

floral management

THE FLORAL BUSINESS AUTHORITY

OCTOBER 2014 | VOLUME 31 | NUMBER 8

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FIRST BLUSH

Euforia's 'Blushing Parasol' takes top honors in SAF's 2014 Outstanding Varieties Competition



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> COVER PHOTO BY BETSY HANSEN



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Viewpoint BY ART CONFORTI, PFCI

WHY WE SHOULD THANK JEFF BEZOS

> The latest change to hit the floral industry that will — or should — influence everything we do isn't from within the industry. It's from Silicon Valley, from the entity that has had more influence on retailing than any other: Amazon. Its latest venture: AmazonFresh. No fancy storefront, just a service-driven standard with a powerful website and mobile interface — and a marketing budget no local florist could ever match.

If you are of the mindset that Proflowers is the local florist's biggest competitor, then it's time to welcome the new Proflowers of our future. Amazon's latest venture offers its Prime members free same-day and early morning delivery of orders of \$35 or more of "more than 500,000 everyday essentials . . . whether it's apples, shampoo, or a digital camera, we've got what you need . . . delivered at the time slot of your choice."

Sound familiar? That's right, they will be doing what we already do.

This is not necessarily a bad thing. Just as shopping for flowers once meant visiting your local florist, sending flowers overnight will seem like an eternity. "Why have it tomorrow when I can have it now?" This is what Amazon will introduce.

The reason Proflowers did so well is because no one could match their marketing dollars. I'm happy to see Amazon going after this same-day business, because they're going to be marketing same-day fresh, and same-day fresh is what we do.

This is an opportunity for the local florist, provided that we all agree on the following: Today's retail florist needs to be a "yes we can" florist. That means we say, "Yes we can!" to all requests. We need to focus on service and design — in that order. Service must come first. The most creative, stunning design has no value if it is delivered late.

We need to eliminate delivery cut-offs. If we are open, we should deliver it. If a customer requires a late delivery, develop a plan to accomplish that. We need to deliver any product, no matter what the cost. If a customer is willing to pay for delivery, why should it matter what they purchase from us?

Last but not least, we need to market more. And part of our marketing message needs to include the value of shopping with us: Shop local, save more.



This is where we need our wire services and organizations like the Society of American Florists (SAF) to step in and make competing more affordable. SAF should start making the same-day delivery message a central theme of its beautiful posters — and shops need to commit to using these posters in their stores. SAF could raise its dues and then provide the posters and other materials to florists quarterly.

If you don't have a marketing plan, if you think you don't need to be marketing during the holidays because you have done so well for so long, then you will fade away. Remove the blinders and realize customers have more choices than ever before. AmazonFresh, being tested in Northern and Southern California and Seattle, will be in all of our back yards soon. In doing so, they will bring expectations back to what we do best as an industry: same-day delivery. Are you ready? 🌸

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floral key

EA = each YD = yard STM = stem
 BU = bunch BG = bag CS = case

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What Inspires Us

> “You sell dependability. You sell service. You sell romance. You sell comfort.”

That’s what noted gift industry consultant and successful retailer Mary Liz Curtin told a crowd of about 400 retailers, growers and suppliers, gathered August 16 for her keynote address at SAF Marco Island 2014.

For the next three days, it seemed as if she were putting those words to the test.



Like each of the 26 speakers at SAF’s 130th annual convention, Mary Liz received a stunning bouquet of flowers, created by Sylvia Bird, AIFD, PFCI, and the volunteer convention design team (meet them and check out

their creations in the “Design Team” folder on [flickr.com/photos/societyofamericanflorists/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/societyofamericanflorists/)). Three hours after her keynote, Mary Liz emailed me a photo of the bouquet, resting in a cup of water on a table, and wrote, “My bouquet and I are in a restaurant at the airport. Updates to follow.”

Little did Sylvia — not to mention the breeders, growers, distributors and processors — know that their part in making

that beautiful bouquet happen would be put to the test. Mary Liz wasn’t about to leave it in her hotel room; she wanted to take it home. Only thing is, the route between Marco Island, Fla., and Detroit would rival that of John Candy’s and Steve Martin’s in the 1980s movie, “Planes, Trains, Automobiles” (minus bio-hazards and near-collisions with semis).

From Ft. Myers, Mary Liz connected through Atlanta, where she spent some time in the Delta Sky Club and then flew to La Guardia. From there — a few cab rides later — she attended a gift industry awards dinner, where she was honored by Gift and Decorative Accessories magazine, followed by a day at the Javits Center for the gift show, after which she high-tailed it back to LaGuardia for the final leg of her trip, to Detroit Metropolitan Airport.

During its long journey, the bouquet was wedged, perched, propped and balanced: in seat-back pockets, on empty seats in airport gates, planes and cabs and on nightstands and tables — including one on the rooftop of a hotel in New York, where it put her newly acquired Retail Excellence Award, a Waterford vase, to practical use (see photo).

Mary Liz said it was almost as fun as traveling with her puppy, something she had done a few weeks prior: lots of comments and smiles from onlook-



ers. (Although she lamented that no one asked, “Were you a bridesmaid?” or “Where’s the groom?”). Her favorite comment: A man in an elevator said to his little boy, “Man, somebody must be in big trouble.”

Dependability, service, romance and comfort. With just one bouquet (and more than 2,000 miles), Mary Liz experienced each of what she considers a florist’s deliverables. Did the arrangement make it home? You betcha (dependability). It landed a spot on her kitchen table on August 19, only slightly worse for wear, where it enjoyed a few more days of admiration. But don’t take my word for it: follow the bouquet’s journey from Marco Island back to Detroit, in photos, posted at [safnow.org/moreonline](https://www.safnow.org/moreonline). 📸

Kate Penn
kpenn@safnow.org

More Online ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON WWW.SAFNOW.ORG



NEXT BEST THING TO BEING THERE . . .

Missed SAF Marco Island 2014? Check out the photos from the convention, from the very first reception to the two dozen educational events and competitions right through to the last event, the Stars of the Industry Awards Dinner. [flickr.com/photos/societyofamericanflorists/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/societyofamericanflorists/)



THE MEAT OF IT

Want to get just a taste of the depth of the content delivered at SAF Marco Island 2014? The more than two dozen speakers delivered an extraordinary amount of best business practices — some of which is captured on handouts and powerpoints. [safnow.org/Marco2014handouts](https://www.safnow.org/Marco2014handouts)



FROM THE HORSE’S MOUTH

Cynics of the world, we suspect you’ve read our coverage of SAF’s convention (p. 10), and you still wonder, “Is it really worth it?” Look for “SAF Marco Island 2014 Testimonials” on [Youtube.com/safvision](https://www.youtube.com/safvision)



FALL WEB BANNER GRAPHICS

SAF offers a year’s worth of beautiful, colorful graphics you can put on your Facebook page and website. Take advantage of the season’s offerings — for Halloween and Thanksgiving, plus everyday occasions — readily available for downloading. [safnow.org/banner-ad-library](https://www.safnow.org/banner-ad-library)

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Mixing Work with Pleasure

Among the dozens of rave reviews SAF received for SAF Marco Island 2014 (p. 10):

> This convention is the kick in the pants I needed to help me refocus on the big picture for my shop and develop an action plan for what I need to do instead of just putting out fires.

Christina Brown, *Roses Are Red Florist*
Melbourne, Fla.

> Don't think there is "nothing new" [at SAF's convention] or that you know it all. SAF masters a convention that is friendly and informative. You meet, share experiences and learn from other florists, growers and suppliers in a non-biased atmosphere. Who can resist being inspired by an industry that shares a common passion and understanding that flowers touch hearts?

Ken LeBlanc, *Clear Lake Flowers*
Houston, Texas

> With all the continuous changes in our industry, the education programs at the SAF convention have helped me stay informed and competitive in my market.

Nick Rotunno, *Al's Florist and Gifts*
Hollywood, Fla.

> It's been a few years since we have attended SAF's convention, but we were quickly reminded of the wonderful camaraderie fostered by SAF. This was a great learning and networking opportunity that we highly recommend for those considering attending.

Rochette W. Allen, *AAF*
Billy Allen Rochette's Florist LLC
Farmville, Va.

> Camaraderie and peer support is the most rewarding benefit of the convention, but everyone is also bound to find several education sessions which will pay almost immediate dividends.

Tim Galea, *Norton's Flowers*
Ypsilanti, Mich.

> Meeting with experienced and seasoned colleagues really steps up your vibe. When away from work and the office, you are in a zone to focus on your business, to identify its weaknesses and to capitalize on the advantages right at your disposal.

Emerson Cadette, *Flowers Express Inc.*
St Lucia, West Indies



HEATHER WAITS
Owner
Bloomtastic Florist
Columbus, OH



I WAS A SKEPTICAL FLORIST

"I sat in on a workshop Tim Huckabee conducted at a SAF convention a few years ago but still felt like we didn't need his training. After all, I thought, we're friendly to our customers and don't want to scare anyone away with 'sales pressure'. Nevertheless, I know that smart business owners invest in education, so I thought I would give it a try. I brought Tim on-site to train my staff and we were all blown away!

Not only did we have a great time, since Tim makes learning fun and easy, we totally overhauled our approach to sales and service. Tim taught us how to really engage customers and help them to shop. The funny part is that once he taught us how to ask fewer questions and just listen better **our sales actually rose by double digits!** And I have seen consistent, **steady increases in our average sale and staff morale.**

Whether you are a big shop or small one, new or old, you can't afford to be a skeptical florist anymore. Call **FloralStrategies**, it's the best move I ever made for my business!"



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SAF in Action

BUSINESS EDUCATION NETS TOP TAKEAWAYS FOR SAF CONVENTION ATTENDEES



GREETINGS SAF President Shirley Lyons, AAF, PFCI, (left) welcomed a record-breaking 95 first-timers — of nearly 400 attendees — to SAF Marco Island 2014. Newcomer Jeanne Ha, AIFD, owner of Park Florist in Takoma Park, Md., took home the second runner-up prize in the Sylvia Cup Design Competition.

> The appeal of sand and surf didn't sway the nearly 400 attendees at the Society of American Florists' (SAF) 130th annual convention, Aug. 13-16, in Marco Island, Fla. They were far too intent on soaking up new ways to better their businesses.

For Lenzee Bilke, of Madeline's Flower Shop in Edmond, Okla., that meant casting a critical eye on her window displays after getting new ideas from Kristine Kratt, AIFD, PFCI, and Bill Schaffer, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, of Schaffer Designs in Philadelphia. Their "Storefront ROI: Put Your Window to Work" session provided an overview of

best practices in visual merchandising along with advice about lighting, color, sourcing props and other nitty-gritty details. "We have huge windows, and I got some great ideas on holiday displays," said Bilke. She was one of four recipients of an FTD scholarship to attend the convention.

Kratt and Schaffer, who also presented "Fashion Forward: 2015 Floral Trends," received another thumbs up from first-time attendee Joey Neubauer of Neubauer's Flowers in Uniontown, Pa. "Kristine and Bill made it easy to understand the trends," Neubauer said, including what to focus on, what to ignore, and how to realistically translate trends into floral designs.

Doug Lindamood, of Calla Lily Ltd. and George's Flowers in Roanoke, Va., was attracted to the tech sessions at his first SAF convention. "The programs on social media photography and video are so key to the future of our industry," he said.

"Hiring for Results" speaker Glenna Hecht drew praise from Keith Hill, DMD, of Beaverton, Ore., for explaining how to pinpoint candidates with skills, attitude and personality traits that deliver specific results. "Her insight was excellent," said Hill, who owns Beaverton Florists and is a representative of the Real Local Florist network.

Beyond the educational programs, convention participants were drawn to Florida by the chance to meet and talk

informally with motivated, forward-thinking members from all segments. "Networking is the primary reason for attending," said Leanne Kesler, AIFD, PFCI, of the Floral Design Institute in Portland, Ore., who called the atmosphere "open and inviting."

Convention veteran Robert Shibata, AAF, of Mt. Eden Wholesale in San Jose, Calif., singled out the State of the Industry breakfast presentation by SAF CEO Peter Moran and SAF Chairman Robert Williams II, AAF, PFCI, vice president of Smithers-Oasis — North American Operations. He said the exploration of macro trends and evolving consumer behavior "always gets you thinking about the future and issues we should all consider. ... It's a unique opportunity to step back and see the vast landscape in which most industry businesses operate." 🌿

Download convention program handouts from safnow.org/marcoislandhandouts.

Next year's convention takes place Sept. 9-12 in Amelia Island, Fla., but meanwhile the opportunities for education continue at SAF. On Tuesday, Nov. 11, pick up best practices for boosting holiday phone sales by listening to Tim Huckabee's secret shopper calls and analysis during the webinar CSI: Flower Shop - Live! Thanksgiving and Holiday Calls. Visit safnow.org/webinars for details.

