

# floral management

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THE FLORAL BUSINESS AUTHORITY

OCTOBER 2014 | \$34 | NUMBER 7

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A Philadelphia shop revs up traffic by embracing its retro charm and delivering modern efficiency





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# floral management

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## Viewpoint BY PETER MORAN

## ON FAIR WINDS AND FOLLOWING SEAS

> Those of you who've worked with me over the years know I have three passions: my family; the floral industry; and the joy of sailing my boat, Never Know, on the Chesapeake Bay. As I set my sails for retirement from the Society of American Florists, I realize much of the knowledge learned from sailing can be applied to running a business.

With sailing, no two days are ever the same, which means you need different tactics every day to deal with new challenges. Sound familiar? Most days in business, we deal with different issues that require different approaches.

To have a successful sail, you need a seasoned crew with the right skills and knowledge. Your crew must know where the safety equipment is and how to use it. Likewise, if your employees don't have the right training or resources, it's hard to have a high-performance organization. That said, there can be only one captain, who sets the course for the sail and makes adjustments to improve performance. I have autopilot on my boat, which allows me to take a break from steering, but just like in business, nothing should run on autopilot for very long. Conditions always change.

Planning is vital in sailing. You need a clear picture of where you want to go and what you want to accomplish. As a sailor, you have to be a student of the weather. In July and August on the Chesapeake Bay, you may start out with a beautiful day, but come midafternoon, you must keep your eyes on the western sky, alert to the potential for ferocious thunderstorms. I never second-guess my gut on weather. If it looks like clouds are building and it is late afternoon, I make sure I have a timely plan to reach my home port or take the appropriate cover so I can reduce any dangerous exposure.

In the floral industry, success often comes down to good planning. This is true year-round, but especially at the holidays. It's natural to hope for the best, but make sure you have a plan in place should things go south in a hurry.

There is a procedure in sailing called reefing. Reefing is what you do when the wind becomes either too strong or so gusty that you can't control your boat. When that happens, you reduce the area of sail by making the sails smaller. That



helps improve control and stability. One of my dad's mantras was, "If you begin thinking the changing conditions may require you to reef, it's time to reef. Don't wait!" It's easier to let more sail out later than it is to be reefing in worse conditions. There is a business analogy to reefing, too: If you begin thinking that an employee may not be right for the job or for the culture of the organization, make the decision to release them sooner than later.

Sailing, like business, is all about knowing as much as you can about the environment you are operating in and keeping a watchful eye on key indicators. In sailing there are forecasts, radar, GPS and VHF radios — all tools to help you operate — just as there are forecasts and technologies in business. I am still a believer, however, that whether you are an entrepreneur or a sailor, you should trust your gut instinct when navigating through your environment. Keep your eye on where you want to go, but always be prepared to fine-tune or change course to reach your destination.

One final sailing analogy: For all the work and preparation, don't forget to look around and see the beauty, feel the joy. Both sailing and the industry are shaped by the natural world. Every good sailor I know got into sailing because he or she loved the water and how it feels to navigate that water. Every successful floral industry member I know came into the business because they loved flowers and plants and how they make people feel. 🌿

**Peter Moran, CEO of the Society of American Florists, will retire at the end of the year from his post after 33 years. Moran joined SAF in 1985 and became SAF's executive vice president and CEO in 1991. [pmoran@safnow.org](mailto:pmoran@safnow.org)**



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## What Inspires Us

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➤ That's what a job posting for my position might look like. Fortunately, after I accepted my new post here as the Society of American Florists' CEO (see page 38), I didn't have to run an ad for my replacement. That's because our longtime editor Mary Westbrook will be taking over. And she has all of what's described above and then some.

Mary came to us about 15 years ago, fresh out of college with journalism degree in hand. After three years as SAF's writer, she moved to Buenos Aires for a year — but kept writing for SAF's publications as a freelancer. She eventually returned to the United States and settled

in Norfolk, Virginia, to get her master's in creative writing at nearby Old Dominion University — and continued writing for SAF. She's taught university level writing classes — and continued writing and editing for SAF.

See the pattern? Mary just can't get enough of the floral industry. (I can relate.) For the last four years, she's been a formidable force behind Floral Management as its senior contributing editor. If you're a regular reader, then none of this is news to you — you know Mary's gift for language, for extracting the essential details out of her sources and presenting it in an easily digestible and enjoyable way. It's that genuine enthusiasm for everything about this industry that has made her such an effective reporter, writer and editor for this magazine and SAF's publications. It's what has her thinking about article ideas and sources 24/7 (late night emails from Mary that begin, "hey, we should write about..." are common). And it's what will serve her — and you — well as she becomes Floral Management's editor in chief, beginning with the November/December issue.



