

Floral Management's
Marketer of the Year

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Run *for the* Roses

by kristin young

Wish you could think of a flower promotion that would guarantee you a spot on the evening news? Brook Jacobs did and saw his sales jump 20 percent, earning him *Floral Management's* Marketer of the Year award.



How many times

can you say you've had a lengthy line of people anxiously waiting for you to unlock your store? You could if you follow Brook Jacobs' lead, the owner of Greenbrook Flowers in Jackson, Miss., but you'll have to give away free a few roses — 15,000, that is.

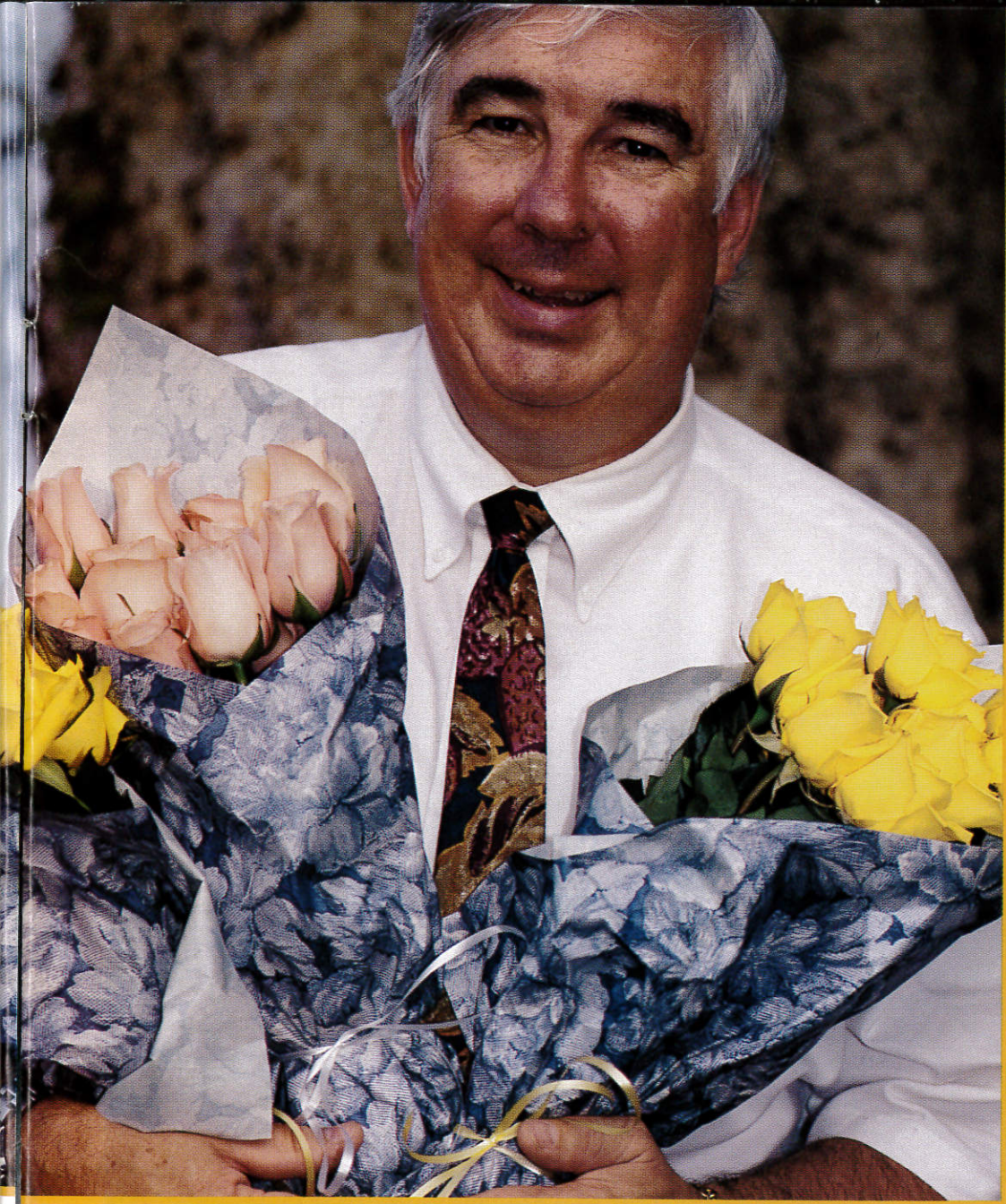
Jacobs' plan began in 1994 as a way to give something back to the community, a way that people could tell each other they were appreciated. But it brought bigger results than he ever imagined, turning slow months at the end of the year into profit generators and winning him *Floral Management's* coveted Marketer of the Year award for 1997. Here's how he made it happen.