Statistical snapshot of SAF Marco Island 2014

25



Sylvia Cup Designers

26



Educational programs & workshops

30



Expert speakers & panelists

95



First-time attendees

254



Varieties of flowers, foliage & plants

380



Attendees from 38 states and 5 foreign countries

4,909



Miles traveled most distant U.S.-based attendee (Anchorage, Alaska)

14,885



Miles traveled by most distant non-U.S.-based attendee (Sydney, Australia)

SAF in Action



ONE FOR ALL Retailers, wholesalers — like Chicago’s Gustavo Gilchrist of Kennicott Brothers Company — and growers took away relevant ideas and information from a convention program with something for everyone.



1+1=3 Attending together was a no-brainer for Nathan and Jacob Johnson of Watson’s Flower Shop in Tempe, Ariz. Like many attendees who came with business partners and employees, they figured two heads are better than one.



BRANDED A good story ... that’s the secret behind iconic brands like Target and FedEx, said keynote speaker Mary Liz Curtin, and the floral industry has one that’s ready-made: “You take care of people during their happiest and saddest moments of their lives.” The award-winning retailer — Curtin owns the iconic Detroit shop Leon & Lulu — also shared marketing and merchandising tips for selling slow-movers during the aptly-titled session, “Who Let the Dogs Out.”



HOMWORK After touring Outstanding Varieties, these girls should have no trouble writing that “What I did on my summer vacation” essay. The competition included 254 varieties of cut flowers, cut foliage, potted plants and bedding plants.



GOOGLE IT Attendees appreciated the tech sessions, which took on complex topics and put them into easy-to-digest terms such as the program on online advertising presented by Joshua Glass, AAF, of Peoples Flower Shops in Albuquerque.



STARTING EARLY The family-friendly location enticed some attendees to bring the kids along. Jacinth Reese of Oregon Flowers, Inc., in Aurora, Ore., introduced her five-month-old son to networking as she chatted with Kasey Cronquist, IOM, PFCI, of the California Cut Flower Commission.



HEADS TURNED During the Premier Products Showcase, attendees sat in the center while four PFCI commentators showed off products displayed around the room.



THE LOOK René van Rems, AIFD, of René van Rems International, earned praise for his cool blend of practical tips and inspiration during “Stylin’ for Profit.”



ROAD TRIP Sara Harmon and Warren Johnson of Nosegay Flowers drove 1,078 miles from Washington, D.C., to attend the SAF convention.



TAKEAWAYS Smartphones and tablets in hand, attendees recorded the latest directions in floral design during Fashion Forward: Floral Trends 2015.



WINDOW DRESSING Kristine Kratt, AIFD, PFCI, and Bill Schaffer, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, brought a double dose of daring design to SAF Marco Island 2014. Their session on storefront ROI was packed with merchandising ideas designed to generate more walk-in sales.

SAF in Action

STARS TAKE SPOTLIGHT AT SAF AWARDS DINNER



FLORICULTURE HALL OF FAME An audience of about 400 stood and cheered as Ken Tagawa, chairman of Tagawa, Inc., of Brighton, Colo., made his way to the podium to accept the Floriculture Hall of Fame — the industry's highest honor — during the Stars of the Industry Awards Dinner at the close of SAF's 130th annual convention. Known for his calm and quiet demeanor, Tagawa drew friendly laughter with his opening words: "We Tagawas are not a very chatty bunch."

Tagawa Inc. — which includes Tagawa Greenhouses, Tagawa Gardens and Ball Tagawa Growers — has been on the leading edge of many innovations. One of the first companies to adapt automatic seeding technology, Tagawa's early adoption of it led to the development of commercial production of plugs. To improve plug quality, Tagawa created a template concept that guides growers on what to do on each day so the product can be consistently produced to the highest quality possible.

Character and integrity are hallmarks of an SAF Hall of Fame inductee. "Ken Tagawa set the standard for ethical behavior, relationship building and business smarts," said SAF Awards Committee member David Gaul, AAF, of DWF Wholesale Florists in Denver, Colo. "Combine that with hard work, dedication and leadership by action, and you have a blueprint for success in business, community and family." (See "Man with a Plan," p. 38.)



PAUL ECKE, JR. AWARD David Armellini, the president and CEO of Armellini Express Lines Inc., in Palm City, Fla., received the 2014 SAF Paul Ecke, Jr. Award, which represents exemplary devotion to profession, industry and community. "For more than two decades David Armellini has used his impressive knowledge of transportation, logistics and communications to introduce new ideas to the family business and industry — and also to give back to the community," said SAF Chairman and Awards Committee member Robert Williams II, AAF, PFCI, of Smithers-Oasis — North American Operations in Kent, Ohio.



GOLD MEDAL AWARD David Clark, Ph.D., professor in the University of Florida's Department of Environmental Horticulture, received SAF's Gold Medal Award for his work developing coleus. The award honors the originator or introducer of a widely distributed plant or flower that has become established as an outstanding product of significant horticultural and commercial value. SAF Awards Committee member Marvin Miller, Ph.D., AAF, of Ball Horticultural Co. in West Chicago, Ill., lauded Clark's groundbreaking research "improving the quality, color and variety of coleus and for generating consumer enthusiasm for the plant."



ALEX LAURIE AWARD FOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION John Dole, Ph.D., (right) head of the Department of Horticultural Science at North Carolina State University, received the Alex Laurie Award. "Dr. Dole has been a recognized leader in developing new production and post-harvest procedures for a wide range of cut flowers and other floral crops," said SAF Awards Committee member Marvin Miller, Ph.D., AAF, of Ball Horticultural Co. in West Chicago, Ill. (left). As a teacher at the undergraduate and graduate levels, Dole mentored countless students, — "many of whom have gone on to make their own valuable contributions to floriculture," Miller said.



TOMMY BRIGHT AWARD The impact of receiving the Tommy Bright honor was more than evident as Joyce Mason-Monheim, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, AzMF, stepped to the podium. It recognizes lifetime achievement in floral presentation by a member of SAF's Professional Floral Communicators — International. "Joyce is inclusive, approachable and relatable — she's an amazing educator," said PFCI Board of Trustees Chairman Lisa Weddel, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, of L. Weddel Design in Highlands Ranch, Colo.

SAF in Action



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF FLORICULTURE (AAF) Membership in AAF marks devotion to volunteer service on behalf of the floral industry and the local community. The honorees, whose contributions were detailed in the August issue of *Floral Management*, were formally inducted during the awards ceremony. Left to right: Eileen Looby Weber, AAF, of Lake Forest Flowers & Greenhouses in Lake Forest, Ill.; Carlos Manuel Uribe, AAF, of Flores El Capiro S.A. in Medellín, Colombia; Joyce Mason-Monheim, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, AzMF, of Designer Destination in Tucson, Ariz.; Joshua Glass, AAF, Peoples Flower Shops in Albuquerque, N.M.; Christie Ann Cothrun, AAF, AzMF, of Baisch & Skinner in Phoenix; Dana Cook, AAF, of Julia's Florist in Wilmington, N.C.; and Rochette "Rochie" Webb Allen, AAF, of Rochette's Florist in Farmville, Va.



PROFESSIONAL FLORAL COMMUNICATORS – INTERNATIONAL (PFCI) SAF's floral industry speakers bureau officially welcomed its newest members (left to right): Derek C. Woodruff, AIFD, PFCI, CF, of Floral Underground and Fleur Couture Cabaret in Traverse City, Mich.; Gary Tharnish, PFCI, of Burton Tyrrell's Flowers, Inc., in Lincoln, Neb.; Derrick P. Myers, CPA, CFP, PFCI, of Crockett, Myers and Associates, Glen Burnie, Md.; and (not shown) Sharon Sabin Ivey, AIFD, PFCI, GMF, of Darien, Ga. "Their unique viewpoints are a good reflection of our well-rounded organization," said PFCI Board of Trustees Chairman Lisa Weddel, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, of L. Weddel Design in Highlands Ranch, Colo.

CENTURY AWARD

SAF celebrates the longevity of floral industry companies in operation for 100 years or more with the Century Award. This year, two businesses and one trade association received recognition: George Didden Greenhouses in Hatfield, Pa.; C.J. Sanderson & Son Florist in Woodbury, N.J. — pictured here are shop owners Dr. Kenneth Sanderson and his wife showing off their plaque — and the Texas State Florists' Association.

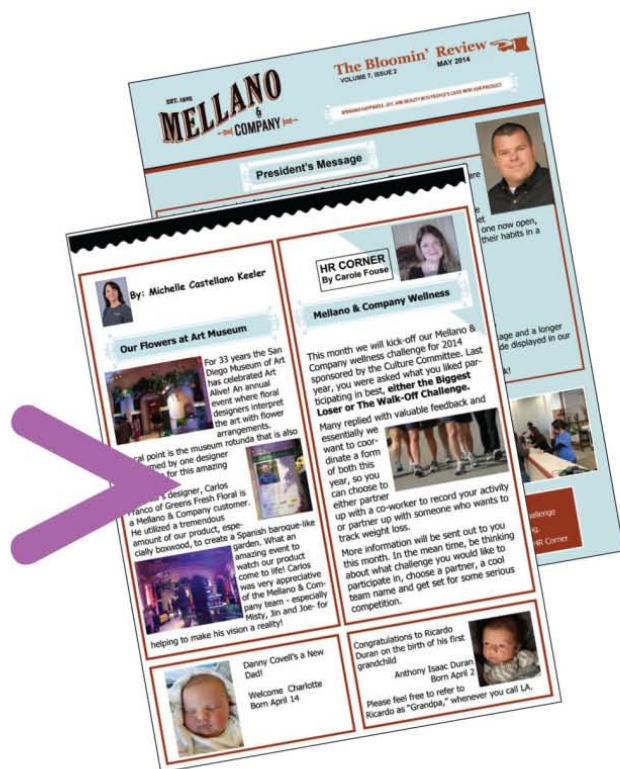


SYLVIA CUP DESIGN COMPETITION Jacob McCall, AAF, AIFD, FSMD, (left) of The Elite Flower, in Miami, took home the Grand Prize — \$3,000, a silver trophy cup and complimentary registration to SAF Amelia Island 2015 — in the Sylvia Cup Design Competition. "It is an honor to be among the elite alumni who have won this prestigious award in the past," McCall said. "I love competing, and this competition has been a lifelong dream to win." First runner-up Derek C. Woodruff, AIFD, PFCI, CF, (center) of Floral Underground and Fleur Couture Cabaret in Traverse City, Mich., won \$500; and second runner-up Jeanne Ha, AIFD, owner of Park Florist in Takoma Park, Md., took home \$250.

Feb. 1, 2015, is the deadline to submit nominations and applications for SAF's honors. Download applications and get information from safnow.org/awards. Recipients of the 2015 awards will be honored during SAF Amelia Island 2015, SAF's 131st annual convention, Sept. 9-12, at the Ritz Carlton in Amelia Island, Fla.

Hands On

TIPS, TRENDS AND TACTICS FOR THE SAVVY RETAILER



FIT TO PRINT Mellano & Company's "The Bloomin' Review" internal newsletter reports on company news and morale-boosting initiatives, including a World Cup-themed competition last summer, says Michelle Castellano Keeler, vice president of corporate affairs, in blue soccer jersey, alongside San Luis Rey office employees Dave McPhetridge, Rachel Padilla, Jennifer Maldonado, Nathalie Olvera and Leonor Rojas.

FIRST HAND ACCOUNT

NEWSLETTER HELPS EMPLOYEES READ ALL ABOUT COMPANY NEWS

At Mellano & Company, an internal newsletter is helping to put team members on the same page, often literally, and boost their morale. Several years ago the company, which has several locations in California and an office in Nevada, launched its newsletter, "The Bloomin' Review." "We wanted people to feel more connected," even if they didn't work in the same office or department, explained Michelle Castellano Keeler, vice president of corporate affairs.

Before the newsletter, managers routinely met with employees, but it was hard to provide a larger picture, and Keeler worried that some employees felt isolated — or didn't understand how their specific job affected and influenced others. Now, the monthly newsletter, available in print and electronic formats and in English and Spanish, helps each employee understand his or her role within the business and keeps everyone up to date on changes, new policies and products. (A college intern works on the Spanish translations, which are especially important for some of the company's farm workers.)

In addition to a regular update from company president, the newsletter routinely profiles employees, lists staff birthdays and important floral holidays and includes tips from the HR, legal and IT departments (Keeler asks employees from various departments to contribute). The newsletter also focuses on

company-wide initiatives, such as its wellness program modeled on the popular "The Biggest Loser" TV show, customer news and even candid discussions of management's decision-making process — last spring, for instance, a story highlighted the company's past efforts to improve sustainability and reported on ongoing experiments with higher efficiency LED lighting in hoop houses.