So if you've been enjoying the last several years of Floral Management, then rest assured that during the next several, the magazine will only get better under Mary's leadership. As for me, I am so very grateful for my years as editor of Floral Management. It meant that getting to know you — what keeps you up at night and how we can help you be more successful — was part of my job. And it paved the way for this new opportunity, where I will continue to listen to you, to grow with the industry and, I hope, help it grow. 🌿

**Kate Penn**  
[kpenn@safnow.org](mailto:kpenn@safnow.org)

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### WELL DESERVED TRIBUTE

SAF's longtime CEO, Peter Moran, will be retiring at the end of the year. Several floral industry members pay tribute to Moran and his many accomplishments during his 36 years in the industry, in a touching video. Search "SAF Leaders Express Gratitude" at [safnow.org](http://safnow.org).



### FALL BANNER GRAPHICS

Add some spice to your digital marketing efforts this fall with some fresh, attractive banner ad artwork to entice social media followers and web visitors to buy. Lots of options to choose from at SAF's complete banner ad library. [safnow.org/fallgraphics](http://safnow.org/fallgraphics)



### FOLLOW THE ACTION

Petal It Forward is happening October 11. Best way to check out the action is to follow the effort on social media. Participating industry members will be posting photos and videos: We hope you're taking part in it, but if not (and even if you are) you can follow the event via social media: **#PetalItForward** **@About\_Flowers** and **#PetalItForward @FlowerFactor**



### FINANCE BRUSH-UP

Want to brush up on best practices for cash flow management? Wondering if your COGS are in line with industry standards? Committed to doing a year-end inventory and want to do it right? Check out these topics and more, in a newly compiled 17-part Floral Management series, Floral Shop Accounting. [safnow.org/moreonline](http://safnow.org/moreonline)



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### Always Big?

> Thank you for your article, “@lways On!” (June 2017). It drove home the message that I really need to pay more attention to my social media presence, which is an issue that is often on my mind.

I do have one comment for your consideration. Each of the four shops featured had staff numbers of at least 20, whereas my shop has two full-time members (and four seasonal employees used for a total of 15 days per year). So while I appreciate reading about what these large shops do, they really have little in common with my staffing issues and reality. In addition, those four shops use GravityFree or Teleflora websites. I used to use the FTD website, but currently I use BloomNation.

There are a lot of us who have very small staffs and who use other websites. Please include us in your highlighting of issues affecting our industry.

**Chaim Casper, Surf Florist Inc., Miami Beach, Florida**

### A Much-Deserved Win

> My reaction to the 2017 Marketer of the Year winner (September 2017): I LOVED IT! Even though I now find myself in the retail segment of the industry, my heart is where it all started for me, as a grower of American-grown flowers. Those flower farmers deserve all the recognition we can give them.

**Bill Ardle, Schneider’s Florist, Springfield, Ohio**

### On Canceling SAF’s Convention

> As we sit back and unpack, in our autumn (rainy) weather, we want you to know we appreciate how hard it had to be to cancel the convention. We also want you to know that we appreciate SAF’s concern for us all by canceling. Our hearts go out to all of the SAF staff, understanding how much work it takes to plan such an event. Well, just know, you all are appreciated and admired.

**Chanda Mines, Bagoy’s Florist & Home, Anchorage, Alaska**

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### SEND US YOUR FEEDBACK

Tell us what you think of this month’s issue — good, bad or “meh,” we can take it! Email [mwestbrook@safnow.org](mailto:mwestbrook@safnow.org).



# Think nobody's listening in Washington? *Think again.*



## During the last Congressional Action Days, SAF members successfully:

- Put floriculture research funding back in the budget — with a \$250,000 increase!
- Stopped the Border Adjustment Tax in its tracks.
- Renewed the call for comprehensive immigration reform.



