



THE Experience EFFECT

By transforming downtown Tempe into a floral festival, Arizona Flower Market attracted nearly 100,000 attendees, elevated local floral artists and helped grow the audience for flowers — earning SAF's 32nd annual Marketer of the Year award.

BY AMANDA JEDLINSKY

For decades, the floral industry has faced the same challenge: How to get people to buy flowers more often.

Not just on Valentine's Day. Not just on Mother's Day. Not just for weddings, funerals and anniversaries. But for everyday life.

That question led Brent Denham, Alexis Rigler, Brennen Rigler, Linda Miller and the team behind Arizona Flower Market to rethink their approach to marketing. Instead of promoting flowers as products, they began promoting flowers as experiences. The result was Tempe Blooms, a community-wide floral festival that has grown into Arizona's largest floral event and one of the country's most visible celebrations of flowers.

In just three years, Tempe Blooms has grown from a promising local festival into Arizona's largest floral event. Attendance climbed from 88,400 in 2024 to more than 99,500 in 2026, while social media reach soared from 910,000 impressions to more than 5 million. Today, the event transforms downtown Tempe into an immersive floral playground filled with installations, workshops, demonstrations, competitions, music and art. But its impact extends far beyond attendance figures.

Tempe Blooms represents a different way of thinking about floral marketing — one that prioritizes emotional connection, community engagement and long-term category growth over short-term product promotion. Just as importantly, it created new opportunities for local florists, artists, educators and small businesses to showcase their talents, reach new audiences and strengthen the community's appreciation for flowers.

DESIGNED TO CONNECT Alexis Rigler, market and social media manager for Arizona Flower Market, helped shape Tempe Blooms as a participatory, shareable experience that would resonate with younger consumers and build lasting connections with flowers.

BACKGROUND ART: SHUTTERSTOCK/TWINS DESIGN STUDIO

The campaign earned Arizona Flower Market the Society of American Florists' 32nd Annual Marketer of the Year award, which recognizes innovative and effective marketing programs across the floral industry. A panel of industry and marketing professionals selected Tempe Blooms from among this year's eight entries, citing its originality, scale and measurable results.

Judge Dani Mackey, a marketing communications professional, says the campaign stood out because it successfully brought flowers to consumers in a creative way while generating significant visibility and sales. "It had everything," she says. "I was wowed by it."

A Shift in Perspective

The idea emerged in the years following the pandemic, when Brent Denham and his team noticed that consumers were increasingly seeking meaningful experiences and connections.

"The realization wasn't a single moment — it was a shift in perspective that happened after the pandemic," Denham says. "As life returned to normal, we noticed people were craving connection and meaningful experiences more than ever before."

At the same time, they observed something happening every day across their floral businesses. Through both Arizona Family Florist and Arizona Flower Market, they watched customers interact with flowers in ways that went far beyond a typical transaction.

"Whenever people were around flowers, something changed," Denham says. "They slowed down. They touched the flowers. They smelled them. They smiled. Most importantly, they started telling stories."

Customers shared memories of grandparents who gardened, wedding bouquets, favorite flowers and loved ones they missed.

Those conversations sparked a realization.

"We weren't simply selling a product," Denham says. "Flowers create moments, memories and conversations. Our goal became helping people build a relationship with flowers long before they ever needed to purchase them."

That philosophy became the foundation for Tempe Blooms.

Tempe Blooms

The Campaign

Arizona Flower Market transformed downtown Tempe into an immersive floral festival featuring large-scale floral installations, educational seminars, hands-on workshops, design competitions, live demonstrations, artists, musicians and community partnerships. Rather than marketing flowers as products, the campaign invited consumers to experience them through art, education and interaction.

The Investment:

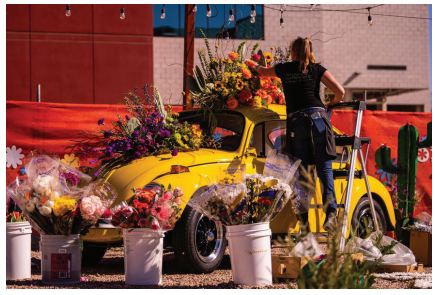
Approximately $23,000

Arizona Flower Market invested in large-scale floral installations, influencer programming, community events and experiential marketing. The investment also helped support participating florists through installation budgets, stipends, hard-good reimbursements and access to wholesale flowers and supplies.

The Return

- **99,500+** attendees
- **5 million** total social media reach
- **3.4 million** organic social media reach
- **78** earned media placements
- **67** participating vendors
- **45+** merchants and community partners
- **$134,549** in direct event sales for Arizona Flower Market







BRINGING THE VISION TO LIFE Local floral professionals transformed downtown Tempe into an immersive showcase, creating large-scale installations that invite the public to encounter flowers as art, entertainment and experience.









STAYING POWER Tempe Blooms encourages visitors to linger, explore and interact with floral art. Average visits grew from 3.5 hours in 2024 to five hours in 2025, demonstrating the festival's ability to engage attendees beyond a quick photo opportunity.

Designing an Experience

Arizona Flower Market had already begun experimenting with new ways to connect people with flowers.

The company partnered with schools, hosted educational experiences and invited consumers behind the scenes to learn how flowers move from farm to vase. These programs weren't designed to generate immediate sales. Instead, they were intended to create appreciation and curiosity.

Tempe Blooms became the natural next step.

Rather than inviting a few dozen people into their facility, Arizona Flower Market partnered with the Downtown Tempe Authority to bring flowers directly into the community.

