your shop's page) and doing a search on your shop. If your Facebook listing pops up, great but if not, check out aforementioned settings and thresholds.

So how does social media relate to your website and overall online presence? Think of your website as the hub of your online presence and all the outside stuff such as social media as outposts for your business that enable you to push specific messages or content to specific potential customers — think Instagram for your younger customers, Facebook for their parents and LinkedIn to target business clients. However, the flow to these outposts is not one way — these outposts also feed the hub by engaging those same potential customers to act upon the content you pushed out.

"You don't put all of your marketing dollars into one radio station or one newspaper," so you're not going to choose just one social media outlet, Hudziak said. "You can re-use a lot of the same content across different channels," to streamline the effort.

### ADRIFT: THINK DESKTOP FIRST

### ASHORE: THINK MOBILE FIRST

On April 21, 2015, Google announced it tweaked its PageRank algorithm to demote websites that are not mobile responsive. In other words, if your site is not mobile responsive, you'll be buried in search results, which could result in fewer visits and ultimately, less Web sales. Sound drastic? Look at the data: ComScore recently reported that 186.3 million people in the U.S. own a smartphone (that's 76.6 percent of the population). This percentage continues to trend toward 100 percent. In May Google confirmed that more Google searches take place on mobile devices than on computers in 10 countries, including the U.S. and Japan.

What does all this mean for florists in day-to-day application?

First, it's important to know where your customers are coming from. To do that, check out your website's analytics page to see how many visits you get from mobile enabled customers. Most sites report anywhere from 35 percent to 40 percent — and growing.

From there, you need to make sure your site is mobile friendly. To do so, visit this Google tool to check: [google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly](http://google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly). If it's not mobile friendly, in the short-term, you should create a separate mobile-ready version of the website that is accessed by smartphones



### GO DEEPER

Need a refresher on how to create an online taxonomy for your shop, or how to best use Google+? Visit [safnow.org/moreonline](http://safnow.org/moreonline).