*"It was so exciting to learn about the issues and then make our 'ask' directly to the people on Capitol Hill."*

Lisa Ambrosio, Wenke Greenhouses, Kalamazoo, Michigan

*"I thought I couldn't make a difference... now I know I can."*

Jeremy Lohman, Scotts House of Flowers, Lawton, Oklahoma



*"It was an amazing experience! I am hooked and already planning my trip next year!"*

Scott Isensee, Frank Adams Wholesale Florist, Portland, Oregon

*"I talked with lawmakers who, when they get to the floor, can stand up and vote for our business."*

Lisa Roeser Atwood, Fifty Flowers, Boise, Idaho



## Experience the POWER of Personal Involvement!

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## SAF in Action

### PETER MORAN TO RETIRE AS SAF CEO, KATE PENN NAMED SUCCESSOR



MORAN

> Society of American Florists Chief Executive Officer Peter Moran will retire at the end of the year after 33 years. Kate Penn, currently chief content officer and editor-in-chief of SAF's Floral Management, will assume the role of CEO effective Nov. 1.



PENN

Moran joined SAF in 1985 and became executive vice president and CEO in 1991. He oversaw the implementation of a strategic plan that shifted SAF from a segment-driven organization to one guided by its key objectives of providing government advocacy, business guidance and consumer marketing. Moran led efforts to put flowers in the consumer spotlight, including his oversight of SAF's involvement in coordinating the floral décor for four presidential inaugurations. Recently, Moran led the board in leveraging the association's headquarters, which the industry purchased in 1983. In

April 2016, SAF sold the building and purchased more cost-efficient space. "Peter has made an indelible mark on our association, from his early years executing the new strategic plan and governance structure to our recent building project, where he led our board in leveraging a key association asset into something the industry can benefit from for many years," said SAF Chairman Martin Meskers, AAF, of Oregon Flowers Inc. in Aurora, Oregon. The executive search committee considered several candidates, Meskers said, before determining that Penn was the ideal candidate. Penn, who has a B.S. in journalism from Bowling Green State University, was hired by SAF as a writer and editor (1987) and then named editor-in-chief (1990), publisher (1993), vice president of publishing and communications (1999), and chief content and publishing officer (2014). Penn has been a key member of SAF's senior management team and has participated in board meetings since 1999.

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### SAVE THE DATE FOR SAF PALM SPRINGS 2018

> Hurricane Irma forced the Society of American Florists to cancel SAF Palm Beach 2017 in September, and the association is looking ahead to its 134<sup>th</sup> annual convention, Sept. 12-15, 2018, at The Westin Mission Hills in Rancho Mirage, California. "Many of the programs slated for Palm Beach will be updated for next year's convention," said SAF Chairman Martin Meskers, AAF, of Oregon Flowers Inc. in Aurora, Oregon, "and some of them will be presented as SAF WebBlasts." 🌿

For the past four years, Penn has driven the content development of SAF's annual conventions, 1-Day Profit Blasts and other efforts to make business education more accessible to members, as well as initiatives to connect suppliers and buyers, including the SAF Supplier Showcase and Supplier Expo. In her oversight of communications she works with staff on optimizing SAF's digital presence. 🌿

### NEW LEADERS TAKE POSTS ON SAF BOARD AND COUNCILS

> In September, the Society of American Florists welcomed new leaders.



LAFEVER

Bill LaFever, PFCI, of the Bill Doran Company in Rockford, Illinois, officially assumed the SAF presidency, taking over from his predecessor



MESKERS

Martin Meskers, AAF, of Oregon Flowers in Aurora, Oregon. Meskers moved into the role of chairman, a position vacated by Shirley Lyons, AAF, PFCI, of Dandelion's Flowers & Gifts in Eugene, Oregon. Chris Drummond, AAF, PFCI, of Plaza Flowers in Philadelphia, is now president-elect, and Paul Fowle, of DV Flora in Miami and a former board member, is taking Drummond's former role as treasurer.



DRUMMOND



FOWLE

Members elected three leaders to serve on the SAF Board of Directors and nine leaders to serve on councils. The board election typically takes place during the annual convention. Since SAF Palm Beach 2017 was canceled due to Hurricane Irma, voting members who were registered for the 133rd annual convention received an electronic ballot in mid-September. Those electronic votes were added to the absentee ballots cast by voting members in August. The new members of the SAF Board are: Grower Patrick Busch of Len Busch Roses in Plymouth, Minnesota; Retailer Tim Galea of Norton's Flowers & Gifts in Ypsilanti, Michigan; and Wholesaler Nick Fronduto of Jacobson Floral Supply Inc. in Boston.



