

floral management

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THE FLORAL BUSINESS AUTHORITY

JULY 2017 | VOLUME 34 | NUMBER 4



PLANT CRAZE

Millennials and down-sizing Boomers are crazy for plants. Here's how your shop can capitalize on the trend.



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> COVER: DEREK WOODRUFF, AIFD, CF, PFCI, DARLING BOTANICALS AND FLORAL UNDERGROUND, TRAVERSE CITY, MICHIGAN. PHOTO BY SARAH BROWN PHOTOGRAPHY.



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Viewpoint BY RACHEL MARTIN

SUNDAYS AT THE SHOP

> My business had a strong Mother's Day this year. Sales were up by about 5 percent. That increase puts us in line with a lot of other florists: A Society of American Florists member survey after the holiday found that about 60 percent of us saw a sales increase. That's great news in this retail environment: Customers have plenty of gift options, and Mother's Day is an important holiday for our industry.

It's also a holiday that consumer trends may be reshaping. In 28 years as a florist, I've seen that firsthand.

First of all, consumers are ordering later and later. For the past few Mother's Days — and to a certain extent, Valentine's Day, too — we'll start out the week at my business feeling a little nervous: Business is slow. Did we order too much? Did we over-prepare? By the end of the week, we're often hustling to order more flowers. This year, Friday was our busiest sales day by far, generating about 35 percent of our total orders.

On top of that, consumers' expectations are sky high. People are accustomed to services such as Amazon Prime and Amazon Now — especially here in Seattle, where Amazon is our neighbor. People expect that they can buy items and, within a few hours, have those goods on their doorstep, no questions asked.

That's why I'm surprised to hear some florists say they don't open their doors on Sunday for Mother's Day (and for Valentine's Day, when that holiday falls on a Sunday).

I understand their reasoning: They want to give their staff a break, and to provide mothers on staff some time to enjoy the holiday. Sunday isn't a big sales day. Listening to other members of SAF's Retailers Council, I know that in parts of the country, including the Deep South, customers don't expect a business to be open on Sunday, and maybe in those regions, it doesn't make sense to be open.

Here in Washington, though, it doesn't make sense to be closed. In fact, I can't imagine telling customers we're closed on Mother's Day. Frankly, I think they'd be insulted. ("You want my business, but aren't even open on this major floral holiday?")

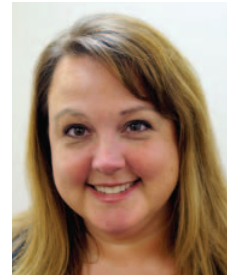
We started opening on Sundays for Mother's Day about 15 years ago. At the time, we added a slight surcharge for Sunday deliveries, but even that practice has become outdated now. Our customers simply expect those Sunday hours and services — every other business in our area offers them or something comparable.

Sunday isn't our biggest sales day. Less than 5 percent of sales come in that day. On the other hand, it has become a day that helps us better manage our workflow — and plan for all those procrastinating customers who wait until Friday or Saturday, despite our best efforts to get orders in early.

The first few years that we were open on Sunday for Mother's Day, we made about 50 deliveries on the day. This year, we did 350 deliveries on Sunday, compared to 300-plus on Friday and more than 400 on Saturday. If we hadn't been opened on Sunday this year, we would have had to spread those 350 orders over our already packed Friday and Saturday — or, even worse, we might have turned customers away, and pushed them straight into our competitors' arms.

Instead, everyone on my team, 10 delivery drivers and 11 designers and sales team members, worked at least a little on Sunday. Were we tired? Yes! Were we also using the day to restock the cooler for Monday? Absolutely. But by being in-store and serving customers on that day, we were also telling our customers something: We're here and we're ready to help you with anything you need. In today's market, that's an important and lasting message to send. 🌻

Rachel Martin is the owner of **Ballard Blossom** in Seattle, Washington, and a member of the SAF Retailers Council. Rachel@ballardblossom.com





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What Inspires Us

> In 2016, the number of entrepreneurs who took a vacation — 61 percent — was the highest it had been in 10 years, according to American Express OPEN. What's up with the other 39 percent? It's not easy to get away when you own a business — but there's all kinds of research to support that it's critical to success.

In fact, time away from the business has given birth to some of the progressive ideas featured in Floral Management and the Society of American Florists's educational programming. Manny and Clara Gonzales, of Tiger Lily in Charleston, got the idea for their shop's pay-for-performance model — since adapted by scores of florists around the country — during a summer getaway. It took a physical and mental separation from the shop for the couple to figure out why, despite the fact that they were working twice as hard as ever, they weren't making any money (labor and COGS were too high). Vince and Carolyn Butera, of Butera the Florist in Butler, Pennsylvania, had a succession of eureka moments during the couple's annual summer vacation that, each year, led to a new idea: a re-do of the shop's organizational structure, a major re-branding and taking a permanent stand in a local Farmer's Market.

There is something about slowing down a bit that allows an entrepreneur to see both problems and possibilities with a clarity that doesn't always exist when

mired in the day-to-day aspects of running the business.

With your summer vacation in mind, we've packed this issue with some big picture ideas to consider (while slathering on sunscreen, hiking through lush forests, or sitting in an Adirondack chair):

Plants! If you've long written off green plants as a category for the big boxes, you may want to reconsider. Both Millennials (with their small dwellings) and the downsizing Boomers are flocking to specialty plants — the kind retail florists are well positioned to provide and profit from. Senior editor Mary Westbrook caught up with three retailers who are digging into this market to find out how they do it and how you can, too, **p. 22**.

Mother's Day recap Summer is a great time to consider not only new product lines moving forward, but also to reflect on what went well over the last few months — namely, Mother's Day. Get your shop's numbers in front of you and compare them to how the rest of the industry did, in our recap of SAF's annual spring holiday survey, **p. 30**. In it, we include some insight from florists on the perennial question, "to be open on Mother's Day, or not to be open?" One Seattle retailer shares her answer to that question as well as the trend toward later and later ordering for the holiday, in "Sundays at the Shop," **p. 2**.

SAF Palm Beach 2017 preview You may be glad to learn that the happy, plant-toting guy on this month's cover is a featured presenter at SAF Palm Beach



2017 — where hundreds of business owners go to get an annual dose of big picture and tactical business strategies. Get a preview of the programming in SAF in Action, **p. 10**.

Strategic summer pricing There's a time and a place for discounting, and monthly contributor Mark Anderson says summertime can be one such time — if done strategically. He spells out the strategy in this month's "The Right Price," **p. 14**.

Sunny side up Another way to lure in summer customers? Sunflowers. Prolific new variety development means that retail florists can outshine supermarket and farmer's market competitors with some unusual varieties, such as those contributing editor Katie Hendrick rounded up for this month's "Fresh Choices," **p. 20**.

Whether you're getting away this summer or opting for a staycation, we hope this issue provides some inspiration for new business ideas. 🌻

Kate Penn
kpenn@safnow.org

More Online ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON WWW.SAFNOW.ORG



PEER PRESSURE

Check out the list of attendees who've registered so far for SAF Palm Beach 2017. At press time, 165 were registered — likely several dozen more by the time you read this issue. Click on the "attendee list" link and check out all of the programming at safnow.org/annual-convention.



SUMMERY GRAPHICS

Remind consumers to bring the sunshine indoors this summer with banner ads and Facebook cover graphics, free from SAF's banner ad library. safnow.org/banner-ad-library



PETAL IT AGAIN

During the 2016 Petal It Forward event, SAF and floral industry members in dozens of markets around the country randomly presented bouquets to strangers — asking each to keep one and give the other to a stranger. Get in on the action for Petal It Forward 2017, on October 11. safnow.org/petalitforward



WAKE-UP CALL

Have you seen SAF's Wednesday E-Brief lately? How about the Saturday Sales Wake-Up? If not, you're missing the up-to-the-minute industry news and valuable business building tips in SAF's e-newsletters. If you're out of the loop, email membermail@safnow.org. Put "Add me" in the subject line and your full name, company, city and state in the body of the message.

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SAF Member Forum

How Was Mother's Day?

Comments volunteered by Society of American Florists members taking SAF's Mother's Day 2017 survey reveal a variety of perspectives on everything from sales, to staffing to the impact of wire services on holiday sales. For more on Mother's Day 2017 results, see p. 30.

> We are back on track after 8 years of stale sales. There is so much optimism now, and clients are spending money.

Mario Fernandez, Belle Fleur, Coral Gables, Florida

> We could have done more if we'd had more help. But when do you say enough is enough?

Beverly Long, Anker Florist, Danville, Illinois

> Quite disappointing for us; we were hopeful for increased walk-ins on Sunday. In our region we were completely undercut by the supermarket pricing flowers.

Kara Rivas, Golden Petal Florist, Corpus Christi, Texas

> We made the decision to be closed this year on Sunday. We've been open for about 10 years on Sunday. Our sales were up 23 percent even without Sunday sales.

Rakini Chinery, Allan's Flowers, Prescott, Arizona

> We limited our wire business and did more straight orders from real customers. We were down 2 percent over 2016 but up on net profits and customer satisfaction.

Lance Williams, Playa Del Rey Florist & Gifts, Playa Del Rey, California

> We expected it to be up, but we did nearly the same dollar amount as last year. However, we ran 35 fewer deliveries, so the average sale was up. Walk-ins were down, and we are in a residential area, so that was disappointing. We have had such rainy, bad weather and the Saturday was gorgeous, so we think a lot of people planned outdoor activities (picnics, etc). Even the cafe next to us wasn't as busy as last year!

Heather Waits, Bloomtastic Florist, Upper Arlington, Ohio

> Excellent for us! We took phone orders at 3:30 on Sunday and happily delivered them. We are staffed appropriately. We also had two weddings and two large family funerals.

Heather Hammer, A To Zinnia Florals & Gifts, New Ulm, Minnesota

> We handle a huge incoming wire volume and were pleased. Our website provided the next biggest growth for us. Holiday was better than we judged.

Cathy Brunswick, Floral Moments, Dayton, Ohio

> I believe it would have been our best, but we were short a valuable staff member due to a death in her family. We had to suspend wire service and website orders Friday evening through Saturday. We accepted limited phone orders and walk ins. It still was a very good and busy holiday.

Lisa Kratz, McCormick Florist, Pario, Ontario, Canada

> We are losing traditional sales in our industry. It is up to us to promote our service and retain our existing customer base. If you fill an order from an order gatherer, don't presume you've lost a client; you've an opportunity to inform them and win the sale back.

Kevin Keser, Keser's Flowers of Glastonbury, Glastonbury, Connecticut

> The false advertising of order gathers and direct shipping has to be pointed out the public and the Federal Trade Commission. A class action suit must be launched soon by the independent florists and SAF against all the false claims on freshness and "better than florists."

John Looby, Lake Forest Flowers & Greenhouses, Lake Forest, Ill.

> Worst one ever — getting product in on time and of good quality was a nightmare from the farm to the shipper, which caused the wholesaler to have problems getting to me. Sales were drastically down. I did even more promoting this year than before (direct mail, Instagram, Pinterest, Facebook, email, radio and print).

Lori Himes, Abloom, Walkersville, Maryland



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SAF in Action

GET READY TO SOAK UP RAYS OF KNOWLEDGE IN PALM BEACH



IMPORTANT CONVENTION DATES

July 27: Sylvia Cup Design Competition Entry Deadline

July 27: Premier Products Showcase Exhibitor Deadline

Aug. 9: Early Bird Convention Registration Deadline

Aug. 11: Deadline for SAF Rate at Hotel

safnow.org/annual-convention

> The countdown is on for the Society of American Florists' 133rd annual convention, Sept. 6-9, at The Breakers in Palm Beach, Florida — four days packed with educational sessions that tackle the various aspects of running a floral business, from producing striking designs that outshine the competition to juggling operational costs and price points to improve profit margin.