Still, "fun" is a big part of the newsletter (and the company atmosphere), too, Keeler said. "This summer we had an ice cream truck show up at each location and we ran pictures of that," she said. And, of course, the newsletter also includes, well, news. On the heels of SAF Marco Island 2014 (see p. 10), for instance, Keeler reported on the State of the Industry address, delivered by SAF CEO Peter Moran and SAF Chairman Robert Williams II, AAF, PFCI, vice president of Smithers-Oasis - North American Operations, along with another highlight from convention: Mellano's red ribbon win at SAF's Outstanding Varieties Competition.

"The newsletter really makes us all feel like we are part of Mellano & Company," Keeler said.

Interested in learning more about the company newsletter? Email mwestbrook@safnow.org for information on how to contact Keeler for back copies. 🌿

SOCIAL MEDIA
HONOR THY VIEWER

> When Raul Marrero visited SAF's Outstanding Varieties Competition, he brought along a camera. In a video posted to the company's YouTube channel, the senior vice president of product development for Equiflor Corporation in Miami walks viewers through the competition, held during SAF Marco Island 2014, chatting amiably about new varieties. The video works, said SAF Chief Information Officer Renato Sogueco, who led a video workshop at SAF Marco Island 2014, because it follows some tried and true "online video commandments," namely:



BIG SCREEN Raul Marrero of Rio Roses in Miami shared tips and insight with customers during his seven-minute video on SAF's Outstanding Varieties Competition.

Marrero's video clocks in at just about seven minutes; many videos in the series are even shorter.

Thou shalt inform. Pink Floyd jokes aside, the video helps raise the curtain on the company — what they're about, who they are, what their product is and why it's special — and gives customers valuable information on new varieties, including design ideas, seasonality and unusual characteristics. Most importantly, it does so with "without sounding like an infomercial," said Sogueco.

Read more about Outstanding Varieties on p. 22. 🌿

Thou shalt entertain. Far from a hard-selling promo, Sogueco said, Marrero's laidback style makes the video fun to watch, and his humor often comes through, as when he stands before one entry and says, "If you want a hot pink with lots of show — 'Pink Floyd'! No not the band from the 70s, but 'Pink Floyd' the hot pink rose that's now on the market."

Thou shalt be brief. People aren't coming to YouTube (or Facebook ... or your website) for documentaries or epic infomercials, Sogueco said.

VISUAL IMPACT
SHOW OFF YOUR WINTER WHITES

> How do you stand out at the holidays when a local Christmas store opens in September and stays jingle-bell-rocking through January? White paint, and lots of it. That's the solution Chris Collum, AIFD, TMF, and Tom Williams came up with for their 12-foot long front display window at Flowerland in Midland, Texas. "A lot of store windows in New York do it — the floors, white, the ceiling, white, etc.," said Collum. "It's eye-catching." The only downside is upkeep. "You do have to touch it up a bit, to keep it clean, and after Christmas," Collum sighed heavily, "well, after all that you just have to start over with a fresh coat of paint." 🌿



PREP TIME "Because we do an open house in [early] November, we have all our Christmas out in October," said Chris Collum, AIFD, TMF, who uses white paint to help his display window shine.

BEST PRACTICES
HIRE FOR GOOD

> Prospective seasonal employees may only be around for a few weeks, but they should answer the same questions that a prospective fulltime employee would answer. That's according to Glenna Hecht, president of Humanistic Consulting in Dallas, who was a featured speaker at SAF Marco Island 2014. Whether you're hiring extra design room help for Christmas, sizing up delivery drivers for Valentine's Day or eyeing a new manager, Hecht suggests asking potential hires these two questions:

1. **"Tell me about the most extraordinary service experience you've ever provided a customer."** Watch the person's body language as she answers. Is she smiling? You're looking for people who thrive on helping others — that joy should come through. If her example is only ordinary or, heaven forbid, she can't think of one, move along.
2. **"If you were working in our location right now, what would you see that needs to be done?"** The diplomatic "gee, looks nice to me," might indicate the person isn't proactive about straightening, sweeping, etc. Give the person permission to be candid. Look for candidates who point out the obvious, as well as those who spot defects, dust or funk even you hadn't seen. 🌿



On My To-Do List

NOVEMBER 2014

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

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

A well-thought-out November will make for a smooth December and February, says Lori Wheat, AAF, of Lafayette Florist, Gift Shop and Garden Center in Lafayette, Colo. Wheat co-presented a session on Holiday Planning at SAF's 2012 convention — and she let us take a peek at her calendar to see what some of that November activity looks like.

1
Host a contest for best fall decor. Share benefits of flowers in home, safnow.org/home-ecology-ideas

2
Daylight Savings ends

3
Review holiday staffing plans; stagger shifts to avoid OT

4
Create/review holiday press release and talking points

5
Update Facebook cover images & graphics, safnow.org/facebook-graphics

6
Staff lunch: holiday temp training

7
Pitch Thanksgiving news stories; think trends, centerpieces, hostess gifts

8
Review Thanksgiving supplies (enclosure cards, delivery needs, etc.)

9
Review holiday photos for website; promo what you want to sell!

10
Send invitations for Christmas open house

11
VETERANS DAY

12
Blog post: Tips on "nurturing gifts." See Hip Giver's Guide, aboutflowers.com

13
Edit VDay pics, start planning promos

14
Vehicle maintenance check

15
Interview temp help

16
Brainstorm VD display ideas

17
itch your holiday party services to local businesses. Resources at safnow.org/corporate-business.

18
Start planning VDay staff needs

19
Blog post: Share party décor tips from aboutflowers.com

20
Create VDay direct mail

21
Staff lunch: holiday website management

22
Blog post: best hostess gifts

23
Brainstorm VDay in-store signage

24
Staff lunch: holiday delivery

25
Send out invites for Girls' Night Out: Christmas wreaths & centerpieces

26
Reconnect with one contact made at SAF Marco Island 2014

27
THANKSGIVING

28
Order holiday staff lunches, snacks

29
Training Day for temp help

30
Review holiday social media plans

MASTER THE ART: BE A TEMP HELP PRO

Glenna Hecht, President, Humanistic Consulting, Dallas, Speaker at SAF Marco Island 2014



When you're looking for seasonal or temporary help, don't think about it like that — seasonal, temporary. Think of it as giving someone a little peek behind the scenes at your business, or, like chefs do, a little taste, an amuse-bouche. Ask yourself who you know, who might be interested in helping — friends, relatives, customers, etc.— and then remember that, even if they work for only a short time, they'll be a mouth and earpiece for your business. They'll tell others about their experience, and you want it to be good. Ask

your partners — wholesalers, growers, suppliers, neighboring businesses — for recommendations, too. It can be surprising, how many people don't recommend a good candidate until they're asked directly. Don't forget about organizations that help people in transition, Boomers who have been downsized, or people who are looking to try something new. Finally, don't wait. The market is turning. It's getting more difficult to hire people for temporary work. Start recruiting.

WEED OUT THE ORDINARY



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CSI: Flower Shop



LISTEN IN as Huckabee poses as a customer ordering Thanksgiving flowers from unsuspecting florists, on Tuesday, Nov. 11, at 1 p.m. EST. **Not available?** Sign up anyway: You can access the webinar and train your staff all month long! www.safnow.org/webinars-education

The Call

SHOP: Customer wants to send flowers out of town

SCENARIO: Flower shop in Boise, Idaho

TIM: Hi Jennifer. I would like to send flowers to my niece who lives in Maryland.

EMPLOYEE: Sure, but we do have a minimum of \$45 for outgoing orders and there's a \$9.95 service fee.

TIM: I'm OK with that. I was in your store last week and saw an arrangement of purple and yellow flowers in the cooler. Can we send her something like that?

EMPLOYEE: I really don't know what you saw (I was on vacation last week) but I can ask. And I'm not too sure if the other shop will have the same flowers but I will ask.

TIM: OK. So, it's her 21st birthday and I want it to look nice so what do you think I should spend?

EMPLOYEE: Like I said, we start at \$45 so I would go to maybe, \$70, \$75 and that should be really nice.

TIM: And it's going to look like that arrangement, the purple and yellow one?

EMPLOYEE: I'll request it but I can't promise.

TIM: Alright, but I'm counting on you to make it work!

Jennifer finished the order and reassured me that the flowers would be great.

The Analysis

👉 Jennifer made the biggest, most costly mistake ever: She told me the LEAST amount of money I'd need to spend — before learning where the flowers were going or why. This practice is costing the industry of dollars a year in lost revenue! (And how about a finishing touch?)

👉 Jennifer focused too much on what she or the shop can't do rather than what they can do ("... but there's a minimum and a service fee," "I don't know what you saw...", "I can't promise..."). For every can't there's a can.

The Fix

Sell it like it's a local order. There is no reason to start an outbound order with all the typical doom and gloom, as Jennifer did. Instead, explain that you *will* get an arrangement with a "similar feeling and palette" delivered anywhere for the customer. If you are in a small town and the order is being sent to a major city, adjust the prices: "In order to get a similarly sized design in a big city like Metropolis, I recommend increasing your budget by \$X." And don't forget to offer finishing touches like a balloon or stuffed animal! As for how to position the service fee? Don't ever mention it. Instead, at the end of the call say, "The total is \$X and we'll get that gorgeous arrangement delivered to Metropolis tomorrow." If your customer questions the total, then — and only then — you can explain the breakdown of the fees.

Get an intelligent second choice. True, you don't know what a shop has on hand — but it really doesn't matter, provided that you get an intelligent second choice. If the customer requests dark pink roses, for example, say, "I should be able to get those roses delivered for you; if the shop in Metropolis doesn't have dark pink roses, or they don't look perfect, would you prefer their best roses in another color or their most beautiful garden flowers in dark pink?"

Get it? It's simple, easy and foolproof, since the customer is left with realistic expectations and the filling shop won't have to contact you with questions.

Bottom Line

Follow my simply guidelines to ensure success with every outbound order! 🌸

Tim Huckabee, an international flower shop sales and customer service trainer, is founder and president of Floral Strategies LLC and the American Institute of Floral Sales Experts (AIFSE), a retail floral sales certification program. If you would like Tim to test-call your shop for this column, contact him at (800) 983-6184 or tim@floralstrategies.com

Got a customer service conundrum? SAF members get a FREE 15-minute phone consultation with Tim Huckabee. For details, visit safnow.org/talk-to-tim.



od
ACCENT DECOR

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

STUNNING SPECTRUMS

> Last spring, models wearing Elie Saab, Fendi and Missoni sashayed down the runway during New York Fashion Week wearing ball gowns, booties and shift dresses in tones that graduated from light to dark. Known as “ombré,” this multi-tonal trend has exploded on the shelves of mass retailers, from Ann Taylor to H&M, and on the pages of beauty magazines, in articles explaining how to replicate the look with nail polish and hair color.

The ombré trend, which has been around for the last five or six years, has maintained its popularity “and continues to evolve,” said Kristine Kratt, AIFD, PFCI, of Schaffer Designs in Philadelphia, who previewed 2015 trends at SAF Marco Island 2014, with her husband and business partner, Bill Schaffer, AIFD, PFCI. In event décor, ombré has many applications, from softly blended stripes of monochromatic color down tiers of a wedding cake to bold bouquets of complementary shades. “Currently, we see it trending into more organic, watercolor-like patterns,” said Kratt, co-author, with Schaffer, of International Floral Distributors, Inc.’s “Floral Trend Forecast.”

When florists talk about ombré or share photos that convey the trend, Kratt said, they earn consumers’ confidence that they can offer something that is modern and stylish —and worthy of a higher price point. The phrase ombré “is a verbal upgrade to a mixed arrangement,” she said.

The flower world is full of multi-dimensional specimens to help you bridge from light to dark. Here are a few of our favorite ombré varieties. 🌸



‘BRANDY CHERRY’ ROSE

Green Valley Floral



‘TITAAN’ GERRONDO GERBERA

Green Valley Floral



‘POSH’ GERRONDO GERBERA

Green Valley Floral



GREAT GRADATIONS “The key to ombré designs is controlling your floral materials so they blend through their colors and textures from light tones to dark,” Kratt said. “We often think of ombré as monochromatic, but the modern evolution is really open to our creativity.” For example, notice how this design, created by J Schwanke, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, travels from purple to green.

BY KATIE HENDRICK **Fresh Choices**



'HELIOS ROMANTICA' ROSE
Green Valley Floral



'COPPER' CHRYSANTHEMUM
Golden Flowers



'DANTE' CHRYSANTHEMUM
Golden Flowers



'ROMANCE' CARNATION
DVFlora



'LAVENDER' CATTELAYA ORCHID
DVFlora



'WILD SPIRIT' ROSE
DVFlora



'ROSE STAR' ROSE
DVFlora



'PACIFIC' GERBERA
DVFlora



'DOMINGO' ALSTROEMERIA
DVFlora



'VAN GOGH' GERBERA
DVFlora



MAKE THEM BLUSH

An abundant number of frilly, fragrant blooms in fashionable hues charmed judges, earning Euforia's 'Blushing Parasol' top honors in the 2014 SAF Outstanding Varieties Competition.