BUSCH



GALEA



FRONDUTO

Members voted in July for new leaders to serve on the Growers, Retailers and Wholesalers councils. The new leaders are:

- **Retailers Council:** Michael Trogdon of Burge Flower Shop Inc. in Asheboro, North Carolina; Nikki Lemler, AAF, of Welke's Milwaukee Florist in Milwaukee; and Brian Kusuda of Jimmy's Flower Shop Inc. in Ogden, Utah.
  - **Wholesalers Council:** Liza Atwood of Fifty Flowers in Boise, Idaho; Tim Dewey of DVFlora in Sewell, New Jersey; and Anne Stewart of Smithers-Oasis North American Operations in Kent, Ohio.
  - **Growers Council:** Hank Bukowski of The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company in Marysville, Ohio; Rodi Groot of Sun Valley Floral Group in Oxnard, California; and Herb Van der Ende Jr. of Burnaby Lake Greenhouses Ltd. in Surrey, British Columbia.
- See SAF's board, council and committee members at [safnow.org/leaders](http://safnow.org/leaders). 🌿





## PETAL IT FORWARD ON OCTOBER 11

➤ On Oct. 11, florists nationwide will surprise people on the street with two bouquets — one to keep and one to share with a friend, family member, co-worker or stranger.

“The goal is to have these events happening on the same day in every state,” said SAF Vice President of Marketing Jennifer Sparks. “This could greatly enhance the industry’s chances of generating news coverage and social media posts promoting flower power.” At press time, florists in 215 cities in 48 states, plus Washington, D.C., and Canada, had planned to participate.

Among them: Sue Palazzo. The vice president of City Line Florist in Trumbull, Connecticut, and two-year Petal It Forward veteran called it “a heartwarming experience.” Last year, her “Happiness Ambassadors” encountered a woman returning from the vet after euthanizing her dog. “She said we gave her unexpected cheer when she needed it the most,” Palazzo said. This year, she’s partnering with a local radio station for greater exposure and plans to hire a videographer to capture quality footage.

“Whatever you do, post your Petal It Forward event on social media as it’s happening, and follow and share SAF’s #petalitforward posts,” Sparks said. 🌸



**GOOD NEWS** Former SAF Chairman Shirley Lyons, AAF, PFCI, of Dandelion’s Flowers & Gifts in Eugene, Oregon, was featured in a number of local outlets, including The Register-Guard newspaper, during Petal It Forward 2016.

## 1-DAY PROFIT BLAST HEADS TO HORSE COUNTRY

➤ Louisville, Kentucky, home to Churchill Downs and the most exciting two minutes in sports, will host SAF’s 1-Day Profit Blast on Saturday, Nov. 4.

Sponsored by the Bill Doran Company, the event covers design, accounting, customer service and marketing and includes a Supplier Showcase and networking. Programs include the following:

- **Tiny Houses, Big Design Opportunities:** Helen Miller, AIFD, CAFA, CF, owner of Flowers & Such in Adrian, Michigan, will share home décor ideas perfect for millennials living in small apartments in this program sponsored by Syndicate Sales.
- **Eventology: The Science of Profitable Events:** Floral industry financial expert Derrick Myers, CPA, CFP, PFCI, of Crockett, Myers and Associates will offer a lighthearted but fact-filled lesson on how to price weddings, galas and parties.
- **Build the Perfect Sales Script:** In this interactive session, Tim Huckabee, president of FloralStrategies, will review tired, old-fashioned sales techniques — and why they fail — and will suggest more professional and polished language to improve customer satisfaction and sales numbers.
- **ABCs of Social Media Marketing:** Crystal Vilkaitis, founder of the Social Edge and an expert on social media marketing for independent retailers, will dish out targeted strategies for top social sites, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn, and offer tips to maximize your marketing budget. Register by Oct. 26 and save \$60. Visit [safnow.org/1-day-profit-blast](http://safnow.org/1-day-profit-blast). 🌸



**STAFF RETREAT** Kathie Murphy of Blossom Flower Shops in Yonkers, New York, and her staff discovered new products, including biodegradable cellophane, moss ribbon wrap, no-cut floral food, and both flat cane and wire bouquet frames at the Supplier Showcase during the SAF 1-Day Profit Blast in Philadelphia in March.

## MARKETING MATERIALS PROMOTE ‘FLOWER POWER’ AND ‘HAPPINESS DELIVERED’

➤ The Society of American Florists released its 2017 Local Marketing Kit in August with materials promoting the research-proven health benefits of floral gifts and showing arrangements designed in on-trend colors. Members have exclusive access to customizable print ads, fliers, web ads and Facebook sharable graphics complementing the two new poster designs at [safnow.org/kits](http://safnow.org/kits). Matching statement stuffers, postcards and posters are available to order.