The diverse curriculum is what spoke to first-time attendees Chris and Robert Palliser of Scotts Flowers in New York City. The brothers are in the process of taking over the shop as their father transitions into retirement, and they want to soak up as much advice as possible.

"When we saw the convention included programs about floral trends, operational costs, profitability, social media, online advertising and more, we knew we needed to check it out," said Rob Palliser Jr. "We are determined to succeed and hungry to learn all these things."

Even after participating in more than 15 SAF conventions, Karen Fountain, AAF, knows she'll pick up new ideas this year too. "When my daughter told me she wanted to get married in September, I actually contacted SAF to make sure her prospective wedding date didn't conflict with the convention," said the owner of Flowers 'n' Ferns in Burke, Virginia. "I couldn't stand to miss it. I always come home

with loads of tips to improve all areas of my business. I probably drive my staff crazy with all the changes I want to implement afterwards."

Here's just a fraction of what's in store at SAF Palm Beach 2017:

Cool Containers and Dynamite Design

At the Outstanding Varieties Competition, Premier Products Showcase and Supplier Expo, get up close and personal with the finest flowers, hard goods and accessories in the market — and the people responsible for them.



See how to fashion flowers to appeal to four different generations of consumers with **Jackie Lacey, AIFD, CFD, PFCI**, of Floriology.



Discover how décor packages increase holiday revenue and master some chic, ready-to-go Yuletide designs with **Kevin Ylvisaker, AIFD, CFD, PFCI, CAFA**, of Smithers-Oasis.

Tech Tutorials



Brush up on emerging digital trends and ways to adapt your business to meet customers' expectations with BloomNet's **Renato Sogueco**.



Bloomerang's **Art Conforti, PFCI**, uncovers the powerful data available through Google Analytics to sharpen your website's performance and marketing efforts.

Acquire a plan for purchasing Google AdWords and responding to reviews to defend your brand online.



Crystal Vilkaitis of Crystal Media shows how to effectively use social media marketing to increase local exposure, foot traffic and sales.

Money Matters



Analyze the financial reports of other florists (anonymous of course!) to identify and correct mistakes for a stronger bottom line with **Kyle Brown** of Lone Star Bloom.



Mark Anderson of FloristWare and **Derrick Myers, CPA, CFP, PFCI**, of Crockett Myers team up to boost your profitability with selective discounting to capture bargain hunters' business without cannibalizing full-price sales.



Skip Paal, AAF, and his team at Rutland Beard Floral Group explain how to handle high volume efficiently and profitably.

Get details and register at safnow.org/annual-convention.



CAN'T MISS IT "When my daughter told me she wanted to get married in September, I actually contacted SAF to make sure her prospective wedding date didn't conflict with the convention," said Karen Fountain, AAF, the owner of Flowers 'n' Ferns in Burke, Virginia. She's participated in more than 15 SAF conventions, including in Maui last year.

SAF TACKLES HARMFUL MOTHER'S DAY PUBLICITY

> This Mother's Day season, the Society of American Florists responded to 18 instances of harmful floral publicity. Ancestry.com and Coach rank as the "biggest offenders," said SAF Director of Marketing and Communications Jenny Scala, as dozens of members reported "forget flowers" in their ads.

"The good news is that both companies acknowledged our concerns," Scala said. "We hope they will keep us in mind when they develop future promotions."

As the voice of the floral industry, SAF contacts companies that disparage flowers and asks them to reconsider their approach. "The main point of SAF's response is to bring attention to the disparaging floral statements and ask advertisers to promote products on their

SAF in Action

ENTHUSIASM GROWS FOR PETAL IT FORWARD 2017



TEAM EFFORT “Our delivery staff is familiar with the reaction people have when they receive flowers, but our other team members never get the chance,” said Staci Bryant, general manager of Expressions Unlimited in South Carolina, about Petal It Forward 2016. “It was amazing for my staff to see what an impact flowers have on people.”

> Florists who held Petal It Forward events last year are planning bigger giveaways on Oct. 11, 2017, when the national event, in its third year, will be held.

“We crushed Petal It Forward for 2016,” said Staci Bryant, general manager of Expressions Unlimited, which has four locations in South Carolina. “It resulted in a huge response of people following us on Instagram and Facebook within 24 hours of the event.”

Petal It Forward is a feel-good flower giveaway created by the Society of American Florists in which participants

give away two bouquets to unsuspecting passersby: one to keep and one to give away — and, ideally, post a picture about the gesture to social media using the hashtag #petalitforward.

“It was great how people reacted on social media,” Bryant said. “We saw pictures of our flowers all over private Facebook and Instagram accounts, and we were even tagged. That was fun to know that we had a part in brightening someone’s day enough to make it to their News Feed.”

Bryant wants to reach more people in 2017, so she and her staff plan to give away 1,200 bouquets, compared with 975 bunches last year, and coordinate events at multiple locations.

Expressions Unlimited is among 41 businesses that plan to hold local events. As of late May, suppliers, growers, wholesalers and retailers in 27 states and Canada had committed to Petal It Forward on Oct. 11.

Bryant sums up the benefits of Petal It Forward: “There are plenty of ways to spend your marketing money. Sometimes you see an ROI down the road from coupon redemption or a report you get from

your website,” Bryant said. “But when you participate in Petal It Forward, the ROI is immediate. ... It’s about reaching the hearts of people. Do that, and we will create customers for life.”

SAF makes it easy to Petal It Forward. Check out the step-by-step advice and materials available exclusively to members at safnow.org/petalitforward. Participants should fill out a form at safnow.org/piform, so SAF can keep the national media posted on events around the country.

“Our goal is to make Petal It Forward happen in all 50 states again, with even more participants” said SAF Vice President of Marketing Jennifer Sparks, “because this will be a great story to tell the media.” The 2016 campaign included 262 events in 234 cities in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia, generating more than 328 million consumer impressions showcasing the positive impact flowers have on emotional well-being. 🌸



GOOD TIMING North Carolinians Debby Sacra and Ted Todd of The Blossom Shop Florist; Dana and Emma Cook of Julie’s Florist; Michael Trogdon of Burge Flower Shop; and Mark Yelanich of Metrolina Greenhouses participated in SAF’s Congressional Action Days in March during “the first 100 days.”

funding of FNRI by more than 40 percent,” said SAF Senior Director of Government Relations Shawn McBurney.

To date, 15 congressional offices had submitted appropriations requests to increase current funding for FNRI. “In the face of significant federal budget constraints, this is a significant achievement,” McBurney said.

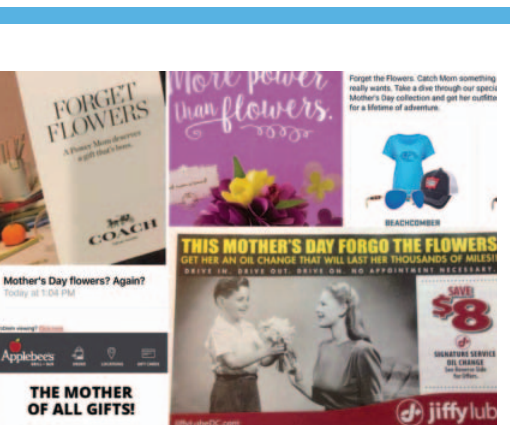
Save the date: SAF’s next Congressional Action Days is March 12-13, 2018. Don’t wait. Educate lawmakers now. Invite them to tour your business and talk about the floral industry. For guidance, email smcburney@safnow.org. 🌸

PUSH FOR MORE RESEARCH FUNDING IN ‘FIRST 100 DAYS’

> In the first 100 days of the Trump administration, floral industry members have successfully pushed members of Congress to support floriculture research funding and helped educate them on tax issues.

During the Society of American Florists’ Annual Congressional Action Days in March, a record number of SAF members visited almost 170 congressional offices and urged lawmakers to increase funding for the Floriculture and Nursery Research Initiative (FNRI) by \$250,000; exclude imported floral agricultural products from a border adjustment tax; and oppose stand-alone mandatory E-Verify worker verification legislation.

“Those CAD visits occurred at a critical time, especially considering that several weeks later the Trump administration’s proposed budget would reduce federal



BAD ADS Among the companies SAF contacted this Mother’s Day season: Coach, Nothing Bundt Cakes, Costa, LOFT, Applebee’s Neighborhood Grill and Bar and Jiffy Lube International.

own merits,” Scala said. “Success comes when the advertiser ceases running that particular promotion or at least takes note not to go that route in the future.”

Members can forward negative portrayals of flowers to jscala@safnow.org. 🌸

snapshot

Darling Botanical Company TRAVERSE CITY, MICHIGAN



ALL IN ORDER The terrarium bar can host up to 12 adult customers at a time or about 23 kids. "We have everything grouped to keep it organized," Woodruff said. "Most of the glass and containers are in one area, with about 40 different stylings to choose from." Retailers who want to follow suit with a terrarium bar may want to "start small," Woodruff suggests. "Invest in what you need and gradually add more inventory."

BY MARY WESTBROOK **Snapshot**

RAISE THE BAR

> Rainy days. Mother-daughter antiquing trips. Bachelorette parties. Children's workshops. These have all been occasions for customers to visit the terrarium bar at Darling Botanical Company. The bar, which takes up about 1,000 square feet, was central to Megan Kellogg's business plan when she relocated her business to a new space in 2014. Today, with the help of Derek Woodruff, AIFD, CF, PFCI, Kellogg uses the bar to tap into consumers' renewed love of plants and their desire to invest in experiences, not purchases alone. 🌿



HOT TICKETS Customers have serious variety to choose from when it comes to plants. Among the bestsellers, "echeveria, haworthia, tillandsia brachycaulos, venus fly trap, living moss, creeping fig and plumosa fern," according to Woodruff.



DIY-ISH Be advised: A terrarium bar is not a total DIY affair. "This is not a self-guided experience," Woodruff said. "You must make yourself available to walk guests through the process and check on them regularly. This part can be especially difficult if all of your staff works in a back design room. Our design space is in the store."



MAKE IT POP The shop stocks dozens of decorative materials — minerals, shells, marbles, butterflies, figurines and much more — to help customers customize their creation (and increase transactions).

The Right Price BY MARK ANDERSON

KNOW THY SUMMER CUSTOMER



➤ Sales can be hard to come by in the summer. Sometimes, though, the will to chase those sales can be just as hard to find.

I've noticed, for example, that the shops I work with tend to get a little less aggressive with their marketing in the summer. That approach makes sense. With employees taking time off, everyone is spread thin. Plus, customers are in and out of town and, hopefully, you're taking some time off yourself.

If it's a conscious decision to pull back in the summer, that's one thing. But if you find yourself worrying over a summertime slowdown — and itching for more business — it's time to take action. To make successful pitches in the summer, you need to be especially sure that your price aligns with the value customers place on your product.

Events: Look for Clues

A golf course in Boston will likely offer discounted rates on tournaments held in early spring or late fall. They aren't sacrificing full price sales because the people that want better conditions will pay to play during peak season. Instead, the course is trying to get additional "incidental" business, from golfers who would either not have a tournament or look for a cheaper club.

Wedding venues have a similar business model. In the South, there are far fewer weddings in steamy July and August than temperate May and September. The week of July 4th and the months November through February are unpopular almost everywhere.

If a wedding is scheduled for one of these off-peak periods, your antenna should be up. There is a good chance you are dealing with a price-sensitive customer who wants a deal, and one who is at risk of going to a cheaper alternative.

Price-sensitive customers respond to charm pricing (prices that end in nines) and perceived value. While discounting event work can seem sacrilegious, doing so might be necessary to keep these clients from going to a big box store, drop shipper, or cheaper competitor.

On the other hand, if the customer books a premium venue for one of "the" wedding weekends in your area (typically Labor Day and Columbus Day) they are more likely to be willing to pay peak prices for everything, including venue, caterer, photographer, etc. Be sure to offer them some higher-margin premium options on flowers, too.