BY KATIE HENDRICK

PHOTOS BY BETSY HANSEN



Best in Show

'Blushing Parasol' Spray Rose

EUFLORIA FLOWERS



On a 2012 trip to rose breeding facilities in Holland and Germany, Chad Nelson spied "a definite winner" when he laid eyes upon 'Blushing Parasol', a multi-tonal spray rose.

"Right away, I knew we had to have this at our farm," said the sales manager at Euforia Flowers, a seventh-generation hydroponic rose producer in Nipomo, Calif. "It had every trait our customers love." A few of the appealing attributes he saw: fragrance, a garden-like petal structure, and nuanced coloring with hints of pink, peach, yellow and cream that make the spray rose a match for a wide range of color schemes.

Nelson's assessment proved accurate. Since he began selling 'Blushing Parasol' in 2013, he's fielded constant requests from satisfied customers for more bunches. "Fortunately, it's available year-round!" he said.

Since its debut in the 2014 SAF Outstanding Varieties Competition, Aug. 13, in Marco Island, Fla., 'Blushing Parasol' has found scores of new admirers. Among them: the nine judges — made up of an appointed panel of growers, wholesalers and retailers — who awarded the demure and dainty spray rose the coveted title "Best in Show."

"I posted this on Instagram two hours ago and already have more than 60 likes," said judge Joost Bongaerts of Florabundance Inc. in Carpinteria, Calif. "Anything with rosebuds is universally popular," he said. "But this a variety that will make customers take notice and learn its name."

"It's simply ... phenomenal," said Eleanor Clevenger, of David Austin Roses in Miami. With its eight to 10 blooms per stem, 'Blushing Parasol' is a versatile and valuable option for florists, she said. It's also a flower that speaks to several current styles, including the "sorbet" trend (a preference for all things peach, pink or berry-colored), the "ombré" trend (color that is gradated in tone; see p. 20, p. 50) and the "hand-picked" look (garden-like qualities, such as fragrance and ruffled petals).

Marketability and usefulness topped judge Celine Bray's reasons for awarding 'Blushing Parasol' "Best in Show." "This fits in the color palettes of about 90

percent of brides," said the sales representative for Jet Fresh Flowers in Miami, Fla. "And all the laterals make it very user friendly for florists, whether it's for event or everyday work."

"I have to get this in my shop!" said judge Kiersten Schulte, of Eastern Floral in Grand Haven, Mich. "Our customers will go wild for its romantic look and sweet fragrance. I'd use it every day."

Judge Jessica Cosentino, AAF, plans to have a standing order of 'Blushing Parasol' at Cosentino's Florist in Auburn, N.Y. "I know if I buy it once, customers will want it again and again," she said. It'll make a lovely choice for Valentine's Day arrangements, corsages and floral hair-pieces, she said.

Judge Josh Glass, AAF, of Peoples Flower Shops in Albuquerque, N.M., rattled off a list of exemplary attributes — strong stems, long laterals, gorgeous foliage, sought-after colors, consistently open blooms — that made 'Blushing Parasol' "very deserving of Best in Show," he said.

"A timeless beauty," said judge Brent Denham of Arizona Family Florist in Phoenix. "It has an elegant, garden look that is always in demand."

The SAF 2014 Outstanding Varieties Competition drew 254 entries from 34 companies. Judges scored each entry based on color and commercial appeal, stem and foliage, bloom form and size, and overall presentation. Judges evaluated specific categories of flowers; the highest scored entry of each won "Best in Class." The judges collectively assessed these winners, naming 'Blushing Parasol' the best of the best.

Read on for the competition's other top performers.

BEST IN CLASS

BEST IN CLASS

Rose

'BIKINI'

MULTIFLORA INTERNATIONAL



> Hailing from The Lone Star State, Denham admitted a penchant for anything that reminds him of “the yellow rose of Texas.” Shiny foliage and strong stems put this saffron stunner in the spotlight, he said.

Cosentino will recommend ‘Bikini’ for customers celebrating a golden anniversary or a friendship. “I know the natural inclination would be to pair it with orange and red, but I think it would really pop next to lime and purple,” she said.



BEST IN CLASS

Garden Rose

'HOUDINI'

GREEN VALLEY FLORAL



> For customers who don’t want “the same old rose,” this is it, said judge Peter Van Antwerpen, of Virgin Farms in Miami. “This would be great variety to raise a design’s perceived value,” he said, praising ‘Houdini’ for its rich salmon color, uniformity, foliage (“as clean as it can get!”) and distinguishing green center.

Denham anticipated ‘Houdini’ making an appearance in many Arizona nuptials. “It has amazing color intensity and texture that ties in with everything brides are pinning on Pinterest right now,” he said. For the legions of women craving ranunculus or peonies, “this is a great alternative,” he said.



BEST IN CLASS

Chrysanthemum

'ANASTASIA SUNNY'

MULTIFLORA INTERNATIONAL



> “This just makes you smile,” Schulte said. She praised the giant bloom size, which is consistent for every flower in the bunch. “That’s a huge advantage when we do event work and have to make lots of replicas,” she explained. The rubber duck-colored hue also fits perfectly in the neon palette her customers “are loving right now.”

The chrysanthemum’s unusual shape captivated Bongaerts. “It’s a mix between a spider and a football mum, and actually looks a little like a cactus dahlia,” he said Mike Henriques, of HyCallas in Miami, Fla., “Florists will like how much space it fills and customers will like its texture.”

Henriques described ‘Anastasia Sunny’ as “exceptionally healthy-looking variety,” thanks to its brilliant color and clean foliage.

**BEST IN CLASS AND PEOPLE'S CHOICE**

Cut Bulb

'AMAROSSİ' ORIENTAL TRUMPET LILY

OREGON FLOWERS INC.



PEOPLE'S CHOICE

> “I would use this every single day,” Schulte said. The lily’s variegated coloring —white, pale pink, dark pink — “is spectacular,” and its massive bloom size means florists will get “a real bang for their buck,” she said.

Bongaerts awarded ‘Amarossi’ high marks for having upward facing blooms. “As a wholesaler, I know this will mean customer satisfaction because the lilies won’t get damaged when we package them in a sleeve.” A consistent flower count, great vase life seven to 10 blooms per stem and delicate fragrance add to the variety’s appeal, he said.

“The big heads really captured my attention,” Henriques said.

The judges had good company in their applause: ‘Amarossi’ won the most votes from convention attendees, earning it “The People’s Choice” honors.



BEST IN CLASS

BEST IN CLASS

Gerbera

'ALLIANCE'

GREEN VALLEY FLORAL



> "This flower looked so perfect, I almost wondered if it was made out of paper," Henriques said. "Every petal is so nicely defined."

Bongaerts saw good commercial value in this blush pink, accentuated with its dark center.

Strong, straight stems make 'Alliance' a very user-friendly gerbera, Schulte said. And the coloring, "reminiscent of strawberry lemonade," impressed her. "This should be a staple in my shop," she said, anticipating 'Alliance' in many monofloral arrangements or mixed with white hydrangeas.



BEST IN CLASS

Alstroemeria

'PUMORI'

GOLDEN FLOWERS



> When Schulte saw 'Pumori', one word came to mind: prom. "We use a ton of alstroemeria in corsages and body flowers," she said. "The variegated qualities work with the ombré dresses so well." With 'Pumori's' "enormous" blooms, she said, florists would only need one bloom to make a statement for teenage fashionistas.

Well-defined colors and foliage "without a hint of yellow" make this alstroemeria stand above the rest, Henriques said.



BEST IN CLASS

Dianthus

'STAR CHERRY'

FLORES FUNZA



> "This is an exciting new look for designers," Clevenger said. She gushed about 'Star Cherry's' delicate flowers and "exceptionally verdant foliage."

"Carnations — unfairly — get a bad rep, but no customer would identify this as one," Bray said. "Put this in an arrangement and people will just think it is pretty and very long lasting."

Vibrant bursts of color would make 'Star Cherry' a good choice for minimal style arrangements, Glass said.



BEST IN CLASS

Other Cut Flower

'SCARLET' BANKSIA

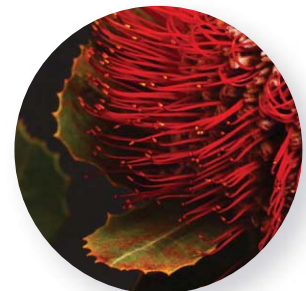
WAFEX USA



> "I adore this," Clevenger said. "We're used to longer banksia that look like a loofah, but this size will make it more user friendly for designers."

Intense colors and texture made this a winner for Bray. "I know several relatives and friends who'd be blown away if I sent them this."

Customers who want something out of the ordinary will gravitate to 'Scarlet' Banksia, Glass said. "It demands attention."



BEST IN CLASS

BEST IN CLASS

Decorative Foliage

'CREAM DELIGHT' LEUCADENDRON

RESENDIZ BROTHERS PROTEA GROWERS



> "This has an impressive amount of flowers per stem," Bray said. "Florists will get their money's worth with this variety in short arrangements." Its color — not quite yellow, not quite green — make 'Cream Delight' a versatile choice to have on hand, she said. "I love how the contrast between the light flowers and the reddish brown stem. It really draws you in."



BEST IN CLASS

Potted Flowering Plant

'PRETTY PARTY' MINI POTTED ROSE

POULSEN ROSER A/S



> 'Potted Party' would be a customer favorite at Peoples Flower Shops, Glass said. "We do a lot of potted plant sales and this shade, which is almost neon, is very on trend."

Bray and Clevenger also spoke of the marketability of the color. "Color and foliage are critical with potted roses," Clevenger said. Sequential blooming, too, really influences customer satisfaction, she said. "This one already has buds blooming with others ready to go."



RIBBON ROYALTY

Of the 36 companies exhibiting at the SAF 2014 Outstanding Varieties Competition some left with enough ribbons to rival the wrap department at the North Pole. Those with the biggest haul include:

Euforia Flowers

15 RIBBONS

- 1 Best in Show
- 2 Best In Class
- 3 Blue
- 9 Red

EuforiaFlowers.com

Green Valley Floral

14 RIBBONS

- 2 Best in class
- 6 Blue
- 6 Red

GreenValleyFloral.com

Rosaprima

International LLC

7 RIBBONS

- 2 Blue
- 5 Red

RosaPrima.com

Golden Flowers

6 RIBBONS

- 1 Best in Class
- 5 Red

GoldenFlowers.com

Ball SB

5 RIBBONS

- 2 Blue
- 3 Red

BallSB.com

Flores Funza

5 RIBBONS

- 1 Best In Class
- 1 Blue
- 3 Red

FloresFunza.com

Holland America Flowers LLC

5 RIBBONS

- 4 Blue
- 1 Red

HollandAmericaFlowers.com

Multiflora International

5 RIBBONS

- 2 Best In Class

- 1 Blue
- 2 Red

MultiFlora.com

Wafex USA

5 RIBBONS

- 1 Best In Class
- 2 Blue
- 2 Red

Wafex.com.au

In addition, the following companies earned either blue or red ribbons:

Alexandra Farms, alexandrafarms.com

Cal Glads, CalGlads.com

Choice Farms, ChoiceFarms.com

Danziger "Dan" Flower Farm, Danziger.co.il

Equiflor (Rio Roses), RioRoses.com

Fides, Fides.nl

Fresca Farms, FrescaFarms.com

Glad-A-Way Gardens Inc., GladAway.net

Green Point Nurseries Inc., GreenPointNursery.com

International Rose Breeders LLC, EGhillCompany.com

Kent's Bromeliad Nursery Inc., KentsBromeliad.com

Kitayama Bros. Inc., KBflowers.com

Mellano & Company, Mellano.com

Oregon Flowers Inc., OregonFlowers.com

Poulsen Roser A/S, PoulsenRoser.com

Quality Service S.A. "QualisA", Qualisa.com

Resendiz Brothers Protea Growers, ResendizBrothers.com

The Elite Flower, EliteFlower.com

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BLUE RIBBON



'Caesar's Palace' LA Hybrid Lily
Holland America Flowers LLC

"I'm a little biased because this is my favorite color," Henriques said. "But it's a color a lot of customers like too and is available and usable year-round." Like the casino of the same name, 'Caesar's Palace' "would light up" any space, he said.

Schulte agreed. "Orange flowers, especially lilies, are in high demand at our shop," she said. "This one, which looks like sherbet, would fit in equally well in the fall (with rust colors) or spring (with pastels)."



'Papiljo' Oriental Lily
Holland America Flowers LLC

"This reminds me of a sunrise peeking out of a cloud," Schulte said of 'Papiljo's' pink, yellow and white coloring. Given its breathtaking bloom size, "I'd be inclined to use this flower all alone," she said. "If I did pair it with anything, it would need to be something tall, so it wouldn't detract from the lily's fullness."