“Flower Power” and “Happiness Delivered” headline the materials, referring to Rutgers University research that found the presence of flowers triggers happy emotions, heightens feelings of life satisfaction and affects social behavior in a positive manner far beyond what is normally believed.

The materials feature floral arrangements designed by member Carol Caggiano, AIFD, PFCI, of A. Caggiano Inc. in Jeffersonton, Virginia, who recently

designed the corsage and boutonniere showcased on the U.S. Postal Service’s “Celebration” stamps.

SAF’s 2017 Local Marketing Kit is possible thanks to voluntary contributions to the **SAF Fund for Nationwide Public Relations** by wholesalers, suppliers, importers and growers. For information on how to support this important industry initiative, visit [safnow.org/prfund](http://safnow.org/prfund). 🌸

### COOL COLLATERAL

“I love the colors,” said Sally Danciu, owner of Sally’s Flowers in Philadelphia. She’s hung the new posters in her showroom and uses the matching statement stuffers in thank-you cards to new customers. “We’ve been in business for 40 years and have used every marketing piece SAF has created. We’re excited to see the new materials.”





# snapshot

Stein Your Florist Co. PHILADELPHIA

**FLOOR SPACE** A dramatic fire in 2001 forced the closure of Stein Your Florist Co. for a year. During the renovation, the Kelly family made a conscious decision to retain the building's historic slate floors, which include built-in drains, rather than use new materials. There's a practical component, too, in terms of safety: The slate doesn't get slippery and the drains allow the floor to dry quickly between plant waterings.





BY MARY WESTBROOK **Snapshot**

## BIG PICTURE

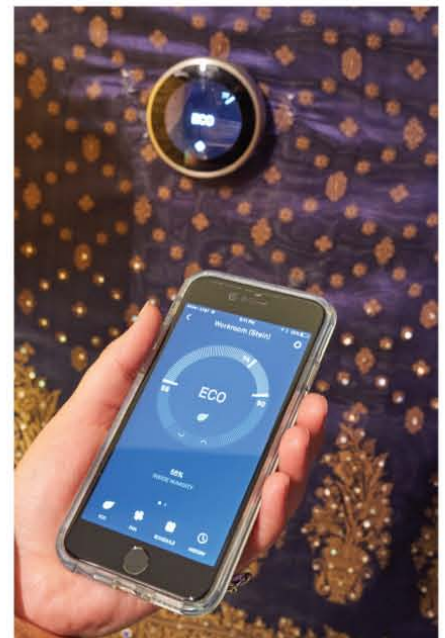
> The Kelly family, owners of Stein Your Florist Co., tries to walk the walk when being eco-friendly. “We’re not perfect, but we do believe every bit helps,” said Jennifer Kelly, manager, designer and head of media for the two-location business. For years, that’s meant the business has stocked fair trade and local goods, recycled as many materials as possible and rewarded customers who bring in used vases. In more recent years, they’ve also made some structural changes to the store that promote their ethos and have the potential to cut down on energy costs. “It’s a little early to benchmark some of the savings, but we’re optimistic over the long run,” Jennifer said. “And we feel good about trying to do our part.” 🍁



**GREEN ON TOP** A green roof has created a relaxing space for employees to have lunch and decompress, and it’s home for the shop’s latest addition, bees. “The roof also acts as extra insulation,” said Jennifer, who added that the family is considering installing solar panels at its New Jersey store. One day, they hope to sell the honey that the bees produce.



**SMART ENERGY** Two years ago the Kellys invested in Nest thermostats — a system that can be controlled by a smartphone and one that “learns” over time to adjust temperatures automatically, depending on usage of the space, for maximum energy savings. “It’s very convenient and easy to use and we have seen some small savings so far,” Jennifer said.





## The Right Price BY MARK ANDERSON

### CUT OUT COMPARISON SHOPPING

➤ Every sale depends on the relationship between the price you have set and the value the customer places on your product:

- Customer Valuation  $\geq$  Your Price = Sale
- Customer Valuation  $<$  Your Price = No Sale

Your cost-plus formula might determine per-unit profitability, but customer valuation determines how much they will pay. If customers believe your product is worth as much or more than the price you are asking, they'll buy. If they don't, they won't. And no sale means no profit.

That valuation is based largely on the price of what customers perceive to be acceptable alternatives; it's a kind of comparison shopping. Few people will pay you more for something if they can buy an acceptable substitute less expensively elsewhere.