Retail: Add Perceived Value

If you live in a cold-weather state, you likely have customers all winter long who are hungry for some green in their life. During summer months, however, gardening, or a walk in the park, gives the flower lover in Wisconsin the same fix. How do you compete? Add more value or lower the price.

You can add value by offering greater incentives such as double or triple reward points, better containers, "free" cards, etc. And with some products you can add value by playing with pack sizes, offering 15 or 20 roses at special prices. With this approach, you aren't conditioning customers to expect lower prices on the (ever-popular) one or two dozen rose standbys.

The other option is lowering the price through discounts and specials. The trick is to avoid discounting full price sales you were going to get anyway, and not to create a lower, and lasting, expectation of what your product is worth. In other words: No blanket discounts. The customer who calls because it's an anniversary, birthday, etc. pays full price. Any discounts are for people that were not going to buy, or would not pay full price.

Where do you find these buyers? In some cities there are weekends (usually long weekends, and often the weeks they

WHAT SAYETH THE CPA ABOUT DISCOUNTING?

Remember, discount only to generate sales you would not get otherwise: the price sensitive bride who was leaning toward flowers from a drop shipper, or the flower lover otherwise willing to settle for looking at flowers in the park. This way, according to floral industry financial guru and Floral Management contributing author Derrick Myers, CPA, CPF, PFCI, the discount represents a promotional expense that was used to generate "incidental" business.

fall in) when pretty much anyone who can get out of town does get out of town. The ones who remain, as a whole, are likely less affluent. Promoting specials going into and during these periods is less likely to cannibalize full price sales.

Promoting walk-in specials is another good approach. Delivery is a huge part of the value that florists provide. If a customer is prepared to forego that benefit and purchase in person, they are almost certainly very serious about saving money. They are the kind of customer that wasn't going to pay full price, so discounting to them with a "Our Driver Is On Vacation!" pick-up special makes sense.

There may also be marketing opportunities. You can tie your in-store specials in with street festivals or increased foot traffic. Florists have also been known to partner with companies that tend to see an uptick in the summer: ice cream parlors and local breweries. Remind people that when they're out for a stroll or visiting patios on your street they should come in and check out your summer specials.

Coupons are also wildly effective at streaming customers. Only the customers that really need a discount to make a purchase will use them. 🌸

Mark Anderson is founder and president of FloristWare. When he's not developing and servicing POS software, he's pursuing his other passion, pricing strategy, as a contributor to Business.com as well as through programming at SAF and other industry events. mark@floristware.com

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Talent BY MARY WESTBROOK



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

STAN BROSKO
Driver
Armellini Express Lines
Palm City, Florida

> For thirty years, Stan Brosko has delivered cut flowers across the country, traveling from Florida to Northern California, and spending an average of 180 hours behind the wheel each month with his driving partner, Bruce Merkel. Brosko, who grew up in a small town in New Jersey, wouldn't have it any other way. "Even though it's hard work, it feels like every day is a vacation," he said. "I see the leaves change, the snow. I see the world come back to life. Trucking is my window to the world."

The best part of my job.

"Training new drivers. I get to see places and experiences through their eyes. Some of our new trainees have never left Florida. There's no better feeling than driving in the middle of the night. It's this massive machine, and you feel everything. If there's also a bump in the tire, you know it. That's empowering."

What might surprise people.

"Trucking's physical work. There's a driver's shortage now — which is why training

new drivers is so important. Things have changed. When I was in school, you learned how to read a map, which way rivers run. I run into people now who can't get from Point A to Point B without a GPS or smartphone."

What I've learned on the road.

"To anticipate other people's mistakes. When you're up high, you see what everyone else is doing. Nine out of 10 people are on their phones while they're driving. When there's a merge or construction, people do dangerous

"How are you today?"

After Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg lost her husband, Dave, in 2015, she realized how unhelpful a common question — "how are you?" — can be. The fix she offers in her book "Plan B": Add the word "today". Jonathan Segal of the Society for Human Resource Management suggests managers consider Sandberg's advice when talking to grieving employees, too. Another tip: Trade platitudes ("let me know if I can help") for specific gestures ("I picked up your favorite coffee on my way into work today").

stuff. You have to be observant, go with the flow and not lose your patience."

Why I stay.

"About 10 years ago I took an office job with Armellini. It was a great experience — it helped me realize that everything we do is a team effort — but I'm not an office person. When I went back on the road, I felt like a fish released back into the open sea." 🌊

Go On, Disconnect

Putting off that summer vacation? You're not alone. The average U.S. employee who receives paid vacation takes only 54 percent of those days, according to the careers website Glassdoor. Why are days off going unused?

According to respondents:

- Fear of falling behind, 34 percent
- Belief that tasks will go unfinished, 30 percent
- Completely dedicated to work, 22 percent
- Inability to truly disconnect, 21 percent

Time away from the office, however, has been shown to reduce stress, improve health and enhance productivity, according to Lolly Daskal, CEO of the consulting firm Lead From Within.

When you (and your employees) take time off,

make sure it's really time off, she advised in Inc. magazine. "Even among those who actually do go on vacation, three in five admitted to doing some work," she wrote, citing a recent national survey. "A quarter were contacted by a co-worker while they

were on vacation." Those kinds of interruptions can immediately reduce the benefits of a vacation. A better approach? Use your vacation time and encourage your team to do the same, and promote a "no contact" approach once people are checked out.

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Growth BY BRAD DENHAM

THE SILVER LINING TO STORE CLOSURES

➤ What do Sears, RadioShack and Bebe have in common? They're closing brick-and-mortar stores. They aren't alone. Ann Taylor, Dress Barn, Gymboree, K-Mart, J.C. Penney, Macy's, and many more national retailers also are closing shops. As of mid-June, there have been 4,789 store closure announcements this year, a 286 percent increase from a year ago, according to Fung Global Retail & Technology. Time recently reported that 22 major retailers are on the brink of bankruptcy.

That trend is concerning. Florists may feel apprehensive about the future of retail. I would argue that the situation also presents opportunities. I think the future of retail is bright.

Facilities Costs: Time to Re-Evaluate?

Store closures can have negative impacts on other businesses, including a decrease in foot traffic around surrounding stores, but they also present upsides for business owners who are in a position to negotiate or renew leases: As other stores close and increase the overall real estate vacancy rates in an area, landlords become more willing to make aggressive deals. In fact, many landlords will renegotiate a lease at a lower cost to extend the terms if they fear losing retailers. Many real estate investment trusts' (REITS) return on investment are in the single digit range, so even a small increase in vacancy can significantly impact the value of their investment.

To take advantage of these situations, think outside the box. Maybe your retail store is located in a high cost retail location and, as a result, you are paying a lot for your design and delivery space. But does that set-up make sense for your business today? If floral sales have shifted online and to the phone and your walk-in traffic has declined, consider relocating to a space designed more for the logistics of design and delivery and less for retail space.

There are real bottom-line advantages here.

In 2009, we consolidated six retail shops, with an average cost of about \$42 per square foot, into one much larger location in a more industrial area, with a

cost of about \$6 per square foot. In that process, we signed an 11-year lease and negotiated below market rates. Our facilities costs dropped from 10 percent of our sales to less than 5 percent of sales.

In addition to lowering our facility costs, we significantly lowered our operating costs by eliminating duplication of efforts in staff, phone, Internet and more. We could also focus our marketing efforts on driving customers to a single phone number, website and retail destination. As a result, we doubled our full margin retail sales in a few short years.

As other stores close and increase the overall real estate vacancy rates in an area, landlords become more willing to make aggressive deals.

Brick-and-Mortar: What's Your Point of Difference?

Here's another lesson these closures offer: In 2017, you have to give people a reason to come to your physical store. Florists routinely promote their customer service or a customer's ability to interact in-person with the design team as a way to get customers in store. While these personal touches are important, they're also expected in today's retail environment.

The real challenge is that many florists can't show off their design staff because they haven't motivated people to walk in. To do that, you must determine your point of difference, the thing or things that motivate customers to choose your store over the others.

For example, we offer "in-store only" specials. Some florists might cringe at that idea: Aren't we competing against ourselves or under-cutting our products and services? Actually, no. There are significant cost savings to walk-in customers — namely, no delivery — and we can pass those savings on to in-store customers.

We have also developed a base of regular walk-in customers by creating \$5 Fridays. We offer a selection of wrapped \$5 bunches. This consistent in-store promotion has increased our "just because" business, motivating customers who hadn't considered flowers but are motivated by a great deal.

We also do sampling — we give away flowers for free. Some florists think we're crazy when we suggest the idea of giving away, but we do regular giveaways in the form of donation drives benefitting nonprofits throughout the year. We reward the customer's donation with free flowers, e.g. a bunch of tulips, daisies or sunflowers. A quarter of customers who come in for free flowers end up making a purchase, and that 25 percent conversion rate helps cover my costs. This has been a big driver in developing new customers. 🌸



Brad Denham is a founding partner in Arizona Family Florist, the parent company of Arizona Florist, Arizona Flower Market and

LUX Wedding Florist and winner of Floral Management's 2012 Marketer of the Year Award. He oversees the strategic business development, including branding, web development and e-commerce strategy, of all of the brands. Arizona Republic and BizAZ Magazine have named Denham one of Arizona's top entrepreneurs. brad@azfamilyflorist.com



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— Anthony Munoz, Village Greenery & Flowers
Houston, Texas



"We took our entire staff. Why? It is important that everyone is on the same page, and everyone is impacted by different presentations."

— Marsha Jones, Littleton's Woodlawn Floral Inc.
Littleton, Colorado



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

CHEER FEEDERS

> With five consecutive appearances in the College World Series tournament and two national championships under their belt, members of the University of Florida softball team have serious athletic cred. But it's their distinctive fashion statement that gets fans and national pundits talking.

Since 2014, before every game, the women have attached sunflowers to their ponytails and braids in honor of Heather Braswell, the Gators' biggest fan (and honorary teammate), who passed away from complications with brain cancer at age 17. Heather adored all things yellow and sunflowers, the women decided, symbolize uplifting feelings like hope and joy.

Many consumers agree with the Gators' assessment. Sunflowers' vibrant coloring and full shape make them a go-to choice for anyone

needing an emotional pick-me-up. At Sparrows Nest Flower Shop in Neptune, New Jersey, customers buy sunflowers for all occasions, "but especially for condolence and get well soon gifts," said owner Tina Roberts. "We consider them 'floral vitamins' — good for the eyes and great for the spirit."

"Sunflowers are the happiest flowers," said Jackie Levine, manager of Central Square Florist in Cambridge, Massachusetts. "They instantly add cheer to any arrangement. No one can look at a sunflower without smiling."

Here are some of the best and brightest varieties to brighten your customers' days. 🌻

Katie Hendrick is a contributing writer for Floral Management. khendrick@safnow.org



'JUA MAYA'
Ball SA



'MAYA DOUBLE'
Ball SA



'SUNBRIGHT'
Ball SA



'SUNFLORE'
Ball SA



'SUNRICH'
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'TAVOR DOUBLE'
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Kendall Farms



'TEDDY BEAR'
Sun Valley Farms



'YELLOW BLACK EYE'
Sun Valley Farms



'SUNFLOWER MAHOGANY'
Sun Valley Farms



Plant # Lovers

BY MARY WESTBROOK Plants are having a moment. Here's how you can capitalize on it.



MAKE 'EM SHINE

Craig Kirchoff, studio assistant and horticulture manager at Twisted Stem in Crystal Lake, Illinois, is the mastermind behind some of the shop's most eye-catching plant displays, which frequently incorporate unexpected materials, including dried eucalyptus pods and twisted metal.

The Instagram account @houseplantjournal looks and reads like a millennial plant lover's dream. There's a hoya in a tall white planter – a container that Darryl Cheng, the Gen Y mastermind behind the popular account, carted home from a vacation in Hong Kong. Another picture shows a mid-century-esque wooden bookshelf dotted with Sansevieria plants and retro misters. Then there's a shot of neon green walls, the foreground filled with succulents.