Free-for-All

When kids are back in school and the days are turning cooler, most florists are looking for ways to entice customers into their store during September. Jacobs initiated a way to line up more than a thousand people outside his store, grab all the media's attention in the city of Jackson and make a profit from the after-glow of his free rose promotion.

What's the catch? Each rose recipient has to give away 11 of the stems to others in the spirit of love and friendship. This offering of goodwill touching thousands of hearts has blossomed into a Jackson tradition called Good Neighbor Day. "This is a way for us," Jacobs says, "to reach out to other people and say 'I want to be your friend. We appreciate



Brook Jacobs handed out more than 35,000 roses at Greenbrook Flowers in Jackson, Miss.

that would run two weeks prior to Good Neighbor Day.

"This would have cost thousands and thousands of dollars if I had paid for it myself," Jacobs said. "But the media likes to help out if it is for the good of the community."

With all the free media publicity he could ever need — a front-page story and photo about Jacob's rose giveaway bumped the beginning of the O.J. Simpson trial to the bottom of the page — Jacob's name has since become synonymous with roses. And after the five television and three radio stations thoroughly captured the day's happenings, Jacobs can't sit in a restaurant in the town of

you." I'm just providing the vehicle. The rose is the best item that crosses all language barriers. Everyone understands that a rose means friendship."

Instead of offering one rose, the giveaway of a dozen added the "zing" and the draw that a single stem would not accomplish. Slated now for the second Wednesday in September, Jacobs chose the date to give florists a way to pep up their sales for a slow month, and a chance for growers to move their extra roses.

An Idea Blooms

Although a free dozen roses should easily entice customers into any store,

Jacobs didn't want to pay for both the roses and publicity. He earmarked \$2,800 to pay for the 15,000 roses he dedicated to give away, but then he began knocking on doors in his search for a co-sponsor. He talked to the mayor of Jackson and received a letter of endorsement, lending credibility to his "Good Neighbor Day." With letter in hand, he went to the media, selling his plight that he couldn't give the roses away and generate the attention the initial Good Neighbor Day would need. The local NBC affiliate gave him 80 thirty-second advertising spots, which they produced for him. The daily newspaper gave him a two-column by six-inch ad

450,000 without someone coming up to him and saying, "Aren't you the guy with the roses?" All of this attention cost him less than \$3,000 to get his rose giveaway started, but his marketing maneuver has netted him a profitable increase in business. Because of his brainchild, his rose sales jumped from 1,000 stems each week to 10,000 stems each week year-round.

"When you give to your neighborhood," says Jacobs, "they give back to you in the form of their business."

Counting on Coupons

Once the people came to his store for the freebie, Jacobs' needed the hook to

bring them back. He made the combination coupon and care tag that would be included with each dozen roses wrapped in tissue paper. On one side, there are rose care tips and instructions on how Good Neighbor Day is supposed to work. A coupon doubles as the other side, offering a dozen roses for \$9.95. Printed on bright paper — hot pink, yellow or green — the coupon demands attention, but also demands action with a two-month expiration date. “You copy off exactly the amount of coupons as the dozens of roses you want to give away,” says Jacobs “and when you run out of coupons, you’re done wrapping roses.”

And if that coupon doesn’t bring customers into the store, there’s the targeted mailing he generates from the “guest book.” “You can have people sign their name, address and phone number while in line,” he says, “and you can create a mailing from that information.”

But just because he’s now giving away upward of 35,000 roses, he wouldn’t dream of taking any care and handling shortcuts. “We still cut them under water, he says, even if this year he expects to give away double what he sells for Valentine’s Day. And in dealing with that many roses, one lesson he learned: Get volunteers to help hand them out. “We had everyone at the store wrapping roses and had no one to do arrangements,” he says.

Haggling Helps

Just like he negotiated for publicity, Jacobs also made deals with his wholesalers.

“To get people to back you,” Jacob says, “you have to do some major talking.” In his smooth southern drawl, Jacobs’ pitch was hard to resist when he told his wholesalers that through this program he would create sales for them all year long. “They think you are crazy,” he says, “but after the first year, everything fell into place.”

For the first year, he paid \$2,800 for

Brook Jacobs’ marketing masterpiece captured tons of free publicity from television and radio stations and newspapers — and his store saw an instant rise in its total sales.

15,000 roses and gave them all away by 10 a.m. Last year, he topped that number by more than half. He’s not picky about the colors because, “if you want to give them to me,” he says, “I’ll take whatever I get.” He does insist on good quality so the recipients can be proud of what they are giving and getting.

For example, this year Jacobs will buy 10,000 roses at 8 cents a stem from one wholesaler, and the wholesaler will donate an additional 3,500 roses to Good Neighbor Day. Even the

freight is donated. His first year, Jacobs paid 15 cents per stem and his freight. “You become better at what you do,” says Jacobs about his haggling skills. “I have proved to them (the wholesalers) that my rose sales have increased.”