So how can you escape this "substitute awareness effect" and charge more? Reduce the number of perceived acceptable substitutes.

#### Case Study in Mattresses

Have you ever tried to comparison shop between mattress stores?

It's difficult, and that's by design. Mattress manufacturers make unique models for each retail chain, so chains carry very similar (if not identical) models, but bearing names unique to them.

By eliminating exact substitutes and making comparison shopping more difficult, manufacturers avoid a race to the bottom: a situation where retailers keep undercutting each other. Instead, retailers compete on sales and marketing while preserving high margins.

Margins in the mattress industry were so high, in fact, that existing companies opened the door for new online vendors such as Casper and alternative distribution models to disrupt the industry.

#### Flowers and Designs That Stand Out

In many ways, the floral industry is the opposite of the traditional mattress industry, with grocery stores and order gatherers promoting unrealistically low prices.

One way to work against those competitors is to cultivate the unique benefit effect, a topic I touched on last month. If you elevate your brand/experience so that it provides unique value, you

become the Tiffany of flowers in your local market. You're less susceptible to the substitute awareness effect. If you're in that position, less expensive options aren't often perceived as acceptable substitutes.

Elevating your brand is a challenging long-term project. Changing the names and descriptions of your designs and creating collections is relatively simple.

Just like the mattress manufacturers use different names for the same mattress model to prevent comparison shopping, you can use unique names and descriptions. If your product is seen as being unique from the competitors', their low prices no longer become customers' sole reference point.

#### The Power of a Name

New research from Food Research International shows that detailed names and descriptions can have a very powerful effect on consumers. In one experiment, customers overwhelmingly favored the wines that had "elaborate" descriptions, and even said they'd be willing to pay more money for these wines: "The elaborate information level evoked higher expectations before tasting the wines, plus resulted in higher liking ratings ... and a substantial increase in willingness to pay."

Amy Ovecka, the sommelier at Lelabar in New York City, describes it this way: "If you can throw in a story and the word 'small-production' or 'artisanal' or information about the wine's organic/biodynamic/sustainable practices... it usually enhances people's perception of the quality of the wine."

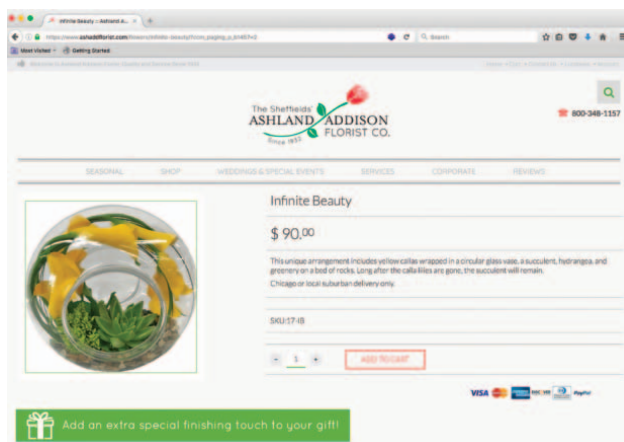
The original iteration of Banana Republic helped pioneer this idea, and the J. Peterman Company used it long before it became a running "Seinfeld" joke. (For more on types of descriptions, checkout [safnow.org/moreonline](http://safnow.org/moreonline).)

As Matt Linderman wrote on the website Signal V. Noise, "The story you surround your product with is a great way to differentiate it from competitors. Banana Republic sells you a jacket. J. Peterman sells you a tale."

By using unique names and descriptions, you become less susceptible to the substitute awareness effect; the price is no longer constrained by the price of more generic offerings. By including detailed descriptions — for example, where a flower was grown or what it signifies, how a particular collection was named or the designer who created it — you further increase the perceived value of your product and with it the willingness of the customer to pay.

You can address the farm the flowers come from (with terms such as "small" or, if appropriate, "sustainable/organic"), the variety (with terms like "new" or "scarce"), and also the design and designer (artisanal, AIFD, etc.). Beware of making false claims or improperly using protected terms such as "Fairtrade." 🌿

**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](http://Business.com) as well as through programming at SAF and other industry events. [mark@floristware.com](mailto:mark@floristware.com)**



#### WORD POWER

In Chicago, Sydney Lewis, marketing and communications manager at Ashland Addison Florist, does an admirable job of using detailed, unique descriptions.