"The jungle vibes make me feel right at home," Cheng wrote of the shot, taken in the Brooklyn apartment of another plant-obsessed blogger. "Plant nerds unite." Hashtags for that post (liked by 7,805 people) include #plantsmakepeoplehappy; #plantstagram and #plantparenthood.

One of Cheng's most far-reaching posts came in February, when he uploaded a seven-second time-lapse video that showed a *Tillandsia tectorum* opening "in sequential fashion" over the course of five hours. The video generated nearly 25,500 views.

You read that correctly: Cheng posted a video of an air plant blooming. His audience, mostly millennials, loved it. ("Wow!"; "Whoa awesome video"; "Que belleza la creación!!!")

If you haven't noticed, plants are having a moment, especially among millennials.

On Instagram, hashtags such as #SansevieriaSunday are trending, with users proudly posting shots of their plants clustered in eclectic pots or "posed" in front of funky wallpaper. Search for #plantshelfie and you'll find more than 7,500 pictures of plants on shelves, clustered on countertops and hanging from ceilings and walls. The posts are highly interactive, and commenters often beg for more info: "Where did you find that container?" "What is that?" "Do nepenthes need lots of light?" We haven't even mentioned terrariums. Search for those, and you'll find 128,000 tagged photos on Instagram alone. (Search "terrarium ideas" on Google and you'll have 700,000-plus results to wade through.)

The movement isn't confined to social media either. According to the 2016 National Gardening Report, five million of the six million Americans who took up gardening in 2015 were 18 to 34. The same report found that 37 percent of millennials grow plants and herbs indoors, compared to 28 percent of Boomers. Consumers can now pick up brass plant markers (\$50 a pop) from Anthropologie, double plant hangers (\$40) from Urban Outfitters, and all manner of containers on Etsy, from sleek and modern to folksy and quirky. Floral container manufacturers are also following suit, with new lines of on-trend containers that speak to the uptick in consumer interest.

> #PLANTLOVERS

What's driving the trend? Lots of factors. Compared to previous generations, millennials are buying homes and starting families later in life — nurturing plants instead, apparently. (#plantbabies is another popular hashtag.) Many are choosing to live in cities and urban areas, where rents are high, space is at a premium, and big, green backyards are nonexistent, making a shot of green inside especially welcome. ("Micro apartments"— spaces as small as 200 square feet — are becoming more common and sought after in cities such as Seattle and New York.) Millennials tend to be more attuned to health and environmental concerns than previous generations — "is this organic?" "where was it grown/made?" — and they're more apt to spend money on experiences. Plants tap into those impulses. (A cut flower design, beautiful as it may be, is inherently ephemeral. A plant is a commitment.)

Even if you aren't in a hip city catering to young professionals, though, consumer interest in plants — and, specifically, the kinds of unique plants customers can't pick up for \$5.99 at a hardware or big box store — could be growing in your community, thanks in part to the explosion of plant love on social media and bestselling books, including "Urban Jungle," published last year, which extol the virtues and delights of bringing nature inside. There are signs that older generations are following suit, too: As boomers downsize and declutter, they're also looking for ways to include green spaces in their lives — even a single fiddle-leaf fig in an artful container.



RUTHIE HAUGE PHOTOGRAPHY

BE SPECIFIC John Regan of Twisted Stem uses Latin nomenclature to ID plants in his store, and he's trained his staff to do the same.



UPSELL POTENTIAL The team at Twisted Stem adds extra design interest (and increases average transactions) by adding unexpected "accessories" and decorative flair to plant designs.

The Pantone Institute named Greenery its 2017 Color of the Year for a reason.

And, consumers who are into plants are often *really* into plants. That's good news for florists who take the time to build a robust plant program (rather than thinking of plant sections as an afterthought or obligatory corner of the retail showroom). These "new" plant lovers want detailed information on plants and their care. They want to trick out their containers and add some real personality — often with a serious dash of nostalgia (macramé hangers are baaaack). They want to play a hands-on role in designing those terrariums, and they consider plant purchases to be décor investments, integral parts of their design aesthetic. Finally — consider the potential: For many of these customers, a space simply can't have too many plants.

The key to turning these plant fans into customers? Engage them, educate them and give them lots of options, say florists who have built a loyal plant-loving following. This month, we turned to three florists in Michigan, cutting-edge shops

in the Heartland, not necessarily major cities, for tips on how to think about these buyers, ways to entice them and advice on how to get them into your store.

Plant Priority: Become the expert. Sell the unexpected.

First a truism: Customers looking for a hanging pothos or a philodendron are likely to head to a big box store for those purchases. That's why, particularly with plants, it's important to find the right suppliers and commit to educating yourself and your team on your unusual offerings.

In Crystal Lake, Illinois, John Regan and his plant manager at Twisted Stem travel around the Midwest to personally inspect plants before purchase — when they buy from someone farther afield or when they don't have the time to drive to a location, they've been known to ask a grower or wholesaler to take part in a Skype video call, so they can at least get a visual on the plants.

"This is especially true when I'm dealing with a new vendor and I'm inspecting for any pathogens or pests,"

said Regan, who has an undergraduate degree in ornamental horticulture. "Bringing troubled plants into the shop results in a much bigger problem," one that puts other plants in-store at risk.

Regan's 1,150-square-foot shop is located a few driveways down from another florist with a 28-acre greenhouse and nursery, so he can't afford to stock the "same old-same old." Instead, he shoots for "edgy" plants — old-growth specimen plants, woodland ferns and exotic orchids are popular now. Because customers can't find them just anywhere they command a higher price.

Back at the store, Regan takes education seriously. He gets frustrated when suppliers have incomplete name information or (worse) rely only on common names, which can vary by region.

"When I'm looking for a collection of cacti or succulents, I'm looking for six or seven varieties," he said. "That shortens my vendor list. I'm looking for people who share that passion and attention to detail. [The specificity] can frustrate some vendors."

He also trains his staff to use botanical names and all in-store signage includes Latin nomenclature.

"It's simple for the staff because they've learned the names from me and it's frequently the only name they know," Regan said. "The best way to train staff is to know and use it from the top down."

For some florists, delving deeper into plants can be a humbling experience.

Derek Woodruff, AIFD, CF, PFCI, had already earned a reputation as a top floral designer in 2014 when he joined the team at Darling Botanical Co. in Traverse City, Michigan, as the cut flower manager. The store, owned by Megan Kellogg, generates about 70 percent of sales from plants and has a 1,000-square-foot DIY terrarium bar — and Woodruff quickly realized he had lots to learn.

"I entered this job thinking I knew a lot about plants based on my background in floral design," he said. "I realized very quickly that I didn't. Plants aren't just amenities" — or afterthoughts to consider once a florist has his cut flower department in order.

Woodruff spent his early days at the shop getting his hands dirty at the terrarium bar, re-learning and in some cases

learning about different plant materials, under the tutelage of Kellogg.

"What I realized is that you can't learn everything out of a book, which is how I initially learned about plants," he said. "There are many outside factors that come into play, such as light within spaces, humidity within spaces, acclimation, consistency and adaptation. The real way to learn to care for plants is hands-on experience."

Having a strong plant business also means staying on top of trends in containers, and finding goods that will surprise and delight trendy customers.

For example, "terra cotta is super-hot right now," Woodruff said. "It can be a traditional terra cotta or something that's more weathered and falling apart. Anything with clean lines is also big, along with gray and modern-looking cubes and troughs."

In Wayne, Michigan, Laura Daluga, AIFD, sources many containers for her business, Department of Floristry, from ceramic companies based in Michigan — they can be more expensive but she presents them to her customers as one-of-a-kind finds with a local connection (a marketing message that appeals to millennials). (Daluga,

design director at Smithers-Oasis, also works part-time at Keller and Stein Florist in Canton, Michigan.)

"We have found that when it comes to Michigan-made products, be they cards, containers or locally-grown flowers, consumers really do get excited when it's made in their backyard," she said, noting that her hard goods markup is 2.5 times, including for more expensive local finds. "Local pride is a very real thing, and consumers are generally looking for products that reflect them, their identity and their outlook."

Daluga also is a fan of Etsy's wholesale platform, which she says has been a consistently good source for unusual finds.

"Often times I'll find a really cool, locally produced geometric planter on Etsy Wholesale," she said. "That platform is really great for sourcing totally unique, locally handcrafted giftware."

Plant Priority: Create Insta-Worthy Displays

If you want to attract millennial plant buyers, the days of putting a few plants on a table are gone. Young buyers are looking for inspiration — they want to imagine their purchase in their home



ONE OF A KIND At Twisted Stem, John Regan video conferences with suppliers to get a visual on a plant when sourcing some of his unique finds, which he pairs with containers customers can't find at Home Depot.

> #PLANTLOVERS

OMG. WHAT IS THAT???



BEST SELLERS Some of the top-selling plants for florists featured this month include: **1** succulents **2** echeveria **3** streptocarpus **4** ficus lyrata **5** paphiopedilum **6** tillandsia **7** Venus fly trap **8** string of pearls (*Senecio rowleyanus*) **9** bromeliad

OK, so plants in plastic containers and generic baskets aren't going to make customers stop and gawk — what will? We asked our florist sources to share what's hot right now in their plant departments, when it comes to both plants and plant accessories and tools (hello, add-on sales!).

John Regan of Twisted Stem in Crystal Lake, Illinois, said his customers tend to be looking for plants that are sturdy (evoking the feeling of permanence) or plants that have exotic blossoms. Top-sellers lately include **echeveria**, funky varieties of **sansevieria**, **ficus lyrata**, imported **streptocarpus** and **paphiopedilum**. The shop also carries several styles and sizes of **glass cloches**.

"We've started to carry some larger **quartz crystal chunks** and **geodes** that add a bit of character to planted gardens, as well as funkier items like **dried banksia pods**, **oyster shells** with **partially formed pearls** and **lots of contorted driftwood pieces**," he said.

Succulents are tops at Darling Botanical Co. in Traverse City, Michigan, said Derek Woodruff, AIFD, CF, PFCI, and at Department of Floristry in Wayne, Michigan, according to Laura Daluga, AIFD.

"We sell trays and trays of them each week, mostly for table-top planters and terrariums," Woodruff said. "They're very attractive and easy to care for. A larger-sized plant that we sell a lot of is the **fiddle-leaf fig**. This is a very popular plant with millennials as it takes up a lot of air space and is very easy to care for."

Daluga also pointed to **bromeliads**, **orchids**, **tillandsia** and **string of pearls** (*Senecio rowleyanus*) as strong performers. Another popular selection at Darling Botanical Co.? **Mounted staghorn ferns**.

"These ferns are mounted to a slab of wood to mimic the way they grow in nature," Woodruff said. "It's a unique way to style a vertical surface with plant material."

Accessories you'll find at the shop? Primarily goods customers can't pick up at big boxes, Woodruff said, adding that popular items now include large **watering cans**, **terrarium tools** and **soil probes** (used to check moisture levels on larger potted plants).

Get additional tips on new plants to source, straight from a grower on the cutting edge at safnow.org/moreonline. —M.W.

(and on their social media sites), and your visual merchandising should reflect that aspirational tone.

Often, that means mixing things up. About a year ago, for instance, Regan turned to a plant display at Twisted Stem and felt a little, well, ho-hum. The plants looked beautiful and healthy but not particularly exciting. He charged Craig Kirchoff, his studio assistant and horticulture manager, with refreshing the display. "Do something avant-garde," he suggested.

The next morning, Regan walked in to find the plants encircled by twisted metal and bent rods. It was modern and cool, and Regan loved it. His customers did, too. Before Regan had time to snap a photo, three plants had been sold.