Bongaerts described the color as "distinguished." He also liked its subtle fragrance. "This is a good choice for allergy sufferers," he said.



'Rilato' Oriental Lily
Green Valley Floral

"People are always asking for white Oriental lilies and this is one of the best I've ever seen," Bongaerts said. Its upward facing blooms "make transportation easy and give florists a good presentation."

Ruffled petals "add dimension to an already giant bloom," Schulte said. Florists could fill a vase using only two stems, she said, "and the foliage is so nice, you don't need any extra greens." She recommends it in an elegant arrangement of roses and light blue hydrangeas.



'Spark' Gerbera
Kitayama Bros. Inc.

"This color, rust, is unusual, and would be in high demand in autumn," Bongaerts said. "It would pair beautifully with an orange lily."

"I love how it goes from sunny yellow to orange to copper," Schulte said. She anticipates it would be a popular pick for corsages at homecoming dances or Thanksgiving centerpieces.

Henriques gave 'Spark' high marks for its strong, sturdy, straight stems and defined petals.



'Table Dance' Oriental Lily
Kitayama Bros Inc.

Henriques and Bongaerts both awarded 'Table Dance' high points for marketability. Schulte envisioned this "very feminine" lily in wedding and sympathy work. "I love how all the blooms face forward," she said. "This makes it easy to use in designs and it photographs well, which is key to getting online orders."



'Green Ball' Dianthus
Ball

"This carnation is totally in line with the neon colors trending today," Glass said of 'Green Ball's' marketability.

When Bray brings flowers home to her friends, she tries to include 'Green Ball'. "They go crazy for it," she said. "It's economical, long lasting and pleasing to the eye."



'Forza Red' LA Hybrid Lily
Holland America Flowers LLC

"You hardly ever see a lily this deep red," Bongaerts said. "This will be a hit for Christmas or Valentine's Day."

"It looks just like wine — in other words: rich," Henriques said.

Schulte can see many Yuletide brides carrying 'Forza Red' down the aisle, paired with white roses.



'Dutch Design' Gerbera
Kitayama Bros. Inc.

"It's a very saturated color — almost like fire — that is useable year-round," Henriques said.

Schulte would pair it with leucadendron in the summer, celosia in the fall, and lime green and pink flowers in the spring "in bright containers."



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BLUE RIBBON



'Merluza' LA Hybrid Lily
Holland America Flowers LLC

"This looks very clean," Bongaerts said of 'Merluza'. A touch of light green when it opens adds visual interest and upward facing blooms makes transport, design work and photography easier.

"There's absolutely no bruising," Henriques noted. "The foliage looks very healthy too."



'Mayra's Rose' Garden Rose
Choice Farms

"Frilly, feminine and perfect for a wedding," Van Antwerpen said of 'Mayra's Rose's' consumer appeal.

Denham called the petal count "remarkable."

"It's a really sophisticated pink," Cosentino said. "You could pair this with lime green without fear of looking like a Maybelline commercial."



'Juliet' (Ausjameson) Garden Rose

Green Valley Floral

Cosentino gave 'Juliet' a high score for its blooms' uniform size and identical spiral pattern. "They look like little teacups," she said.

Denham declared the creamy peach "extremely versatile and marketable."

Van Antwerpen praised its hearty stems and glossy foliage.



'Nashville' LA Hybrid Lily
Oregon Flowers Inc.

"It looks like the sun," Henriques said, praising 'Nashville's' bright "flawless" color.

An impressive five blooms per stem and "outstanding" foliage wowed Bongaerts.

Schulte recommends pairing 'Nashville' with pinks "for a lemonade palette that would liven up a space and make people happy."



'Moody Blues' Standard Rose
Royal Flowers

"A great season-less rose," Cosentino said. For wedding work, she'd like to pair it with black callas in the fall and peonies in the spring. This would be a great variety to have on hand for sympathy work, she said: "What grandmother didn't love lavender?"



'Sweet Black' Dianthus
Ball

"I love the dimension on this," Glass said. "It takes up a lot of space and seems to have two types of foliage: one down the stem and another under the bloom."

"It looks just like velvet," Bray said, pointing out how the carnation appears either raspberry or burgundy depending on how the light hits it. "It looks high end."

Clevenger praised 'Sweet Black's' compactness. "Look at all those blossoms!" she said.



'Freedom' Standard Rose
Fresca Farms

"No matter what we try to tell them, guys just want to buy red roses for Valentine's Day. If you offer this, they will spend buy it and spend a lot of money," Denham said of 'Freedom's' 120-cm long stems.

Cosentino, too, described 'Freedom' as the perfect choice for the man who wants to make a statement. "I could totally see this go out on a blind date," she said.



'Midori' Anthurium
Green Point Nurseries Inc.

Clevenger could not find a single blemish on this entry. "It's so flawless, I had to touch it to prove myself it wasn't fake," she said.

"The perfect apple green has the vibrancy to stand alone for event work," Glass said.

Bray said 'Midori' was aptly named. "It definitely reminds me of the drink," she said.



'Free Spirit' Standard Rose

Royal Flowers






"We get a lot of requests for 'peachy pink,' which is subjective and hard to source," Denham said. "This variety runs the gauntlet of pinks and peaches and will especially appeal to customers in tune with the ombré trend."

"This looks like a 'BOGO' (Buy One Get One) rose to me," Cosentino said. "You pay for a rose and get two extra buds per stem." She would reach for this variety for a casket spray. "The number of blooms and vibrant color would add a lot of dimension that could be seen from the back of a church," she said.


Van Antwerpen praised 'Free Spirit' for its high petal count, blooms that open fully and consistently, and foliage "so lush greens aren't necessary."

CHOICE COLORS


If you're noticing a lot of similar shades among these winners, it's no coincidence. Judges scored entries for marketability, and consumers' color preferences play a huge factor in that assessment. Based on conversations with our judges, the following are the five most in demand colors to have in your cooler:

-  Ombré
-  White
-  Orange
-  Neon
-  Radiant Orchid
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BLUE RIBBON



'Patience' Garden Rose
Alexandra Farms

"We don't score fragrance, but I smelled all the garden roses anyway because I know it's a perk that adds to consumer appeal, at least for our customers," Denham said. He also awarded high points for an impressive vase life, high petal count, strong stem and clear foliage.

"Garden roses are susceptible to botrytis, but this is a very clean," Van Antwerpen said. "The creamy white is always in high demand."



'Moody Blues' Standard Rose
Rosaprima International LLC

A color that matched "Radiant Orchid," Pantone's 2014 Color of the Year, spelled marketability to Denham — as did the rose's bloom size ("as big as your fist!").

"The ratio of head size to stem length is perfect," Cosentino. The gradual tonal shift from lavender to magenta also impressed. "There's amazing dimension in this rose," she said. "It's practically begging to be used in event work."

"This got a 10 out of 10 in every category for me," Van Antwerpen said.



'Madiba Red' King Protea
Wafex USA

"This commands attention," Clevenger said of 'Madiba Red's' crimson coloring and "striking" shape.

Bray, too, commented on its "wow factor." "There's good commercial value in a flower that makes people lean in for a closer look," she said. She envisions it in a hotel lobby or on a Thanksgiving table.

Glass gushed about the enormity of this variety. "Its stems are as thick as my fingers!" he said. "This was made for stage designs."



'Pink Flamingo' Calla
Fresca Farms

Florists looking to create an opulent-looking arrangement in mere minutes need only reach for 'Pink Flamingo'.

Its massive flower and stem size are well suited for a wedding, sympathy work or hotel lobby pieces, Bongaerts said.

Bray awarded high points for marketability, due to the calla's antique pink color ("classic," she said) and reputation as a high-end flower.

"This is a valuable flower to have in your shop because it looks great with other flowers, but it's pretty all on its own," Glass said.



'Carey' (Ausweather) Garden Rose
Green Valley Floral

Undeniably elegant, 'Carey' would befit a sweet sixteen arrangement. "It's the perfect symbol of a girl's maturation into a sophisticated lady," Cosentino said.

Denham would recommend this variety for a wedding because of its "super sweet" fragrance. "If a bride has this in her bouquet, she'll always remember that smell," he said. Then, every year for her anniversary, "we can sell her husband on using the same garden roses to take her back in time."



'Julianne' Spray Rose
Euforia Flowers

Clevenger described 'Julianne's' color as "champagne with a hint of peach, just like a Bellini!" The impressive bloom count five to eight blooms per stem will earn florists a lot of money, she said: "You only need three stems in a vase for a breathtaking, high-end arrangement."

With its full, healthy foliage and multi blooms, 'Julianne' "looks literally like a bush in a garden, which is what almost every customer is asking for these days," Bray said.

Glass agreed. "This fits that natural, earthy style that's so in vogue," he said. "And its fragrance would be an extra selling point with our customers."



'Pink Sapphire Gem' Spray Rose
Eufhoria Flowers

Glass called 'Pink Sapphire Gem' "a very relevant color." Customers gravitate to anything pink, he said. "I would use this daily in cash and carry bouquets."

"When I look at this, I see a mass of pink — and a dozen of potential corsages," Bray said.

Clevenger praised how the buds open at the same level. "That quality turns this spray rose into a focal flower," she said.



'Mondial' Standard Rose
Rosaprima International LLC

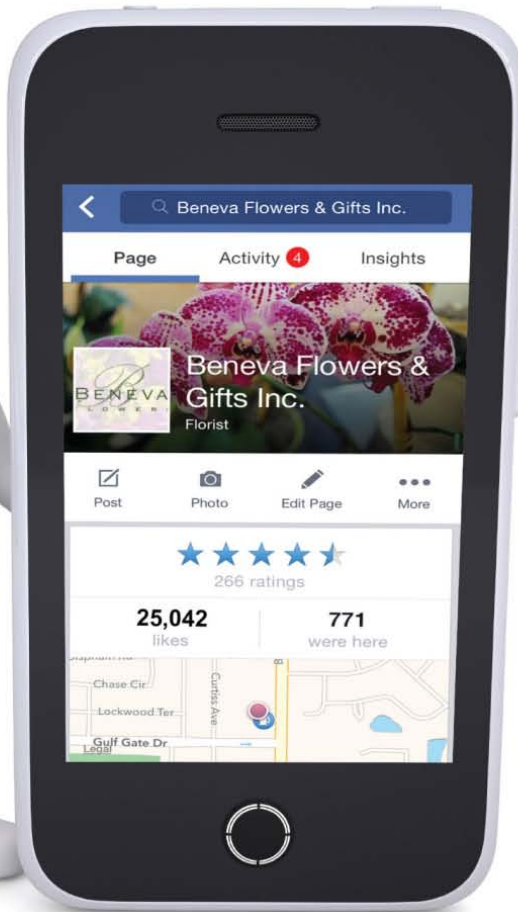
"The stems are like tree trunks," Van Antwerpen said. Cosentino agreed. "If a bride's budget only allowed her bridesmaids to carry one flower, it should be this one," she said.

Denham said 'Mondial' will be his go-to white rose. "This opens beautifully; not a single head looks like a bullet," he said.

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LEAD ON For his long, selfless service and many concrete contributions, SAF recently recognized Ken Tagawa with its highest honor.

Man with a Plan

BY MARY WESTBROOK

For more than 60 years, Ken Tagawa, the newest member of SAF's Floriculture Hall of Fame, has pushed his family business and the floral industry forward in word and deed.

➤ When Bill Kluth joined Tagawa Greenhouse Inc. 17 years ago, he was slightly unnerved by one of his boss's work habits: Every day, Ken Tagawa, would stop by Kluth's office and casually ask, "So, Bill, how do yesterday's sales numbers look?"

Kluth knew the information was readily available to Ken, but he would rattle off figures anyway until Ken wandered away, satisfied, leaving Kluth behind to shake his head in wonderment — why didn't Ken just look up the figures himself? Eventually, the answer hit him. Ken already knew the numbers. He just wanted to be sure that Kluth knew them, too.

This is the kind of anecdote you hear often about Ken Tagawa — stories of hard work, dedication, a tiny bit of well-placed stubbornness and leadership by

action, not words alone, in everyday situations. Over six decades, Ken has used these qualities to shepherd his family's business through periods of turbulence and change. At the same time, he's pioneered innovations that dramatically changed how plants are produced and showed an unwavering dedication to educating the next generation of floral industry leaders. All those years ago, Kluth may have been alone at his desk marveling at his boss, but thanks to Ken's leadership, countless others have been in the same metaphorical position — pushed by Ken, challenged and mentored by Ken and, ultimately, made better by their relationships and friendships with him.

For his long, selfless service and many concrete contributions to an industry he loves, the Society of American Florists

recognized Ken with its highest honor this year during SAF Marco Island 2014: induction into the Floriculture Hall of Fame.