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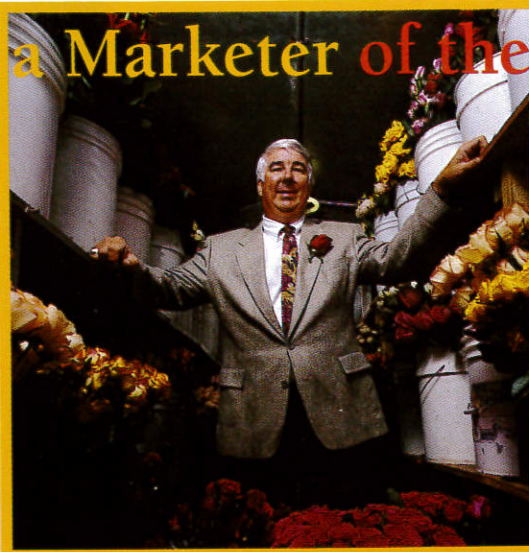
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What Makes a Marketer of the Year?

When *Floral Management* launched the Marketer of the Year award in 1994, we hoped to draw attention to some of the industry's outstanding marketing efforts — and inspire the rest of the industry with their ideas. Once again, *Floral Management* invited retailers, wholesalers and growers to take part in the contest, luring them with the prospect of a \$5,000 cash prize, a change from the \$2,500 awarded in two categories in previous years. For the fourth year in a row, the cash prize is sponsored by Design Master color tool, Inc.



With his rose giveaway a success, Brook Jacobs now sells 10 times more roses than he averaged three years ago, a quantity that gives him more negotiating power with growers and wholesalers.

Flowers & Gifts in Seattle, Wash.

Steve Dahllof, vice president of marketing with Ogilvy Adams & Rinehart, the agency that handles the Society of American Florists' national consumer relations campaign.

Barry Gottlieb, grower/ importer, Continental Farms in Miami.

Joan Watson, AAF, retailer, Sunflowers 1-800-FLOWERS in Phoenix, Ariz.

The Criteria

What constitutes an outstanding marketing effort? The judges are charged with reviewing the entries and rating each entrant in the following six categories:

- Effectiveness of campaign*
- Originality*
- Success*
- Use of available resources*
- Professionalism*
- Overall excellence*

The Judges

We knew that only experienced marketers with a track record of success could make such judgments. So, each year we choose a panel of seasoned professionals from within and outside the floral industry.

George Boulton, retailer, Flowers by George in Arlington, Wash.

J. Sten Crissey, AAF, retailer, Crissey

How to Enter

Want to enter next year's Marketer of the Year contest? Call, fax or e-mail a request for an entry form to Cheryl Burke at *Floral Management*: (800) 336-4743; fax (800) 208-0078; e-mail cburke@safnow.org. Applications for the 1998 award will be mailed after the first of the year.



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Jacobs' Way

In the middle of summer when other florists see their businesses come to almost a standstill, Jacobs' coolers need revolving doors to keep up with his brisk rose business — averaging 11,200 roses each week, more than 10 times the number he averaged three years ago. To fulfill his need for roses, he has been able to negotiate a standing weekly order of 5,000 roses for 10 cents per stem from one wholesaler. This price is even guaranteed during Valentine's Day when other florists are paying \$1 or \$1.50 per stem. "You just can't beat those savings," says Jacobs. "And it's all due to my wholesalers knowing I'm giving them business through Good Neighbor Day."



Measure of Success

The success of Good Neighbor Day isn't truly measured in the number of free roses Jacobs gives away — it's the amount of business he receives after the promotion that he banks on. After his first Good Neighbor Day, Jacobs saw his store's total sales for October go up 20 percent. "Our phones began to ring off the hook," he says, "and we had tons of people ordering flowers. And here I'm selling it all at regular price." The skyrocketing sales continued through the new year. Jacobs saw his outgoing FTD holiday orders shoot up from 17 percent to 48 percent of all outgoing FTD holiday orders made by Jackson's 21 florists.



What it Can Do for You

Good Neighbor Day has made more than one florist a winner when it comes to marketing the store and increasing total sales. "It was hard the first year to get across to people that giving away your product will produce more positive results than they could imagine," he says. Now that florists have seen the results from the first

year's guinea pig effort, they are putting the promotion to the test in their own stores.

"Everyone who has embraced it says it is the best thing they have ever done," Jacobs says. Now, with 1,100 florists participating in the program that is now under FTD's umbrella and collectively giving away more than 10 million roses last year, Jacobs says it's

a boost for the industry.

"When you give something in love," Jacobs says, "love comes back to you. You develop a loyal following." And it's a loyal following that has made his business even more prosperous. ■

Kristin Young is senior editor of Floral Management.



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