Today, Kirchoff, is the mastermind behind many of the most creative flourishes to plant displays in the store; he's been known to pick up fruit tree limbs outside or to dry eucalyptus pods to add some flair to plant displays.

"Plants don't go out on our floor in baskets," Regan said. "The less it looks like a 'grocery store plant,' the better. Our tagline is 'edgy and elegant,' and a funky look is what often draws our customers in. If a display feels predictable, we change it up."

When considering your displays for plants, embrace a little nostalgia, suggested both Regan and Daluga, who note that the '70s and '80s are back in a big way. With plants, that translates to rattan plant stands and macramé hangers.

As you set up your plant area, remember, too, to take care and handling into account, especially when it comes to light levels. When Kellogg moved Darling Botanical Co. into the larger location in 2014, she chose the space in part because the window placement would facilitate optimal lighting for plant areas. (See "Quality," p. 48).

Plant Priority: Pitch the Experience

One of the most popular areas at Darling Botanical Co. is that 1,000-square-foot DIY terrarium bar, where customers can choose from an assortment of containers, mediums (soil, drainage stones, etc.), decorative materials and plants. The bar has become a popular stop for everyday customers and people



WHAT'S OLD IS NEW Plant love is ushering in a renewed interest of materials common in the '70s and '80s. Macramé hangers are baaack. "That makes my hippie florist mom's heart so happy," said Laura Daluga, of Department of Floristry and Keller and Stein Florist, both in Michigan.

> #PLANTLOVERS



PLANT POWER ON THE JOB

Millennials and Boomers may be filling their (tiny) homes with plants, but did you know that university research proves that flowers and plants can also make a workplace more productive? More important, do your customers know that?

In 2003, the Society of American Florists partnered with an internationally recognized research team at Texas A&M University to learn how flowers and plants in the workplace impact productivity and problem solving. Among other results, the study found that:

- Problem-solving skills, idea generation and creative performance improve substantially in workplace environments that include flowers and plants.
- Specifically, both men and women who work in environments with flowers and plants demonstrate more innovative thinking as compared to environments with sculpture or no decorative objects.
- Men who participated in the study generated 30 percent more ideas

when working in environments with flowers and plants than ones without.

- While men generate a greater abundance of ideas, the research shows that women generate more creative, flexible solutions to problems in workplace environments with flowers and plants.

Find out more about this study and other SAF research at safnow.org/trends-statistics/consumer-research.
—M.W.



"As an industry, we've got to get over any anxiety around selling unfinished designs, or just the raw elements to them," said Laura Daluga, AIFD, who advocates florists allow for some DIY (or DIY-ish) areas, particularly with plants.

looking for a special occasion — parties or mother-daughter outings. (See "Snapshot," p. 12., for more.)

The bar has always been central to Kellogg's business plan; when she moved the business to a new location in 2014, she knew she wanted space for the area. Today, the shop hosts weekly workshops at the bar, drawing in a diverse crowd of customers (bachelorette parties are a popular group to take advantage of the space — and, when the weather is gloomy, the bar is often hopping.)

A big part of the appeal: "It's an experience, and that's really what's driving a lot of purchases among millennials and, frankly, customers of all demographics," said Woodruff.

Beyond the terrarium bar, the shop capitalizes on customers' desire to spend money on experiences by giving them the chance to buy everything à la carte — the container, the plant, and any accessories.

"It gives customers a feeling of ownership," Woodruff said. "The like to feel like they're creating the purchase."

Daluga has seen a similar trend among her customers.

"It's really about the experience," she said, pointing to the explosion of companies that specialize in group events such as paint and wine nights. "I don't see that changing anytime soon, and there's no reason florists can't capitalize on it."

At Twisted Stem, clients frequently bring in their own containers. From there, Kirchoff helps them determine the right plant match by asking about light and humidity levels and the general level of care a customer wants to provide.

"We do offer in-house workshops including a friendly lecture and demonstration, always followed up with a handout to take home with the planted creation," Regan added.

Daluga said involving the customer in the process of creating the final product is a big deal — something that's important to customers, even if some florists shy away from the concept. (If I set up a terrarium bar, they wonder, won't that give away my "secrets" and hurt future sales?) While customers still need plenty

of guidance, labor surrounding these sales can be low, and hands-on activities generate sales florists might otherwise lose out on.

"Many florists already have a corsage bar and a bouquet bar, why not a terrarium bar?" she said. "As an industry, we've got to get over any anxiety around selling unfinished designs, or just the raw elements to them. We know the joy of flowers and plants, let's spread that love. [The experience] will only build greater appreciation [for what we do] with our customers."

Plant Priority: Consider the Customer

Because they see the purchase as an investment, customers who buy a plant can require a little more hand-holding than cut flower buyers.

"People come in and the first thing they say is, 'I want something easy to care for,'" said Woodruff. "Some customers do have a little anxiety — 'I have a black thumb' — and they think of plants as a big commitment."

For that reason, selling a customer a plant is often about finding her the right plant, and that can require lifestyle and caretaking questions that might not be in your sales team's normal line-up for flower sales: What kind of light does the room get? Do you have a pet? Are you a "nurturer" (and prone perhaps to over-watering)?



MANY HANDS The terrarium bar at Darling Botanical Co. in Traverse City, Michigan, speaks to consumers' desire to invest in experiences.

BIG PLANT NEWS ON TINY HOMES

Ready to jump start or re-energize your plant department? You can learn more about some of the top trends discussed in this story and much more firsthand from Derek Woodruff, AIFD, CF, PFCI, during the Society of American Florists' 1-Day Profit Blast, July 22, at the Renaissance St. Louis Airport Hotel in St. Louis.

In this hands-on design presentation, sponsored by Syndicate Sales, Woodruff will share strategies to connect with customers who are downsizing (or choosing tiny homes to begin with).

You'll learn:

- How to create chic designs perfect for small spaces
- Movements in indoor gardening that you can leverage
- How to set up a terrarium bar in your shop

SAF's 1-Day Profit Blast, underwritten by Baisch and Skinner Wholesale and DWF Wholesale, also includes sessions on finding hidden profits, best practices in social media and practical tips to improve customer service, along with a Supplier Showcase and Networking Lunch, sponsored by Hortica.

Find out more and register today at safnow.org/events.

It's also about dispelling the myth that all plants are hard, as Woodruff notes. "Sometimes, people over think it. I tell them 'Look if this plant in your terrarium dies after six months, you've had it for six months! Pop it out and replace it.'"

A tip from Daluga? You can't repeat care info enough to customers.

"Care and handling is best communicated in stereo, on repeat," she said. "I try and glean as much info as I can from a customer in terms of the environment the plant will be living in. What's the light situation? How about humidity? From there I can best explain the plant's needs, as they rely heavily on environment. For example, tillandsia placed in the shower will fare well, needing direct watering only sporadically. In addition to these in-person notes, we include some general care tips and we remind customers, 'We are always happy to help! Just give us a ring.'"



At Twisted Stem, Regan likens the process of buying a plant to buying a pet: You need to find the right fit. Like Daluga, his shop also provides a high level of service post-purchase. Every plant the shop sells includes a code on a sticker attached to the bottom of its container. If a customer runs into trouble with the plant once she's taken it home, she can call the shop and a staff member can use the code to look up a detailed history of that plant — where it was grown, special considerations, when it was purchased and more. By having the customer call in, or even sending a staff member to her house, Regan can also ensure that plants with diseases or pests aren't brought back into the store, where they could put other plants at risk. 🌿

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



HURRY UP and WAIT

BY MARY WESTBROOK

Most florists saw increased sales on Mother's Day, but many customers waited until the last minute to order

**MOTHER'S DAY SALES:
2017 VS. 2016**

61%
INCREASED

16%
DECREASED

21%
REMAINED
THE SAME

3%
N/A

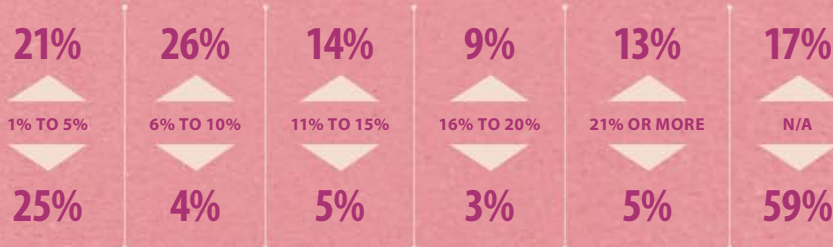
Mother's Day 2017 will go down in the sales books as a positive holiday for many florists. This year, about 60 percent of florists saw increased sales, according to a post-holiday survey conducted by the Society of American Florists. About 20 percent of respondents reported flat sales and 16 percent experienced a decline. Those returns exceeded expectations for many. Only about 27 percent of florists were predicting increased sales before the holiday.

Survey returns also show that many florists are fielding the bulk of orders at the end of the week. Respondents reported on average that 27 percent of orders came in Friday, 21 percent on Saturday and 19 percent on Thursday. The "trend" isn't a new

one for florists accustomed to dads and kids who kinda, sorta forget about Mother's Day until around Saturday morning, but it does complement research from the credit card marketing firm Cardlytics, which has found that consumers are waiting longer to make holiday and special event purchases. What might that mean for future Mother's Day? Tweaks to planning, continued pushes for early orders and deliveries and, for some florists, doors opening on Sunday to handle the late-week workload. (Read more about the Sunday debate on p. 2.)

Here are other highlights from this year's survey. Please note, responses have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

BY HOW MUCH DID SALES INCREASE?



BY HOW MUCH DID SALES DECREASE?

"While we were down 28.4 percent this year, in 2016 we had 30 percent growth — so we were still up over 2015 by 4 percent. [I] was not unhappy with the holiday."

— PHOENIX RETAILER



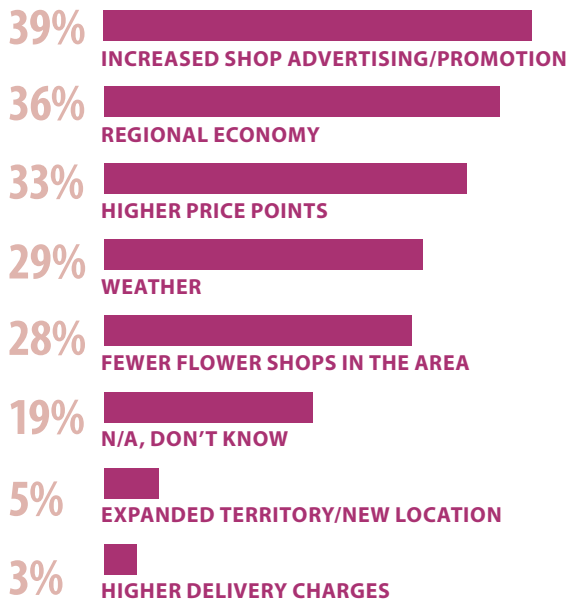
"Order-gatherers still hurt the floral industry badly. They promise delivery, [and] then can't find a florist to deliver. All they do is cause people to want to spend their money on some other gift."

— INDIANA RETAILER

Source: SAF Spring Holidays Survey, emailed May 18, 2017 to SAF retailers. 111 % response rate.