The concept was ambitious: transform an entire downtown district into a floral experience where flowers become art, education, entertainment and social connection all at once.

Visitors encounter large-scale floral installations, mural artists, musicians, floral demonstrations, hands-on workshops, floral-themed food and beverage experiences, vendor markets and build-your-own-bouquet stations.

Instead of simply viewing flowers, attendees interact with them.

"People weren't rushing through the festival to check another event off their list," says Brennen Rigler. "They stayed. They explored. They attended demonstrations. They voted for their favorite installations. They asked designers questions. They built bouquets. They returned with friends and family."

Location-tracking data showed attendees spent significantly more time at the event, with average visits increasing from 3.5 hours in 2024 to 5 hours in 2025 — evidence that Tempe Blooms wasn't just attracting visitors but deeply engaging them.









ELEVATING FLORAL ARTISTRY Through installations, demonstrations and educational programs, Tempe Blooms gives floral professionals a prominent platform to share their creativity and help consumers see floral design as an art form.

Investing in the Industry

What makes Tempe Blooms especially noteworthy is that Arizona Flower Market intentionally designed the event to elevate other floral professionals — not just itself.

One of the festival's centerpieces is a floral installation competition that invites local florists and designers to create large-scale works of floral art throughout downtown Tempe. Participating designers receive flower budgets, stipends, reimbursement opportunities for hard goods and cash prize opportunities.

"This structure mattered," Brennen Rigler says. "We weren't simply asking florists to participate. We were investing in them."

The event also creates opportunities for participating designers to teach educational seminars, conduct demonstrations and connect directly with consumers.

For Blanca Mondragón, owner and creative director of Amazing Flowers, Tempe Blooms pushed her team to think bigger, take creative risks and approach floral design in new ways.

"It challenged my team and me to step outside our comfort zone and create work we never imagined possible," she says. "More importantly, it encouraged us to tell stories through flowers and helped our community see floral design as an art form rather than simply gifts for special occasions."

That impact has gained attention beyond Arizona. Brent Leech, AIFD, says the festival's growing scale and visibility have helped establish it as an important showcase for professional floral design.

"What started as an exciting floral celebration has quickly grown into one of the premier floral showcases in the country," Leech says. "With its continued growth, impressive installations and increasing national recognition, Tempe Blooms is positioning itself among the most significant floral events in the United States."

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Reaching a New Generation

Tempe Blooms also reflects a broader shift in consumer behavior, particularly among younger audiences.

"Younger consumers aren't looking to simply purchase products — they're looking for experiences they can participate in, share and remember," says Alexis Rigler, market and social media manager for Arizona Flower Market. "They value authenticity and connection."

Arizona Flower Market built the festival around participation. Visitors vote in floral competitions. They attend workshops. They create bouquets. They engage with designers. They photograph installations and share them on social media.

One of the festival's most successful initiatives is its People's Choice installation competition.

"People didn't simply admire the designs," Denham says. "They discussed them, voted for their favorites, encouraged friends to participate and returned to see them again."

Arizona Flower Market also recognized that those conversations could begin before opening day. Prior to the festival, the company invites social media influencers, media personalities and reporters to preview the installations, create content and experience the event firsthand. By the time the public arrives, stories and images are already circulating online, helping build anticipation and extending the festival's reach.



PARTNERSHIP POWER The Downtown Tempe Authority team, Arizona Flower Market's largest and most essential partner for Tempe Blooms, helps transform downtown Tempe into a vibrant, flower-filled celebration.

Growing the Audience for Flowers

The Arizona Flower Market team never viewed Tempe Blooms as simply a marketing campaign. The company viewed it as an investment in the future of floriculture.

"Traditional marketing often asks, 'How many arrangements can we sell this week?'" Denham says. "Our question was different: 'How do we help thousands of people develop a stronger relationship with flowers?'"

That philosophy shaped every decision, from providing stipends to florists to creating educational programming and community partnerships.

"Too often businesses view one another as competitors," Denham says. "We wanted Tempe Blooms to demonstrate a different philosophy — that we can also be ambassadors for our industry."

The results suggest that approach is working.

Tempe Blooms has become a platform that introduces new consumers to flowers, elevates floral professionals and demonstrates the power of experiential marketing in a category traditionally driven by transactions.

For Denham and his team, however, the greatest success isn't the attendance numbers or media coverage. It's the conversations.

"Nearly everyone has a flower story," he says. "Whether it's a floral scent that reminds them of someone they lost, a wedding bouquet, a loved one's favorite flower or memories from childhood, flowers have an incredible ability to connect people to meaningful moments in their lives."

And in a world increasingly hungry for connection, Tempe Blooms has found a way to make flowers part of that story.

Amanda Jedlinsky is the senior director of content and communications for the Society of American Florists and editor in chief of Floral Management.

Thank You

The Society of American Florists extends its appreciation to Design Master, a division of Smithers-Oasis, which sponsors the contest's $5,000 cash prize.

SAF also thanks the volunteer judges whose thoughtful review and industry expertise helped select this year's winner:

- **Ryan Black, AAF**, Jet Fresh Flower Distributors
- **Lisa Hays Holmes**, Tiger Lily Florist
- **Victoria Register**, FernTrust
- **Dani Mackey,** Dani Mackey Communications
- **Lori Wheat, AAF**, Lafayette Florist
- **Holly Haveman, AAF**, Kennedy's Flowers & Gifts



SAF AMELIA ISLAND 26

141st Annual Convention



Many thanks to the individuals and organizations who helped make SAF Amelia Island 2026 a success!

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