Bridgette Arnold FSC  
Owner  
Posey Peddler Flowers  
Jonesboro, Arkansas

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## Talent BY MARY WESTBROOK

### EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

**MANUEL SOTELO**  
Production Supervisor  
Dramm & Echter  
Encinitas, California



➤ Manuel Sotelo joined Dramm & Echter almost 30 years ago. He started out processing orders and cutting lilies and gerberas before working his way up, first to field supervisor (at two separate company sites) and then to production supervisor, his role today. His career has taught him to be patient and flexible: Growers understand you can't predict everything. Indeed, the best advice he's ever gotten may be the simplest and — with all of the variables that go into growing great flowers — also the hardest: "Grow the best product for the customer," he explained in Spanish, as translated by the Dramm & Echter's team. "Keep your cost down and follow the rules."

#### How I stay engaged.

"Working with vendors, customers and my team. We have learned to grow quality flowers with fewer expenses and have overcome many challenges — including leaf miner (the larva that lives and eats leaf tissues of plants). At one point, 20 percent of production was affected. I'm proud because we got control of the situation before it got worse. Now, as a result, we have better production and quality."

#### On braving the elements.

"I'm outside roughly six hours a day. I enjoy being outside. I can learn more, be hands-on. I can show the employees and teams more in person, and so the train-

ing is enhanced. I tell people who are just starting out: Learn your safety equipment and drink a lot of water during the day. Wear comfy shoes, long sleeves and a big hat."

#### Why I work and play hard.

"We have friendly, hard-working employees. I've played soccer in the flower fields. We also have had company parties with a dunk tank. Those activities make a fun environment for employees. It creates better relationships and communications with employees, management as well as the owner." 🌻

**"Don't let the door hit you on the way out..."**

That may be *what* you want to say to an employee who quits, but take a breath and ask some productive questions instead, counsels Elizabeth Dickerson, of the HR blog [fistfuloftalent.com](http://fistfuloftalent.com).

"No matter how busy you get or how blindsided you are by the two weeks' notice, do an exit interview to find out the motivation behind your employee's decision," she writes. Ask:

- Did you have the resources you needed to do your job effectively?
- How did your position match your expectations?
- Would you recommend our company to a friend as a great place to work? Why or Why not?

### Employees Crave 'Just-in-Time' Info

The Valentine's Day web gallery you expected to post January 1 is already online — but the team decorating a major corporate client's lobby for Christmas is running 45 minutes behind. What gives?

If your team is crossing signals, try rethinking *when* you communicate. Alison

Davis, founder and CEO of the consulting group Davis & Company, says bad timing — giving employees information too early or too late — often is behind mishaps.

"Ask employees what they would like to change about internal communication, and one factor always makes the top of the list: timing," she

writes for [Inc.com](http://Inc.com). "Their preference? Information that's delivered 'just in time'— right when they need to act and before hearing it from external sources."

Her tips for better communication timelines:

**Define the urgency.** Decide if information is of the

FYI variety (and can wait to be disseminated) or more pressing (a company announcement or promotion that employees need to be aware of before the public knows that info).

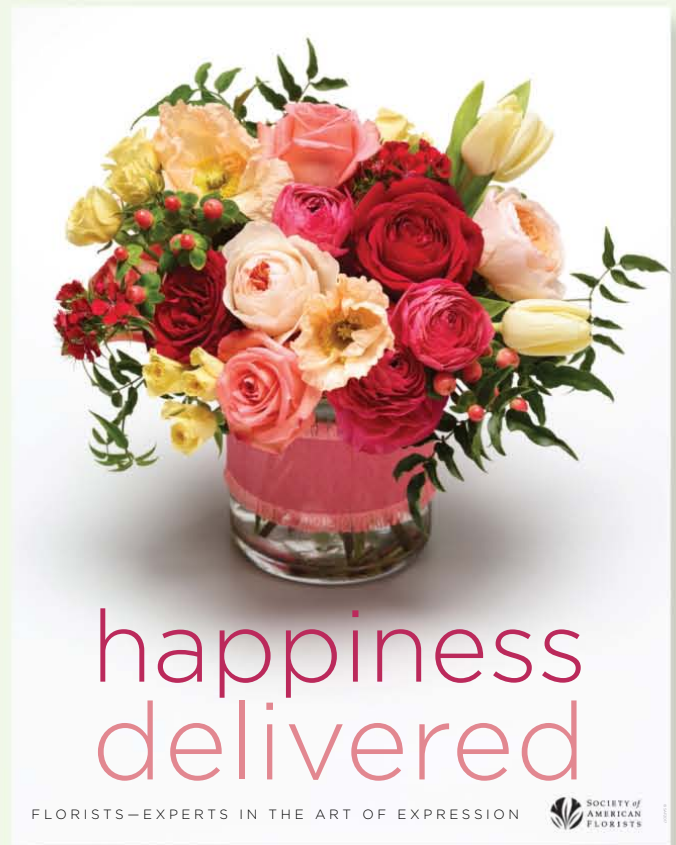
**Embrace deadlines.** Informal workplaces can sometimes lead to vague deadlines. That's a mistake. Assign