> MOTHER'S DAY 2017: GOOD FOR MOST

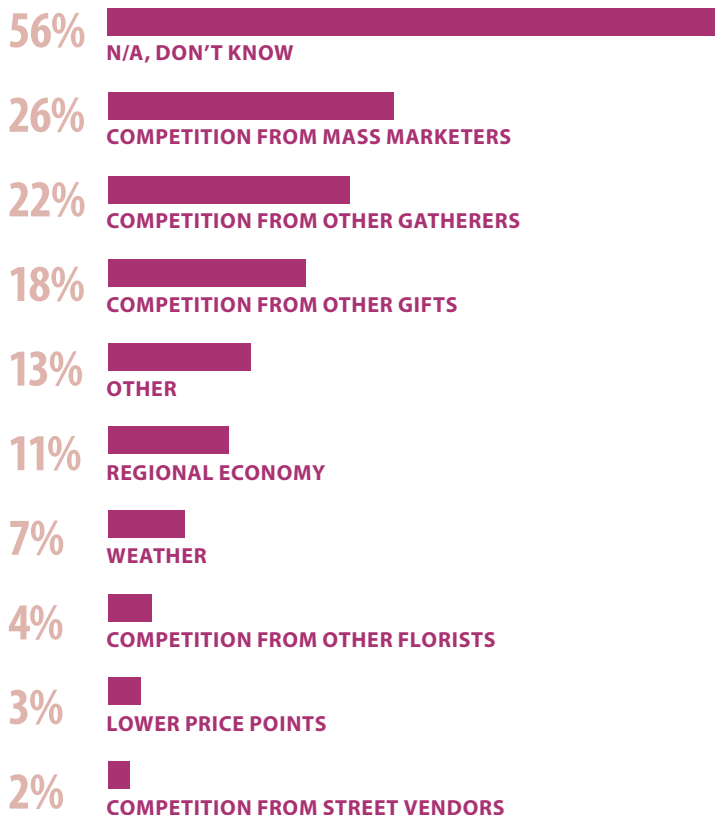
WHY DID SALES INCREASE?



"[Mother's Day] will always be a good holiday here. We have been doing it for 43 years and have a very huge walk-in business."

— NEW JERSEY RETAILER

WHY DID SALES DECREASE?



WHAT DID YOU SELL?

11% N/A, DON'T KNOW



78%
CUT FLOWERS



14%
FLOWERING AND GREEN HOUSE PLANTS



10%
OUTDOOR BEDDING AND GARDEN PLANTS



ARE YOU OPEN ON SUNDAY?

Here's a question most florists have wrestled with at some point: Is it worth it to be open on a Sunday for Mother's Day? We asked SAF volunteer leaders to weigh in on the decision. (Read another take in "Viewpoint" on p. 2.)

Of Course!

Kristen Gainan-Sparboe, Gainan's Floral & Greenhouses, Billings, Montana: "Mother's Day Sunday is one of our garden center's busiest days of the spring season. At our other locations, we use this as a day to catch the last-minute walk in-customers. We also deliver any unsuccessful delivery attempts from the previous day."

Chris Drummond, AAF, Plaza Flowers, Philadelphia: "Consumers are making purchasing decisions later and later every year. Closing [Sunday] would never even cross my mind."

No Way!

Jo Buttram AAF, AMF, Shirley's Flowers Inc., Rogers, Arkansas: "We have tried being open but we did not do enough business to warrant being open, and our customers are not used to us or any of the flower shops here being open. We're in the Bible Belt, so that might have a lot to do with this."

Jeremy Lohman, Scott's House of Flowers, Lawton, Oklahoma: "We made the decision a long time ago to remain closed on Sundays for rest, church etc. No regrets. I have always been told that if it's not your regular hours...then it's usually not worth it. Your customers just won't know." -M.W.



75%

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION?

SMALL TOWN SHOPS WERE MORE LIKELY TO REPORT AN INCREASE IN SALES (75 PERCENT) VERSUS SHOPS IN SUBURBAN (57 PERCENT), RURAL (56 PERCENT) OR CITY/URBAN (55 PERCENT) LOCATIONS.

HOW DID ORDERS COME IN?



44%
PHONE



21%
WALK IN



21%
SHOP WEBSITE



17%
WIRE SERVICE/
ORDER GATHERS



20%
N/A

WHEN DID YOU SUSPEND INCOMING ORDERS?

FRI	SAT	SUN	N/A	OTHER
24%	23%	9%	31%	14%

WHEN DID MOTHER'S DAY ORDERS COME IN?

5% BEFORE MONDAY

7% MONDAY

8% TUESDAY

12% WEDNESDAY

18% THURSDAY

27% FRIDAY

21% SATURDAY

5% SUNDAY*
*Mother's Day



WHEN DID YOU CUT OFF ORDERS?

FRI	SAT	SUN	DID NOT cut off orders	OTHER
5%	23%	11%	52%	9%

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

Source: SAF Spring Holidays Survey, emailed May 18, 2017 to SAF retailers. 11.1 % response rate.

PETAL IT FORWARD

Wednesday, October 11, 2017

Will you join us?



In October 2016, the Society of American Florists and florists nationwide randomly surprised people on the street with flowers in more than 234 cities in 50 states. Lucky recipients received two bouquets – one to keep, and one to share with a friend, family member, co-worker, or even a stranger. There were a lot of smiles going around as the country experienced flower power.

Get ready now to **Petal It Forward** on October 11, 2017

Fill out the participation form at safnow.org/piform so we can add you to the list of events we share with the media. For step-by-step instructions on conducting your own event, visit safnow.org/pif.



SAF's Petal It Forward is possible thanks to the voluntary contributors of the SAF PR Fund. Find out if your supplier is a PR Fund supporter at safnow.org/prfund.

1.86 BILLION AND COUNTING

That's how many consumer impressions have been generated by SAF's public relations and social media programs, such as the Petal It Forward campaign.

And these supporters helped make it happen. Read about Petal It Forward at safnow.org/petalitforward and view the video at aboutflowers.com/youtube.



IF YOUR SUPPLIER IS ON THIS LIST, THANK THEM!

PLATINUM: \$20,000 or More

Growers

Asocolflores

Suppliers

Smithers-Oasis USA/
Floralife

GOLD: \$15,000 - \$19,999

Suppliers

Syndicate Sales, Inc.

SILVER: \$10,000 - \$14,999

Wholesalers

Delaware Valley Floral
Group
Kennicott/Vans/Nordlie

BRONZE: \$5,000 - \$9,999

Wholesalers

Pennock Co.

Suppliers

Accent Decor, Inc.

Growers

Equiflor/Rio Roses

COPPER: \$1,000 - \$4,999

Wholesalers

Amato Wholesale
Florist
Baisch and Skinner
Wholesale Florist, Inc.
Bay State Farm Direct
Flowers

Cleveland Plant &
Flower Co.

Dreisbach Wholesale
Florist

DWF Wholesale Florist
Co.

Flora Fresh, Inc.

Greenleaf Wholesale
Florist, Inc.

Hillcrest Garden, Inc.

Mayesh Wholesale
Florist, Inc.

Mueller Supply Inc.

Pikes Peak of Texas, Inc.

Sieck Floral Group

The Roy Houff
Company

Tommy's Wholesale
Florist, Inc.

Suppliers

Candle Artisans, Inc.

Design Master color
tool, inc.

Floral Resources
Sacramento

Growers

Burnaby Lake
Greenhouses
Miaflora Farms LLC
Ocean View Flowers
Oregon Flowers, Inc.
Sun Valley Floral Group
Washington Bulb Co.,
Inc.

Importers/Distributors

Liberty Blooms
USA Bouquet Company

FRIEND: \$100 - \$999

Wholesalers

Allied Growers, Inc.
Berkeley Florist Supply
Co. in Miami
Dillon Floral Corporation
Ensign Wholesale Floral
Frank Adams Wholesale
Florist Inc.
GM Floral Co.
Gassafy Wholesale
Florist, Inc.
Georgia State Floral
Distributors
Henry C. Alders
Wholesale Florist
Inland Wholesale
Flowers, Inc.
J.B. Parks Wholesale
Florist

Louisiana Wholesale
Florists, Inc.
Lynchburg Wholesale
Floral Corp.
Mears Floral Products
Metro Floral Wholesale,
Inc.
Miller Sales Wholesale
Distributor
Reeves Floral Products
Inc.
Rojahn & Malaney Co.
Schaefer Wholesale
Florist, Inc.
Seagroatt Riccardi, Ltd

Suppliers

Berwick Offray LLC/
CSS Industries, Inc.
Chrysal Americas
FloraCraft
Garcia Group, Inc./
Floral Pak Co.
Garcia Group, Inc./Plus
One Imports

Highland Supply
Corporation
Lion Ribbon Co., Inc./
CSS Industries, Inc.
Reliant Ribbons, Bows
& Trims

Growers

Green Point Nurseries,
Inc.
Pyramid Flowers, Inc.

CONTRIBUTOR: \$50 - \$99

Wholesalers

Coward & Glisson
Wholesale Florists
LaSalle Wholesale
Florist, Inc.
Younger & Son Inc.

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We thank these companies who voluntarily contributed \$165,000 in 2016 to the SAF Fund for Nationwide Public Relations, which promotes flowers and florists to consumers through groundbreaking research and media outreach as well as Aboutflowers.com, AboutflowersBlog.com and NationalFloristDirectory.com.

**Want to help sell more flowers
(and see your name on this list)?
Support the SAF PR Fund!
safnow.org/prfund; jsparks@safnow.org**



BY PAUL GOODMAN, CPA, PFCI

THE Risky Business OF BORROWING



Business loans can be the most effective way to spark growth — or ignite bankruptcy. Here's how to mitigate the risks of borrowing.

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.*

➤ Ask a financial analyst with a big company about debt. He'll probably tell you borrowing is a tool of doing business, that companies need to borrow to be profitable. As a small business, however, you also know firsthand that any borrowed money puts your shop at risk. The more money your business owes, the closer it moves toward possible bankruptcy.

So, is debt good or bad? It can be either. The issue isn't so much whether you borrow. It's why you borrow. If you are borrowing for the wrong reasons, debt is bad business — very bad.

Defining Good Debt

While debt is risky, there are some practical reasons to borrow. Sometimes projected returns justify the risk. Maybe you have one shop on solid ground and are considering opening another one in a new section of town. You've looked at the demographics. Your accountant has given the go-ahead, but you need some cash to cover the start-up costs.

At other times, debt can be the best solution to a problem, e.g. a short-term line of credit to help you get through the summer sales slump. Sometimes you are forced into debt by an unexpected obligation — maybe that expensive cooler you thought would last forever unexpectedly breaks down and is beyond repair.

Vehicles are another common reason to borrow money. You must have enough vehicles to handle your delivery obligations, and delivery creates the revenue needed to pay back the loan. So, vehicle loans are usually good debt, and this particular credit need is fairly easy to obtain because it is secured by the vehicle itself.

When Good Debt Goes Bad

Even when it's justifiable, debt can put a tremendous strain on a small business. A loan payment increases your overhead costs. You need more money each month just to pay the loan. That weakens your shop's ability to compete.

Suppose you have debt service of \$1,500 a month, and a competitor of yours only has debt service of \$500. If the shops are comparable in size, the other shop could have an extra \$1,000 per month to spend on advertising, wages, equipment or something else to gain a competitive advantage.

There are also ranges of emotional burdens that accompany debt. Pressure. Insecurity. Anxiety. Money may be part of the solution to some problems, but before you start borrowing, make sure that you've correctly identified the problem.

Eight Questions to Ask

Businesses that operate with a thin layer of cash are forced to pay more and closer attention to market pressures. On the other hand, businesses that are fat with cash often lose a "feel" for the key aspects of the marketplace. They may fail to notice when operating costs soar or procedures fail.

The real need is often not how to find more operating money but instead how to find the cause behind the lack of operating money. Like a fever warning of an illness, a cash flow problem in your business may be a symptom of deeper problems.

It's never wise to keep borrowing money to fund a business that is continually losing money. Before you borrow, answer the following questions. Truthful answers may reveal that you are ignoring one or more fundamental problems.

Financially:

- Are you currently losing money? If so, why?
- Are there repetitive patterns in your borrowing needs? (For instance, did you borrow money this time last year?)
- Are there operational solutions such as staffing levels that could reduce the need to borrow?
- Have you fully analyzed the conditions that led up to your money needs? Do any need correcting?
- Do you have to borrow more this year than last just to keep up?

Operationally:

- Are your costs in line with the industry? (When projected over an entire year, a COGS that is just a couple of points too high can add up to real money.)
- Do you follow a sound pricing formula?
- Are there any aspects of your operation that just don't "feel" up to par?