Early Days: History and Commitment

Ken's sense of purpose and drive took root early. His young adulthood was not easy: As part of the Japanese American Internment, Ken, his parents and oldest siblings, all American citizens, were relocated from California to Colorado during World War II. After being released from the camps, Ken went immediately to work. In a testament to his patriotism, he served in the U.S. Navy and then later received a degree in engineering from the University of Colorado.

Alongside his four brothers and parents, Ken later bought land outside of Brighton, Colo., and began growing



CHILDHOOD CHALLENGES As part of the Japanese American Internment, Ken (back row, second from left), his parents and oldest siblings were relocated from California to Colorado during World War II. Pictured are (back row, left to right) George, Ken, Albert, Dave, (front row, left to right) Hazel (Ken's mother), Carolyn, Frank (Ken's father) and Jim.



ROOM TO GROW Ken Tagawa was on the leading edge of many innovations that have improved both the quality and efficiency of greenhouse production.

vegetables. The family had small greenhouses for their vegetable transplants and soon started growing flowers as well for the local market in Denver.

From these humble beginnings, the Tagawa family built greenhouses and expanded the business to include cut flowers and bedding plants. They also helped construct greenhouse for other companies in the area and quickly became recognized leaders in the local horticulture community.

Today, the business has grown to include Tagawa Greenhouses; Tagawa Gardens, one of Colorado's largest garden centers; and Ball Tagawa Growers, a 50/50 partnership with Ball Seed. The business also has part ownership in Denver Wholesale Florist, which has branches around the U.S.

Industry Innovator — and Risk Taker

As the chairman of Tagawa Inc., Ken set the standard for ethics, relationship-building and business acumen. Without fail, he's also been on the leading edge of many innovations that have dramatically shifted the industry.

Tagawa, for example, was one of the first companies to adopt automatic seeding technology, which paved the

way for the commercial production of plugs, and Ken worked closely with Blackmore Company to improve automatic drum seeders and plug trays. The significance of these technical innovations is immense: Prior to the automatic drum feeder, seeds were sewn into a coarse media and individual seedlings were transplanted into a four-pack. Blackmore and Tagawa isolated the seed, to drop it specifically into one cell.

"This revolutionized the system," Kluth said. "The previous system was far less efficient, more labor intensive and wasteful."

Ken also developed germination and growing methods to consistently produce a quality plug. To improve plug quality, Ken created (and Tagawa continues to modify as new varieties are introduced) a template concept that guides growers on what to do on each day, so that the product can be consistently produced to the highest quality possible.

"Ken doesn't do things by accident," Kluth said. "He believes that you get your data, you analyze your information ... and then you go."

Working as a team, Tagawa and Blackmore also developed the patented Punch 'N Gro plug transplanting system. Under the previous system, a grower would extricate a plant — sized about

one-third of an index finger — from one tray to another. Punch 'N Go technology allows growers to push the plant directly through the tray.

When it's time to change paths, to become more successful, Ken never hesitates, even if the shift means a significant shakeup or challenge to tradition. As Kluth recalls, in 1993, Denver Wholesale Florist took Ken, a board member, to Miami to meet South American cut flower growers. At that time, Tagawa Greenhouses was a major supplier of carnations and roses to DWF.

"After meeting the South American cut flower growers, Ken realized that the cut market would change from domestic production to international production," Kluth said. "Ken, with his brothers, made the decision to transition out of cut flowers and expand their already increasing business of bedding plants and plug production."

Working with Colorado State University, Ken also funded research to identify genes responsible for ethylene production in roses and geraniums, an effort that resulted in several genetic patents.

"He's accomplished everything through relationships," Kluth said. "He's so smart. He's honest and straightforward."

> MAN WITH A PLAN



ALL IN THE FAMILY For all of his contributions to the industry and to his business, Ken Tagawa's (seated) first priority has always been his family including, (back row, left to right), son Randy Tagawa, daughter-in-law Jeri Tagawa (Randy's wife), son-in-law Yuji Kimura, daughter Aiko Tagawa, granddaughter Annabel Tagawa and son Yoshi Tagawa, along with his beloved wife, June (front).

ward — and he has never hesitated to take the opportunity when it was there."

Community and Industry Leader: Relationships First

In everything Ken does, he considers relationships first — those with his family, suppliers and customers, Kluth said.

He feels critically that each member within the floral industry supply chain needs to be aware of and care about how others are doing; otherwise, "the chain will break," Kluth said.

Ken helped develop the Greenhouse Services Foundation, a nonprofit corporation that provides group wholesale purchasing of natural gas supply for greenhouses and agriculture-related businesses. Recognizing the need for a strong, prepared next-generation floral industry, he's provided internships to international and domestic students; many have gone on to manage major businesses.

"Part of Dad's philosophy is: Our people are our greatest assets," said Randy Tagawa, Ken's son and the CEO of Tagawa Greenhouse Enterprises LLC. "We need to treat each other like family."

Ken also contributes to his local community and has served on planning committees for the Brighton, Colo., area.



WINNING WORDS

Induction into the Floriculture Hall of Fame always comes as a surprise to the honoree — and when Ken's name was called by SAF Awards Committee member Dave Gaul, AAF (**left, in photo**), during the Stars of the Industry awards dinner at SAF Marco Island 2014, he was so shocked by the announcement, he could only say a few words at the podium. But, he shared his sentiments, in writing, with SAF shortly afterwards.

Acknowledging his own debt to family members, friends and colleagues in the industry, Ken wrote: "I am honored and humbled

to be even considered for this most prestigious award ... When my name was announced during the ceremony, I was stunned, and for a moment [my wife] June and I just sat staring at each other, like: 'What is going on here?'" He went on to marvel about an industry in which all segments — retail, wholesale, grower, supplier, university and trade association — can share and exchange ideas. He referenced a Japanese phrase that captures that dynamic, 'okagesama-de,' which translated means interdependence, or in your shadow. "I believe there is no other industry where this is possible," he said.

-M.W.

He and his wife, June, are active in the Tri-State Buddhist Temple in Denver, along with the Brighton Japanese American Association.

"[Ken] recognizes that to be successful you have to have relationships with all of the agencies and departments that tax, regulate or affect your business by actively attending meetings, participating on committees and meeting face-to-face with administrators," said Dr. Marvin Miller, market research manager of Ball Horticultural Company.

Within the floral industry, Ken has served in leadership roles for the American Floral Endowment Board, and he is an active participant in the Colorado Greenhouse Growers Association, the Colorado Floriculture Foundation and Wholesale Florists & Florist Supplier of America, among other groups.

Family Man

For all of Ken's dedication, Randy, his son, says he is actually the *second* hardest worker at Tagawa Inc.: "The first is my mom, June," he said, laughing. Indeed, Kluth admits that he's yet to arrive to work before June, the company's HR manager. She's often still on site when he leaves.

The power couple has worked together to build a sustainable legacy for their employees and their own family. To ensure a successful succession, in 2006, Ken and his brothers sold the operating company but kept the property, making it economically feasible for the next generation to purchase the business. They also invited two non-family members to join as owners, Bill Kluth and John Williams. Today, Ken and June's children are three of the eight owner partners: Randy Tagawa as CEO, Aiko Tagawa Kimura as payroll manager and Yoshi Tagawa as vice president of operation. Many of Ken's nieces and nephews are active in the business, some as owners and others as managers. (Ken and his brothers serve as board members and advisors.)

As for Ken's most important contribution to the floral industry — it may just be his big-picture attitude, Miller said.

"Ken's leadership is based on his strong character, ethics and integrity," Miller said. He is 100 percent engaged, 100 percent of the time." 🌿

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

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Industry Outlook

SAF's much awaited biannual 'State of the Industry' offers a snapshot view of the industry's best prospects and most daunting challenges.

BY MARY WESTBROOK

> You already know that consumers shop differently than they did 10 or even five years ago — but have you considered how the widening of the Panama Canal will affect your business? How failing infrastructure could hurt flower sourcing and delivery? What the baby boom of 2007 could mean for your shop?



Peter Moran
SAF CEO

These were some of big-picture issues raised during the Society of American Florists' biannual State of the Industry address, presented at SAF Marco Island 2014 in August by SAF CEO Peter Moran and SAF Chairman Robert Williams II, AAF, PFCI, vice president of Smithers-Oasis North American Operations. For many attendees, the address is a singular opportunity to step

away from the day-to-day grind and consider big questions and challenges about the overall floral industry, consumer behavior and the U.S. and global economies.

"Get us thinking about the future — that's part of the effect that the State of the Industry address has," said Robert Shibata, AAF, of Mt. Eden Wholesale in San Jose, Calif. "You may agree or you may disagree [with every point] — whether it's production areas or trends or shifts — but it always gets you thinking about issues we should all consider."

Highlights from the address include:

Measured economic optimism



"Despite higher taxes, surging gasoline prices and federal budget cuts that plagued much of 2013, consumer spending stayed resilient," said Moran, who also noted that the National Retail Federation is predicting a 4.1 percent uptick in retail sales. And that's good news, indeed, according to Williams, who said, "there is no country in the world that's more dependent on consumer spending and retail sales than the United States of America. It is the economic driver of everything we do." Significant challenges loom, however, and threaten to restrict consumer spending, including mounting student debt (\$1.1 trillion overall), stubbornly high unemployment rates and geopolitical issues, including sanctions on Russia.

Refined understanding of customers today — and in the future



Baby Boomers "are still the most coveted generation," said Williams, a Boomer himself. "We spend \$2 trillion annually" and are more likely to patronize a retail florist than members of Gen X, who are often time-starved and more apt to spend their income on big-ticket items (electronics, mortgages and — here it is again — college tuition.) Williams also provided insight on Gens Y and Z, who have less purchasing power now but are

worth studying. "Gen Y is fascinating to us," he said. "They're constantly researching products online, but only buy 36 percent of the time ... Once they've researched online, they usually go to a brick-and-mortar" to finalize the purchase. "Millennials buy the experience," rather than simply assessing the quality and price of a product, he said. In addition, Williams noted 2007 was the "largest birthing year" in the history of the U.S.; 25 percent of the babies born that year were Hispanic.

The retail florist advantage



Finding employees remains a tricky area (more on that later) but for the employees you do have, Moran and Williams had a

shared message: train, train, train your staff to offer the best service and increase average transactions. Pointing to recent SAF and AFE studies on consumer purchasing patterns, Williams underscored the importance to consumers of quality, perceived value, service and personalization. "When convenience trumps, the supermarkets will win," he said, "but when emotion is involved in a purchase, [retail florists] are the channel of choice. On traditional events and on holidays, unless you give [the business] up, you are the channel of choice." The Internet, and consumers' ability to Google local shops, has helped "level the playing field" in some ways — many florists report 10 to 15 percent of their orders now come from their websites — but customer relations are "as important

as ever," Moran said. "The big corporate business model and organizational structure has never really flourished in this industry. What has proven successful is employee-owner operations, whether it's family-owned businesses or ESOP. Culturally, they've been positioned to operate at all levels" of the industry.

Insight on FTD-ProFlowers deal



The news of FTD's deal to purchase ProFlowers broke shortly before convention, and Moran said the impact of that change was still impossible to pin down precisely. "Some florists who have the volume and production models to fill these orders are going to jump at the chance for increased business, while other florists may put their energies into a more customized approach." One definite positive: "ProFlowers' practice of promoting their services by disparaging florists will come to an end," Moran said. "I think that's a very good thing for the industry."

Other snapshots from the address include:

Addressing labor shortages — or not



"Across so many industries, obtaining qualified talent is a challenge, especially with our aging workforce," Moran said. "We especially hear this from SAF members," including growers, wholesalers and retailers, but also transportation companies, who have increasing difficulty finding drivers. "This country needs a comprehensive immigration policy to add both skilled and unskilled labor," he said. "It better be sooner than later." (Unfortunately, given President Obama's recent announcement that he'll delay any executive action until after November, and the midterm elections, it looks like it will be later.)

Stabilized industry but ongoing contractions



While the pace of contraction has slowed, Moran said he expects it to continue. For instance, while best estimates indicate there are currently around 12,000 retail florists in the U.S., Moran expects that number to drop to 8,000 to 9,000 by 2020. He also expects the 500 to 600 current wholesale doors to drop to about 300 (with 10 major players dominating in major regional hubs). Currently there are 59 cut flower growers in California with sales of \$500,000-plus; he predicts there will be 30 large cut flower producers in California, in addition to regional specialty cut flower growers, by 2020.

Import shifts



The economy in Colombia was up 6.4 percent for the first quarter of 2014, second only to China worldwide, Moran noted. Three companies control about 50 percent of the country's flower production. In Ecuador, the industry is more fragmented, with smaller farms but lots of innovation in new rose varieties. Product from Mexico is also finding its way increasingly into U.S. holiday bouquets. "The lack of infrastructure [in Mexico] holds them back, but this is an emerging market to watch," Moran said.

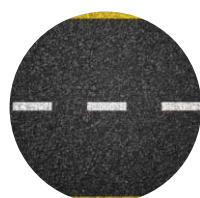
Questions of sustainability and origin



The origin of products isn't necessarily a good-bad proposition, but where flowers are grown and how they are grown will continue to interest some consumers, Moran said. "It will be important to educate the consumer on branding, origin and sustainability practices," he said. "In other words, flowers aren't just flowers, in the same way that wine isn't just wine and cheese isn't just cheese. It all

depends on where and how they're produced and it's the taste of the consumer that decides what they'll buy."

Roads, bridges, canals and ports



"A major concern across industries is the health of U.S. infrastructure," Moran said, noting that The American Society of Civil Engineers gave the state of U.S. infrastructure a D-plus, just a step above failing. "The problem of deteriorating, underinvested infrastructure has become a serious crisis," he said. "[Improved infrastructure is] imperative to the floral industry, which needs to move perishable product rapidly through the distribution chain." Congress, he noted, has the opportunity to provide stable, long-term funding to the Highway Trust Fund; this year they approved only a short-term fix.

Moran also touched on the widening of the Panama Canal to accommodate so-called mega-ships. By offering a direct route for container ships traveling from Asia to Miami, the expansion could significantly change the dynamics of freight ship and transportation on both coasts. "Currently, container ships coming into Miami hold about 2,500 containers," he said, by way of one example. "With the widening of the canal, they're going to be able to handle ships that carry between 6,000 and 7,000 containers."

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

Interested in hearing more? The full video of the State of the Industry is available to SAF Marco Island 2014 attendees for free (plus \$5 shipping and handling). SAF members who didn't attend the convention can purchase it for \$19; non-SAF members pay \$49. To order your copy, email [Krissy Doyle at krissydoyle@safnow.org](mailto:krissydoyle@safnow.org). The State of the Industry powerpoint presentation can be downloaded for free at safnow.org/Marco2014handouts.

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.*



Countdown to Retirement

BY DERRICK MYERS, CPA, CFP

Q: I want to retire in 10 years. What should I do now?

> Almost all buyers value a strong company. So, the question becomes: How do you strengthen your company on paper?

When a buyer begins to analyze your company, he or she will want to see financial statements and tax returns for at least the past three years to determine sales trends and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of your business. Expect the buyer to focus on several areas.

Profit is the most important number on your financial statement. A well-run business, with profits getting larger each year, is more valuable than a flat or declining venture. In the three to five years before the sale, you need to make your business as profitable as possible.

The buyer will also look closely at **labor** percentages, which are an indication of business efficiency. If you maintain the proper labor percentages — I recommend 25 percent of product sales for employees and contractors, plus 10 percent for the owners — profit will be better and your company will be more attractive. Another big labor consideration is the cost of replacing you, the owner. If the buyer isn't going to run the business herself, then she'll need to hire someone to replace you as the manager. If you haven't been paying yourself a salary, the addition of this new person could cut deeply into the new owner's anticipated profits.

All buyers will spend the most time analyzing **sales**, namely whether yours are increasing or decreasing. They'll also want to know what percentage of your sales are "wire-in" business; most buyers won't pay for wire-in business because, technically, it's not yours to sell. To strengthen your position, do everything you can in the last few years before the sale to increase sales and reduce the percentage of wire-in business.

Another way to strengthen your company is to work diligently to eliminate **debt**. Debt weakens your financial position and cash flow. Even though the vast majority of buyers don't assume the debt of the company they're buying (unless they're buying the stock of your company), a debt-free company pays less in interest, presents a stronger position and can command a higher price at sale.

Finally, resist the urge to save the extra money by neglecting your **equipment**. A business that doesn't require any immediate large cash outlays is better positioned to retain the value of its assets when it's time to sell.

When the time comes, who will buy my business?

Presuming you've already eliminated the possibility of a family member or current employee as a buyer, there typically are three different types of buyers in the marketplace:

The Hobbyist: As always, you'll find buyers who wish to get into the flower business because they think it will be fun, they "love" flowers, and they have

always wanted to work (they mean play) with flowers. Don't scoff at them. These buyers are often willing to pay the most for your flower shop, because they see a value beyond the numbers. They see enjoyment. And, despite their initial lack of financial know-how, I have worked with several of these new owners and they seem to adapt to the business very well.

The Retail Buyer: The second type of buyer includes business owners who are looking for their next business venture — they know how to run a business, but when it comes to running a floral business, they're often about as green as the hobbyist. This person will study the numbers and base the purchase offer on traditional business valuation modeling and will pay the second highest price for your business.

The Wholesale Buyer: These buyers are already in the business and are looking to expand. They may buy your store and keep it open, or they may close the location and consolidate your sales into their already existing organization. This buyer will typically pay the least for your business.

If you need to sell fast, the wholesale buyer is there. They have formulas to speed up the valuation process and can offer you a quick out when needed.

How much money can I expect to get for the sale of my business?

Short answer: The hobbyist will quite often pay 30 percent to 40 percent of the annual sales of your business, sometimes significantly more. The retail buyer will usually pay about 30 percent of sales. The wholesale buyer is usually around 15 percent of sales. A stronger company may command a higher price. Last year I saw a business sell at nearly 100 percent of sales (to a retail buyer), because the company had an incredibly high profit margin and cash flow.

Keep in mind these figures are just averages based on my experience and the experience of other accountants in the floral industry. The actual sale price of your shop needs to be professionally determined by an accountant or other valuation expert. Don't rely on a percentage factor or a simple multiplier to determine the value. (See box.)

What's My Business Worth?

There are several ways to get a rough estimate of the value of your business. In a previously published article, Myers maps out the formulas. Go to safnow.org/moreonline

Does it ever make sense to work through a third party broker?

Brokers can get your information out to more potential buyers than you can — which can result in fetching a higher price for your business. Just be prepared to provide a lot of detailed information, which they'll need for their reports. Also, it's in their best interest to maximize the selling price, so it may take some time to find the right buyer.

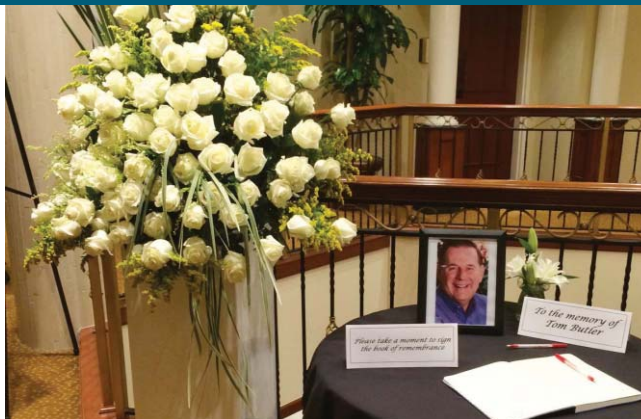
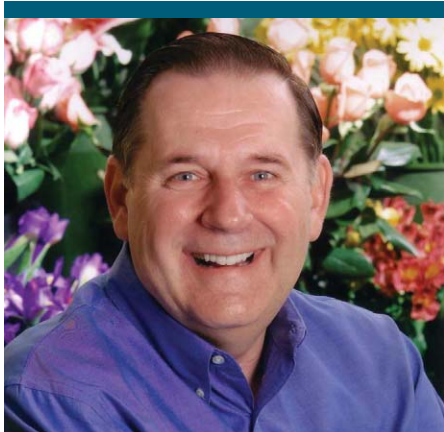
If you are planning to sell, you may be able to *quietly* make some casual inquiries to potential buyers — not your competition, but perhaps a broker or a wholesale buyer to test the market and see what you may be able to get for your business.

What else should I do to prepare for retirement?

Ideally, you've built a company that appeals to multiple buyers and commands a great price. What if that's not the case? Diversify. Consider setting up a retirement plan and begin contributing as much as possible. Many plans available let you start with as little as \$25 per month and with others you can invest \$52,000 (or more) per year. Work with your financial and tax advisors to choose the plan that is right for you. 🌿

Derrick P. Myers, CPA, CFP, PFCI, is vice president of **Crockett, Myers & Associates Inc.**, a financial management firm that has been working with florists for 29 years. Send requests for the firm's chart of accounts to Derrick@crockettmyers.com.

Industry News



NO. 1 CHAMP

Tom Butler, chairman of Teleflora, was considered by many to be the industry's "chief champion." SAF Marco Island 2014 attendees could express their sympathy and share memories with Tom Butler's family, in a book that was on display during the convention.

TOM BUTLER, AAF, PFCI, 1945-2014

➤ When Tom Butler, AAF, PFCI, wanted to get a point across, he would repeat his argument, summarize it, then punctuate it with, "OK?" — "just in case you had any doubts what the right answer was," said SAF Treasurer Dwight Larimer, AAF, PFCI, of Design Master Color Tool in Boulder, Colo., who on August 15 had the unenviable job of informing 400 floral industry professionals gathered for SAF's convention that their "Chief Champion" passed away, the night before.

For someone who was relentless in his efforts to have the floral industry's needs heard and remembered, even the timing of his death — the very night a research grant in his name was announced — seemed somewhat deliberate.

"As we cheered Tom and his commitment to American Floral Endowment (AFE), he felt our love," Larimer told the crowd. Less than 12 hours earlier, the Tom Butler Family Fund was announced during AFE's Annual Fundraising dinner. At about that same time, Butler "was surrounded by his family. He was at peace. He was ready to let go."

No one in the industry was quite ready to let Butler go, though.

"It felt like a punch to the gut," said SAF Chairman of the Board Bob Williams II, AAF, PFCI. "There are so many ways he made a difference. It's hard to imagine our world without him."

A devout Catholic, Butler graduated from Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit. Though he never officially joined the priesthood, as he initially intended, his faith nonetheless shaped his life, and many florists attest that he provided spiritual guidance.

"I told him, many times, that he did follow his original plan. He just did his work specifically for our industry," said SAF CEO Peter Moran. "He always preached taking the high road and having a positive attitude. And he was always ready to counsel someone faced with a difficult situation."

With the announcement of the Tom Butler Family Fund, attendees who'd been personally impacted by Butler were asked to stand.

"The entire room was on its feet," said Kathy Arde, of Schneider's Florist in Springfield, Ohio. "I believe God waited for a time when so many of Tom's favorite people were gathered together to send him home."

That fanfare came as no surprise to Paul Goodman, PFCI, president of Floral Finance Business Services in Tulsa, Okla., who worked with Butler for 29 years at American Floral Services and was among the speakers at his memorial service, held in Oklahoma City on Sept 9.

"He was larger than life in any room," he said. "Tom had an infectious smile, a wonderful laugh and an engaging personality."

And then there was his uncanny way of making everyone he met feel like the most important person in the world.

"To Tom, the industry was all about the people," Goodman said. "He visited more shops and knew more retail florists personally than anyone else has ever done and probably ever will."

Linda Zoerb, of La Crosse Floral in La Crosse, Wis., was among the hundreds of florists Butler visited. "When we turned 100, he came to congratulate us. He took

photos with each and every employee, which he then mailed, individually, with a short note," she said. "What a class act!"

For nearly half a century, Butler dedicated his life to promoting flowers and the people who sold them. He was with FTD for 13 years where he held a variety of senior positions, including director of the international division. He then worked for three years as vice president of sales and marketing at Syndicate Sales. He joined American Floral Services (AFS) in 1985 as executive vice president and then became president. When AFS merged with Teleflora in 2000 — a merger he was instrumental in making — Butler became chairman.

An avid baseball fan, Butler "went to bat" for retail florists at every opportunity. Through Teleflora, he pushed for educational programming, technology innovation and national marketing campaigns. A fixture at SAF's Congressional Action Days, he lobbied for legislation to improve the business climate. As Development Chairman and later Trustee Emeritus of AFE, he raised more than \$2 million to fund research and scholarships for floriculture students.

These efforts, as well as his unprecedented number of shop visits, earned Butler his "Chief Champion" moniker and a place in the SAF Floriculture Hall of Fame.

For those grappling with how to proceed in the absence of "such a great man," Larimer challenged them to follow Butler's example.

"Give a hug, say a prayer, and take a picture," he said. 🌸

— Katie Hendrick



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Plugged In BY RENATO CRUZ SOGUECO

VIDEOGRAPHER IN THE HOUSE (PART II)

> “Video is the future of content marketing,” wrote Chris Trimble, director of content at Axonn Media, in a story last summer for *The Guardian*. Among other points, Trimble highlighted that YouTube gets more than 1 billion unique visitors every month and that Cisco predicts videos will account for 69 percent of all consumer Internet traffic by 2017.

Floral industry business owners should capitalize on this resource, especially since we have such a beautiful, video-ready product to share. Last month, we talked about shooting video on the go with a smartphone; this month we’ll talk about the tools you need to shoot, edit and process professional-quality video in your store.