Remember, there is no formula or ratio that will determine the "best" level of debt for any flower shop, except to keep it as low as possible by being profitable and retaining some of those profits to fund your cash flow needs.

Always keep in mind the greater the debt you carry, the greater the risk of bankruptcy. Those aren't just words. It's a fact. At the same time, if you have a policy of zero debt, it can be very difficult to purchase capital equipment or make other investments in your growth. The skill is balancing the proper use of debt.

To the Bank You Go

Once you've determined that you do need to take on debt, you'll need to work closely with a banker. Here, there are some best practices to follow.

Don't forget, you're the client. The bank needs to make secure loans to stay in business. If you're a good credit risk, you are in a good bargaining position. Regardless of what your loan officer thinks of you personally, she is really concerned with only one question: Will you be able to pay back the money as promised? Different banks have different tolerances for risk. So, if you are turned down, keep looking.

Still, if several different banks turn you down, there may be a fundamental problem with your package. Ask for reasons every time your loan request is denied. You may be able to fix the problem.

The loan committee will rely on your cash flow projections to judge your ability to repay the loan. Be sure they are well supported. For example, a business rarely collects all its receivables. Show an allowance for bad debts. The loan officer will appreciate your conservatism.

Neatness counts. Prepare a concise proposal that demonstrates your understanding of the business needs. Put it in the banker's language. If in doubt about format or style, seek help from your accountant or a business associate with experience in this area. 🌸

Paul Goodman, CPA, PFCI is the founder of Floral Finance Business Services based in Tulsa, Oklahoma, editor of *Floral Finance* and author of *The Profit-Minded Florist*. plgoodman@aol.com

Industry News BY MARY WESTBROOK

TRAVEL GRANT CREATED FOR ARIZONA RETAIL FLORISTS

> The American Floral Endowment (AFE) has announced a new travel grant for retail florists in Arizona to pursue floral industry educational or design events.

The Arizona Retail Florist Education Travel Grant was established to assist florists from Arizona in traveling to national industry events for educational programs and to provide networking opportunities on a national level.

Each year, one recipient will be selected by AFE's Education Committee to receive the travel grant of up to \$1,000 to help cover the cost of attending an out-of-state industry educational event. The grant is open to owners, managers and employees of traditional retail florists with a brick and mortar storefront in Arizona.

"The Endowment is opening new paths on ways to support education and industry programs," said AFE Executive Director Debi Chedester. "This grant is a perfect example of how industry contributions can be used to establish new offerings and programs."

The application deadline is October 1. Find out more at endowment.org/grants.

INTERACT WITH KEY INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS AT PROFLORA 2017

> This fall, floral industry members will have the chance to network, learn and see new varieties and flower growing and breeding technologies firsthand during the 14th Annual Proflora convention in Bogotá, Colombia.

The event, one of the industry's largest trade shows, includes farm tours through Colombia's main growing region and an outstanding varieties competition, along with dozens of exhibiting vendors and companies.

Proflora takes place October 4-6. For more information, visit proflora.org.co.



BORDER ADJUSTMENT TAX IN TROUBLE



BAT NO GO? Congressional Action Days attendees headed to Capitol Hill in March to ask for an exemption from the Border Adjustment Tax.

> A key element of the Republican blueprint for tax reform is facing strong headwinds from business leaders, members of the Trump administration and the president himself.

These concerns are a "serious blow" to the proposed border adjustment tax (BAT), which needs GOP and White House support to be included in a tax bill, said Shawn McBurney, the Society of American Florists' senior director of Government Relations.

During SAF's Congressional Action Days in March, floral industry members asked Congress to exempt imported agricultural floral products from the BAT. Since that time, the future of the tax has only become less certain.

"Given the partisan divide in Washington, Democrats clearly would be opposed to the Republican proposal," McBurney explained. "However, it isn't just Democrats that have expressed concerns with the BAT. Several Republicans, including some on the House tax writing committee, are openly critical as well."

The BAT provision is key to the GOP's goal of simplifying the tax code and reducing tax rates because it will raise federal tax revenue to offset tax revenue reductions caused by those lower rates.

"Increasing divisions between Republican members of Congress mean the provision may be scrapped, forcing an entirely new approach to tax reform," McBurney said.

ORLANDO FLORIST SHARES FREE FLOWERS ON ANNIVERSARY OF DEADLY MASS SHOOTING

> To commemorate the one-year anniversary of the country's deadliest mass shooting, Orlando residents and visitors turned to song, prayer, community — and flowers.

"Hundreds of people have left flowers, cards and drawings at Pulse nightclub to remember the victims who were killed a year ago in Orlando, Florida," according to CBS News.

Last year, John and Sally Kobylinski of In Bloom Florist offered to donate all funeral floral arrangements for the immediate families of the victims. For the anniversary this year, the shop created a floral heart in rainbow roses for City Hall and handed out around 600 flowers at Pulse.

"Our heart at the time of the tragedy was to provide something to soften the grief and financial burden to the victims' families," said Sally. "Obviously, this was not the same need now."



FULL HEARTS

In Bloom Florist helped the Orlando community mark the one-year anniversary of the Pulse nightclub mass shooting with a heart design and free flowers.

Industry News

CUSTOMER SERVICE
GURU MARKS 20 YEARS

MILESTONE MARKED As Tim Huckabee celebrates 20 years in business, he's helping florists deal with the "seismic shift" in how consumers buy flowers.


➤ When Tim Huckabee started his sales and customer service training company in June 1997, flower shops with web sites were considered tech-savvy and florists had a major advantage over other gift outlets for spontaneous purchases and same-day delivery.

Flash forward to 2017 and — "the Internet has turned things upside down," said Huckabee, who wrote the popular "CSI: Flower Shop" and then "Dear Tim" column in Floral Management magazine for six years and is a frequent speaker at Society of American Florists education events. Huckabee trains some 200 shops a year in Australia, North America and Europe. "People still buy flowers, but there's been a seismic shift in how they buy them."

As Huckabee marks the 20th anniversary of his business, FloralStrategies, he noted that the Internet — and the effect of the web on florists — has only accelerated in the last decade.

And, don't get Huckabee started on bad sales habits that remain pervasive across the industry — from wire service sites to local florist showrooms.

"Whether you are shopping in Paris, Texas, or Paris, France, a person selling you a watch or a car won't say, 'How much do you want to spend?' They won't put the *least* expensive item high on their website, but a flower shop will."

In honor of Huckabee's anniversary, we've compiled some of his best Floral Management columns online. Check out a few of our favorites at safnow.org/moreonline 

GROWERS RESPOND TO NEWS OF GENETICALLY
ENGINEERED PETUNIAS IN THE MARKET

➤ News that several varieties of genetically engineered (GE) petunias had been imported into the U.S. without proper authorization from the government has created headaches, hassles and, potentially, financial hits for some floral industry members.

On May 2, 2017, the German breeding company Selecta Klemm informed the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS) that one of its petunia varieties, an orange petunia, was "potentially genetically engineered and had been imported and moved interstate without required authorization by APHIS," according to an update from USDA. "This led to testing by USDA of numerous petunia varieties, which confirmed this particular variety and several others are indeed GE."

APHIS regulates the introduction of certain GE organisms. The petunias, engineered to produce various hues of orange, red and purple flowers, were from Africa, Asia, Central America, Europe, South America, as well as Australia, Israel and Mexico, and distributed interstate, without the necessary permits.

APHIS is now asking retailers, growers and breeders to voluntarily withdraw GE petunias from distribution. (See the list of nine varieties.) Because the petunias have not been shown to pose a risk to human health or the environment, consumers don't need to take action, according to the agency.

Mark Yelanich, Ph.D., of Metrolina Greenhouses in Huntersville, North Carolina, said that for now his company


is "working closely with our suppliers to work through this issue."

"It is not really affecting our business [because] orange petunias are not one of our major petunia colors," said Yelanich, a member of the Society of American Florists' Growers Council. "We did have to dump some liners and are working on replacing them with other crops, for example orange calibrachoa. There should be no effect on our customers."

Growers Council Chairman Marvin Miller, AAF, Ph.D., of Ball Horticultural Company in West Chicago, Illinois, said industry members should be watching the issue.

"Where there is potential for this to get much larger is if a breeding company used the GE petunia to breed with," said Miller, who estimates that orange petunias constitute only about "a small fraction of 1 percent" of all petunias in the marketplace. "Since the existence of a GE petunia on the market was a surprise to everyone, imagine the bigger surprise if you find that your breeders liked the orange petunia so much that it was crossed with reds, purples and perhaps other varieties."

For now, growers and breeders are living with some uncertainty with the issue.

"USDA could grant all of these companies permits to continue to market, ship and sell their petunias," Miller said. "This could get costly, but it is possible procedures could be implemented by next spring to allow these petunias back on the market. But the opposite is also possible." 



Your Digital Brand BY CRYSTAL VILKAITIS

HOLD THE PHONE, RUN YOUR BUSINESS

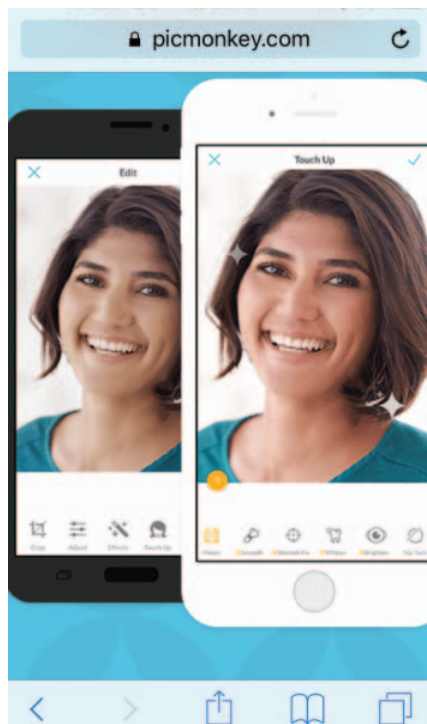
➤ Imagine you're on-site at a wedding set-up when you remember you need to create a graphic to promote an upcoming event on Facebook — or schedule a series of posts for the coming holiday season. Or, imagine that your delivery driver comes to you with a great photo of a happy recipient, a photo that needs just a little lightening and cropping.

Not long ago, these tasks would have sent most business owners hustling back to their laptops. Today, these jobs and many more can be done remotely, thanks to apps that make on-the-job management of your digital marketing easier than ever before.

With a few swipes and clicks, you can schedule posts, check in on ad campaigns and edit entire videos and photos.

From Phone to Page

While beautiful DSLR photos are great for special projects such as advertisements, your smartphone's camera will do the job for video and photos most of the time. Both Androids and iPhones have high-quality cameras now that include their own built-in features such as photo optimization and panoramic options. You can improve your results using a few apps.



MONKEY, SEE? PicMonkey easily lets users create collages, add themes, touch up photos, add filters and more.

Many retailers say that taking photos and videos is the easy part; it's editing them and getting them in prime shape to share that's the struggle. Unless you're doing super-advanced editing, you don't need to fork out the big bucks for PhotoShop. There are many free online tools to help you with this process.

One of my favorites is PicMonkey, a free app that allows users to create collages, add filters and themes (a little snowfall for a holiday shot?) and touch up photos (think: white teeth and blemish-free skin). PicMonkey has so many editing options as well as effects — similar to Instagram but with significantly more options and control.

Some of my other favorites include:

Video editing:

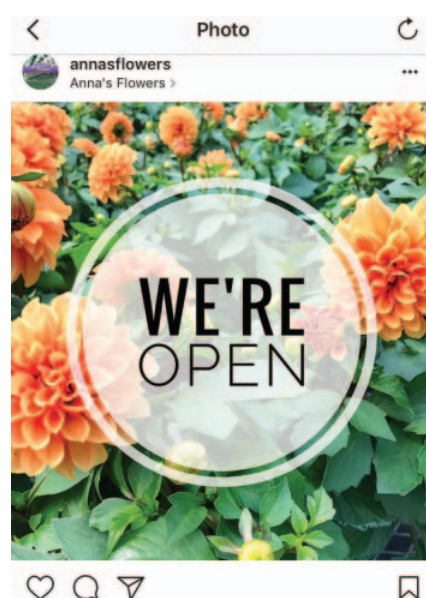
- iMovie
- Animoto
- Magisto

Photo editing:

- Airbrush
- SnapSeed

Content Creation

Sometimes, you need more than a video or photo to get your point across. You may want to create a custom graphic, a GIF or a mixture of text and video. Yes, you guessed it: There's an app for that. A lot of apps, actually.



BYO GRAPHIC DESIGNER Canva can be used for print, ads, emails and social media.

An app that I use regularly at Crystal Media is Canva, which works on desktop, iPhone and Android.

Canva is a free graphic design tool that allows you to build graphics from scratch or work from one of their templates. You can choose to begin projects such as Facebook covers or Instagram posts that are already the correct size. Canva also recently released the option to create animated graphics that you can save as GIFs or videos, adding a whole new level of customization.

Here are a few other great apps for unique content creation:

- **Ripl** (Animated text and video)
- **Legend** (Animated text)
- **Photofy** (Text on images)
- **Word Swag** (Text on images)
- **Adobe Spark** (Graphic creator)
- **Diptic** (Collage maker)

Common Sense Scheduling

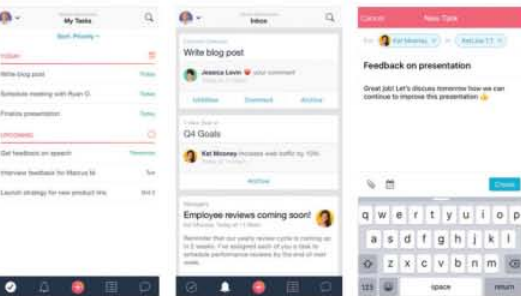


ON DEMAND Use Hootsuite to schedule social media posts in advance.

Scheduling is one of the easiest ways to save time with social media. You don't have to be sitting at your computer to crank out and schedule content.

I like to schedule Facebook posts within the Facebook platform, and I use Later to schedule Instagram posts. As a note, you cannot schedule Instagram posts the same way you schedule Facebook posts (to post automatically). You can only schedule a reminder to post. (You still have to do the actually posting later.)

Here are a few other scheduling options. Some of these have free versions, with a more robust paid option (that



TAG TEAM Asana lets several team members share projects and to-do lists.

often includes content curation and analytics), and several of these offer a free trial. One thing to note: Scheduling also works great for Pinterest, but there are currently no products on the market that let you schedule for free. See which one works best for your needs:

- **Hootsuite**
- **Buffer**
- **Drum Up**
- **Tailwind** (Pinterest and Instagram only)
- **ViralTag**
- **Board Booster** (Pinterest only)

You also can manage your Facebook and Instagram ads directly from your phone. You can access your ads through the Ads Manager app or through the Facebook app.

Other Apps I Love

While these apps didn't fall under the categories above, they are still worth mentioning as good tools for your business. Each can help you run your business while you are on the move:

- **Asana:** Keep track of team to-dos
- **IFTTT:** Sets up automation on your phone to complete tasks such as sharing to social when you post a new blog post
- **Google Analytics:** Access your website's analytics on the go
- **Dropbox and Google Drive:** Upload files, including photo and video, and access these files from any of your devices
- **Unfollowers:** Easily bulk unfollow users from Instagram
- **Letstag:** Hashtag generator 🌿

Crystal Vilkaitis is a social media teacher, owner of [Crystal Media](http://CrystalMedia.com) heycrystalmedia.com, and founder of [Social Edge](http://SocialEdge.com), a membership website for retailers on social media trends and changes, socialedge.co.



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SUNNY SENSATIONS



JACLYN GOUGH

> “In Maryland, we have a bit of a sunflower obsession,” said Jaclyn Gough, a freelance designer in Baltimore. “I can hardly recall a party that didn’t feature them. And there’s this field with thousands of them, where couples and families flock for photo shoots.” Sunflowers’ popularity, she surmises, is partly due to their striking resemblance to black-eyed Susans, the official state flower. The other reason: their presentation. “They’re big and bold,” she said. “They give customers a great bang for their buck.”

Here are two of her favorite ways to style sunflowers. 🌻

Katie Hendrick khendrick@safnow.org

Find complete recipes at safnow.org/moreonline.



LOW AND LUSH “This is something I make for my mother,” Gough said, with a laugh. “She’s intrigued by the architectural designs I make in flower competitions but she, like a lot of my clients, prefer ‘roundy moundy’ arrangements.” She added flat cane “so it’s artistic, but still traditional.” The cheery color palette would be ideal to send a hospital patient, she said. Design time: Under 10 minutes. Wholesale costs: \$23. Suggested retail price: \$74.



LONG AND LEAN Gough built a pussy willow armature that extends roughly two feet above the container’s lip. “People automatically think anything tall is high-end,” she said. “Also this accent adds movement and interest, which distinguishes the design from something customers can find at the grocery store, and it takes very little time and money to create.” This towering piece would look fantastic in a hotel lobby or on the entrance table at an event. Design time: 10 to 15 minutes. Wholesale costs: \$26. Suggested retail price: \$75.



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10. SAF Fund for Nationwide Public Relations raises floral awareness

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12. Customizable employee handbook
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15. 1-Day Profit Blast
16. Annual Convention

Expert Consultations

17. Contact SAF staff for advice on technology, marketing and more
18. Free 15-minute legal consultation with attorney Paula A. Calimafde with law firm Paley Rothman, and a free test call and analysis with sales trainer Tim Huckabee of FloralStrategies

Industry Watchdog

19. Negative floral publicity response
20. Government advocacy

This is just scratching the surface!



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> Betallc.com



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GRIM GRINNING GHOSTS

Kids will adore this scratch and sketch book with black-coated glow-in-the-dark and gold and orange glitter pages. Ghosts, goblins, and witches come alive as they scratch away the black coating with the handy wooden stylus. It also features blank pages where kids can draw their own spooky creatures and haunted houses. > PeterPauper.com



FRUITS OF THE HARVEST

Pumpkins, cats and turkeys are just a few of the charming characters in A&B Floral's Fall Décor collection. These pieces have a timeless quality your customers will appreciate. > ABFloral.com



NO TRICKS, JUST A TREAT

The oh-so-cute jack o' lantern adds a touch of whimsy to your Halloween arrangements and gift baskets. Thanks to the wired edge, these bows will hold their shape, so you can fashion them into any configuration your imagination allows. > ReliantRibbon.com



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What should YOU do?

Need to have a fast chat with an attorney? Give SAF's legal eagle a call. It's free!

SAF partners with Paley Rothman, a Bethesda, Maryland law firm so members can get quick answers to business legal questions — without running up a huge bill.

What kinds of questions? Here's a sample of what floral business owners want to know:

- "Do I have to pay my salespeople overtime?"
- "My lease says I am the mall's only florist, can I stop other stores from selling bouquets?"
- "We did our job, but the bride wants half her money back... can you look at the contract?"
- "What do I have to tell my employees about healthcare?"
- "Is it possible to copyright a floral design?"
- "Do we have the right retirement plan?"
- "We want to sell the business to the kids but I'm worried about taxes. Where do we start?"

Through the partnership, SAF members can contact attorney Paula A. Calimafde (Kal-i-MAF-da) for a free 15-minute legal consultation at 301-951-9325. Be sure to mention your SAF membership.

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Your Growth is Our Business

Quality BY TERRIL A. NELL, PH.D., AAF

SUCCESSFUL POTTED PLANTS IN 7 STEPS

> Foliage plants that complement visually sterile interior spaces are enjoying a resurgence among customers who are looking for their long-life and low-maintenance benefits. Retailers can offer exciting new varieties of plants with colors, textures and forms introduced to the market over the last 10 to 15 years.

The following guidelines provide suggestions for purchasing and handling plants.

1. Select long lasting varieties.

Coordinate with your supplier(s) to be sure you're getting long-lasting and disease-resistant varieties. Some potted foliage plants will last for months, depending on variety.

2. Be sure plants are shipped correctly.

Coordinate with the grower or supplier for prompt delivery at proper temperatures. For best performance, shipping times should be three days or less. Potted foliage plants need to be shipped between 53 F and 58 F. Check the plant temperature at the time of arrival.

Plants requiring warm shipping temperatures will drop leaves or exhibit brown leaf margins if shipped below 50 F. Beware of a delayed reaction; plants shipped at improper temperatures may look fine at the time of unboxing, but leaves will begin to drop or show damage two to three days after shipping.

3. Unpack and inspect plants immediately upon arrival.

Remove plants from shipping boxes or from carts and remove sleeves upon arrival. Then, check soil moisture level — before watering them — and inspect for insects and diseases. In many cases, plants do not need to be watered upon arrival. Insects and/or insect damage, if present, will be on the petals or underside of leaves.

4. Keep plants moist.

Potted plants depend on a healthy root system. The roots absorb water from the soil and transport it to the leaves and flowers. Common causes of root damage relate to water: too much or too little.



Overwatering is common with plants displayed in foil pot covers or containers with no drain hole. Ideally, excess water should be removed from containers after about 30 minutes to avoid root rot. Don't wait for plants to wilt prior to watering. It is best to check soil moisture daily.

5. Avoid ethylene damage.

Ethylene is a colorless and odorless gas that is produced by fruits and vegetables and combustible engines. Ethylene is also produced by plants themselves when stressed (improper temperatures, wilting etc.). Ethylene causes some foliage plants to drop leaves or to have yellow leaves. Fruits and vegetables (and employee lunches!) should not be stored in the same cooler with plants.

6. Provide optimum display light and temperature.

Most potted foliage plants will tolerate low light display areas but higher light levels are preferred, provided plants are not placed into direct sunlight. Plants in high light areas will lose water faster, so check soil moisture daily. Humidity

should be between 60 percent and 80 percent in the display area, which should be between 65 F and 80 F.

7. Provide care instructions.

Customers need guidance to select a potted plant that will perform well under their unique light and humidity conditions. Orchids and bromeliads can be placed in a medium light and cool area. A cactus dish or succulent should bring weeks or even months of enjoyment. Dark, hot and dry interiors can quickly kill many potted plants.

Finally, provide your customers with care and handling instructions. Customers should know the light and temperature requirements for the plant and understand how to water it for maximum effect. Good performance by these plants will leave your customers wanting more. 🌿

Terril A. Nell, Ph.D., AAF, PFCI, is professor emeritus from the University of Florida, a consultant to the floral industry and the research coordinator for the American Floral Endowment. terrinell@gmail.com

SPECIAL NEEDS

Most of the "favorite plants" mentioned by florists featured in this month's cover story share the same plant care needs outlined on this page, but there are a few exceptions:

Bromeliad Display between 70 F and 90 F in medium light (some will tolerate high, but not direct light). Prefers low soil moisture.

Echeveria Enjoys well-drained soil and bright light. Water the soil, not the plant. Let soil dry between waterings. Cold sensitive; keep above 50 F.

Ficus lyrata Display between 60 F and 75 F in well-lit area. Sensitive to drying out (drops leaves) and to overwatering. Toxic to cats, dogs and horses.

Sansevieria Display between 65 F and 85 F.

Paphiopedilum Mottled leaf types of this flowering orchid prefer night temperature above 60 F, while the solid-leaf varieties need temperatures between 50 F and 60 F and day temperatures between 70 F and 80 F.

Tillandsia No soil needed. Needs bright, indirect light. Plant mists weekly. Soak in room temperature water every three to four weeks, and let dry for about one to three hours. —T.N.

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