Upgrade Your Camera

While a smartphone is capable of capturing quality video (1080p), these gadgets are also limited by the size and quality of their lenses. If you want to upgrade, you have a few choices. While some people spend \$1,000, \$2,000 or more on video cameras, our recommendation is to save your money and invest in a dual-purpose **digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) camera**.

DSLRs offer better lenses and better digital sensors than smartphones, and that means better video. Of course, a DSLR will help you take high-quality still floral photography, too, making it a sound investment.

Canon fans should consider the T5i (around \$750, including the lens kit) or older models, such as T3i or T2i, which will also capture 1080p (around \$500, depending on the seller). Nikon fans may consider the D5300 (about \$700). Believe it or not, people are now shooting feature films with DSLRs. Check out one example at www.imdb.com/list/ls059550382.

Can You Hear Me Now?

For crystal-clear sound, the built-in mics on smartphones and DSLRs are adequate but not ideal. We recommend a **lavalier (LAV)** or **boom mic**.

LAVs are attached to the speaker’s lapel or clothing seam. The LAV we recommend (Audio Technica, ATR3350iS, \$26) has a 20-foot cable and is inserted into the cameras or smartphone headphone or mic jack. The boom mic (Audio Technica, ATR6550, \$55) may require an extra set of hands; for best results, you must point the mic at the speaker.

Light Bright

If you’re shooting video on the road or at a venue, you can’t always control light-

ing, so we recommend using indirect, natural sunlight. If you don’t have a spot in the shop that offers this, invest in a **lighting kit and backdrop**.

You have lots of lighting kit options. We recommend the ePhoto Video Studio Portrait 3 Point Hair Light 2000W Photo Kit with Case VL9004SB (about \$180). Search “Three Point Lighting for an Interview – Tutorial” on YouTube to learn how to set it up.

To ensure that you have a clean, consistent and professional background, you’ll need to buy a **backdrop**. Search for “video photo backdrop” and you’ll see lots of choices on backdrops and stands. Be sure that the backdrop width matches that of your stand — we recommend a muslin backdrop and stand that spans 10 feet.

Continuing Ed

Stepping up your video game can be a challenge, but many resources exist to help you. If you purchased a new Mac for this project, check out Apple’s <https://onetoone.apple.com> program (\$99). You can ask any question or be trained on any Apple software by one of the Apple Store Geniuses.

Tutorials for all the software mentioned this month can be accessed with a \$25 per month subscription to lynda.com. Free resources also are available through YouTube.



Computer Hardware Specs

Capturing, editing and processing edited video is intensive work for your computer. You may need to upgrade this equipment, too. Following are the recommended specs for any PC or Mac you buy: **Intel Core i7** (the i5 or i3 will double or triple processing time); **32 GB of RAM**, a Nvidia GTX 760 **graphic video card** or better and a **1TB hard drive** (or more) — video files are space hogs. For Mac users, consider the Mac Mini (\$799). It satisfies most of the specs but you’ll need to spend another \$60 to max the memory up to 32GB. For a **monitor**, get the Dell Ultrasharp 29 U2913WM (\$499). Working with video requires more width than height and this monitor is plenty wide.

Editor’s Cut

You’ll also need to invest in some video editing software. For PC users, download the free **Microsoft Live Movie Maker**. Mac users have the free **iMovie** program preinstalled on every system. Both provide basic editing tools and built-in functions to upload to social media.

If you need fancier fills, effects and transitions or more control over audio, consider Adobe Premiere Elements 12 for Mac/PC (\$99). If you’ve already paid for an Adobe Creative Cloud license to get Photoshop or another suite program, it already includes Premier Pro. Mac users also have another paid option in Final Cut Pro X (\$299.99). 🎧

Renato Sogueco is SAF’s chief information officer and the floral industry’s go-to consultant on all things tech. rsogueco@safnow.org

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Business of Design

THE BUSINESS OF BLENDING

> Florists eager to recreate the ombré trend (see Fresh Choices, p. 20) should know one thing: "It takes time and money to blend colors effectively," said Cindy Anderson, AIFD, PFCI, a Colorado Springs, Colo.-based designer and past winner of the Sylvia Cup Design Competition.

The good news: slave-to-trend customers are willing to pay for that effort. "It's one of the most popular looks right now," she said. "Customers love it and consider it high end."

Be prepared to buy several bunches of flowers in four to seven different shades for just a single piece, Anderson said — ideally, the client will need multiples (think: bridesmaid bouquets, centerpieces). If not, either have a plan for using the unused product elsewhere or charge for the extra flowers that might go unused.

The second part of the profit equation: charging enough for labor. "It's not just design time," Anderson said. "It takes time to figure out the color form you'll use and to scrutinize flowers for the exact right shades." If your customer has her heart set on ombré, don't hesitate to charge for your shopping time, she said. 🌿

See safnow.org/moreonline for complete recipes.

Katie Hendrick
katiehendrick@gmail.com



RADIANT ROSES

A monofloral hand tied bouquet keeps the emphasis on color rather than texture, Anderson said.

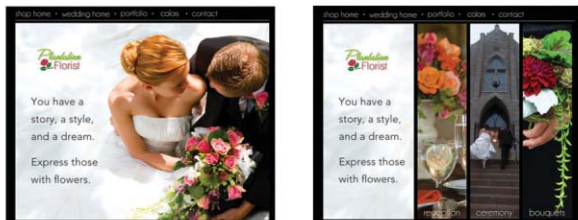


TRENDY TOWER

Carnations help minimize the cost of ombré and the style elevates the humble flower's perceived value. Anderson uses a permanent and reusable branch structure she made and keeps on hand for events.

Wedding Portfolio

How your shop looks on its website is how you appear to most brides looking for a florist. Your wedding inquiries jump when you stand out with a gorgeous display of photos that represent the work you can deliver.



Exclusive Web Template

Sales increase when a shop moves away from the “cookie cutter” stock templates. TeamFloral offers beautiful templates for Members who have a Teleflora site.



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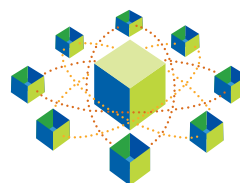


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Care and Handling BY TERRIL NELL, PH.D., AAF, PFCI, AND JOHN DOLE, PH.D.

TEST YOUR WATER UPTAKE IQ

> Water is critical for flower longevity and opening after harvest. Why? It's absorbed through the base of the stem and moves up the stem to the leaves, stems and flowers. Absorption through the stem must exceed the amount of water lost through the leaves, or the flower will die prematurely. No new petal cells are produced after flowers are harvested, so maintaining a continuous flow of water to the petal cells is the only way that flowers will open. Sounds simple enough, right? In fact, several factors can impede that continuous flow of water. This month, we test you on two of them.

Editor's Note: The authors led a session at SAF Marco Island 2014 titled "Test Your Care and Handling IQ," that garnered great reviews from attendees. Dallas retailer Charles Ingram, of Dr. Delphinium, called it "the best session at the convention." While there's no substitute for the live event, we will attempt to bring a slice of Terril Nell's and John Dole's IQ test to the pages of Floral Management in the next several installments of Care and Handling.

1

Should stems be recut under water?

- Yes, but only when they can be recut under clean water.
- Yes, every time is best.
- No, it is too messy.
- No, it doesn't help.

Stems must be re-cut prior to placement in hydration or flower food solutions. Anything that blocks water flow in the stem — air, microbes or naturally occurring substances, such as latex — prevents the movement of water upwards. That said, research has shown that cutting underwater does not enhance flower life and may even decrease it (so the answer is D). If the water is clean for every cut, underwater cutting may increase water absorption for the first 24 to 36 hours, but total water absorption for flowers cut underwater or cut dry is not much different. The process of cutting flower stems in an underwater cutter dirties the water with plant parts,



which results in microbial growth. All those microbes in the cutting tank will clog the base of the stems. The more stems that are cut underwater the greater the likelihood of blocked stems. Laboratory testing has shown that as few as 600 chrysanthemum stems cut underwater resulted in reduced vase life.

Flower life is generally longest when stems are cut dry and immediately placed into clean vase water with a commercial hydration or flower food solution. It should be noted that underwater cutters with circulating water baths reduce the risk for blocked stems.



2

Why are the flowers in the three vases on the right dying?

- Dirty water.
- Old flowers.
- They were sprayed with a solution of aspirin.
- Exposure to ethylene gas.

While freshly made flower food solutions contain biocides to limit microbial growth, they are designed to be used in clean water and cannot "clean" a dirty vase or bucket. Therefore, use of dirty vases or previously used vase solutions will lead to blocked stems, poor water uptake and premature flower death, as shown in three of the four vases. Using clean, freshly-made hydration solutions and flower foods, as was the case with the vase on the left, will give you a better return on investment on your flowers. Providing customers with sachets of flower food will increase vase life by 3 - 5 days or longer. The answer, in case it's not obvious: A.

Terril Nell, Ph.D., AAF, PFCI, is professor emeritus from the University of Florida, a consultant to the floral industry and was recently appointed as Research coordinator for American Floral Endowment. **John Dole, Ph.D.**, is professor and head of the Horticultural Science Department at North Carolina State University. The support of the American Floral Endowment is gratefully acknowledged.

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~Robin Heller (pictured) Flowers by David

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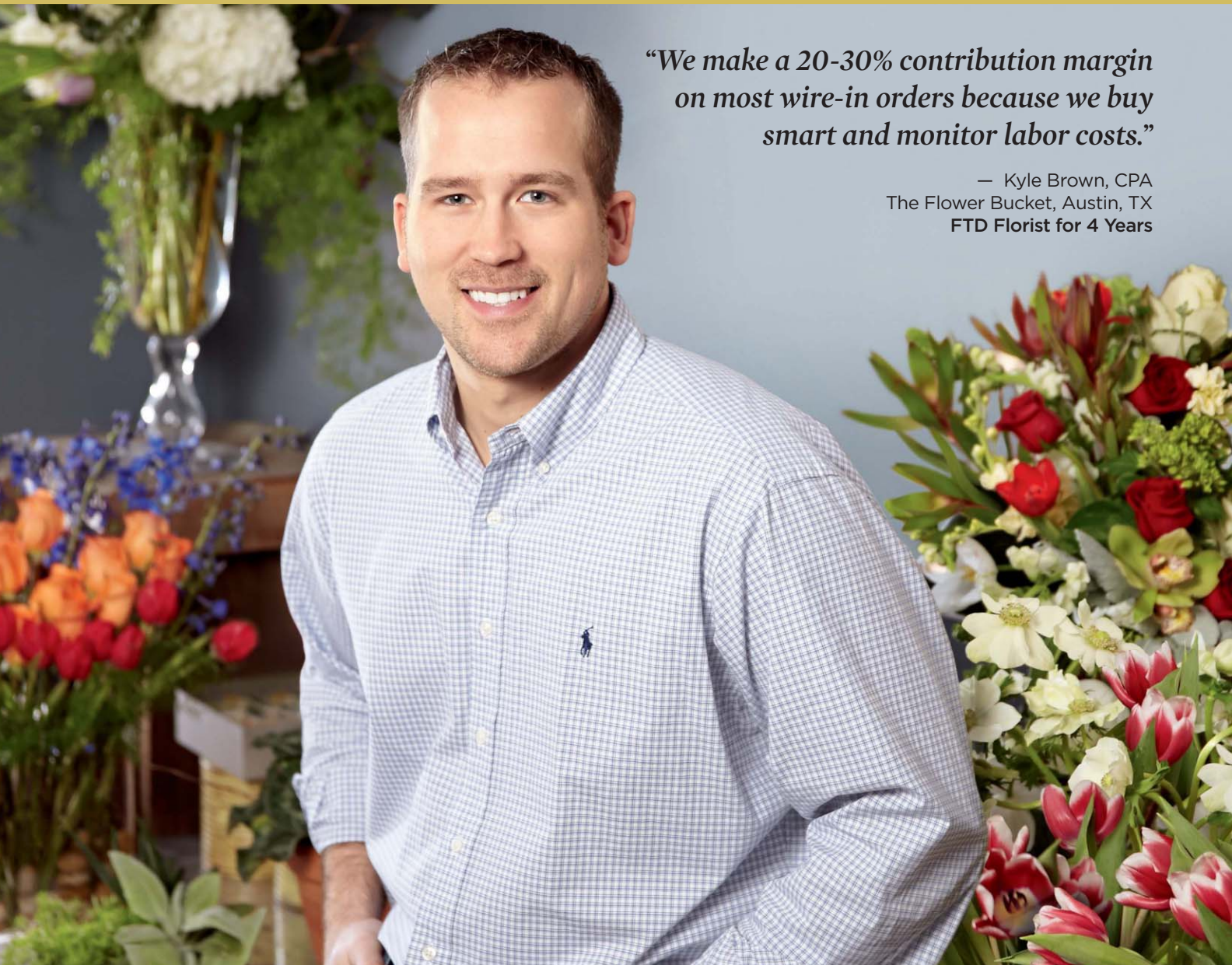
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