specific deadlines for tasks to keep employees on track and accountable.

**Provide updates.** For longer range projects, provide timelines and updates — including verbiage such as "We hope to be able to provide more information within two weeks."



# New Marketing Materials for SAF Members!



What You'll Find at [SAFNOW.ORG/KITS](https://safnow.org/kits)

These materials correspond with the posters distributed to SAF members:

- Customizable print ads in 3 sizes
- Printable and email-able photos
- Customizable fliers
- Web banners
- Shareable images for social media
- Materials from previous SAF marketing kits
- Postcards, statement stuffers and additional posters are available to order

Start using the marketing materials today to help bolster your sales and visibility!



SAF's "Flower Power" and "Happiness Delivered" materials are possible thanks to voluntary contributions to the **SAF Fund for Nationwide Public Relations** by wholesalers, suppliers, importers and growers. Find out if your supplier is a PR Fund Supporter at [safnow.org/prfund](https://safnow.org/prfund).

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## Growth

 BY BRAD DENHAM

### CAN GENEROSITY HELP YOU GROW?

> With Thanksgiving and Christmas around the corner, many organizations are desperate for resources to meet the needs of their local community. Recent natural disasters in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico have only further burdened these organizations with a lack of capacity to meet the community's needs.

As business owners, we want to help people in need in our communities. People in our communities also want to support businesses that are doing philanthropic work. A 2013 Cone Communications and Echo Research study found that 82 percent of U.S. consumers "consider corporate social responsibility when they shop." The same study found that mothers and millennials are particularly tuned into corporate philanthropy.

This month, I'll share the inside play-book of how Arizona Family Florist runs a canned food drive that creates positive results — for our charity partners and for our own business.

#### Step 1: Lay the Groundwork.

Discuss the idea with employees. Get them on board. Establish a plan for individual tasks. Since these are busy floral holidays, designate a team leader and volunteers to share the work. Doing so will help hold each person accountable and create a sense of ownership among the team.

#### Step 2: Partner Up.

Select a local community organization that needs your support. Reach out to your local food bank or charity to discuss opportunities. Ask if the organization can provide resources such as donation boxes, as well as assistance in scheduling pickup of your donations. (Overwhelmed with requests for donations? Read about how one florist in North Carolina set up an annual application process at [safnow.org/moreonline](http://safnow.org/moreonline).)

#### Step 3: Find a Buzz-Worthy Angle.

Once you have a partnership, decide what the promotion will look like. For example, we offer donors a free bunch of sunflowers at Thanksgiving. That floral gift sets

us apart because most people who contribute to food drives make a donation without receiving anything in return. By giving away free flowers, we encourage customers to make a generous donation and become a hub for all those donors. The offer also generates social media buzz and feel-good stories for the traditional media. Many farms or wholesalers will make concessions or even donations of flowers if you communicate your intentions. Offer to promote their business on your press release or media exposure in exchange for a great deal.

We do giveaways and donation drives with nonprofits throughout the year. A quarter of customers who come in for free flowers end up making a purchase.

#### Step 4: Promote the Effort.

The key to a successful donation drive is to get the word out. We use social media as our primary driver. We create a Facebook Event page and use promoted posts to start the buzz. To ensure success, we spend a few bucks promoting the post to our existing customers, as well as targeting Facebook users who like charitable causes, including food banks and other organizations. We also send a press release to the local media, with event details and quotes from the charitable organization and our flower partners. Take advantage of the resources you have, including website banner ads, email blasts, postcards, statement stuffers, in-store signage and flyers. Spread the word to your friends, family, neighbors

and co-workers. Ask the organization you are supporting to help get the word out through its networks.

#### Step 5: Make the Most of Traffic.

Once a drive starts, we make sure our store is merchandised in a way that encourages customers to add vases, design services, gifts or chocolates to their free flowers. Attitude is everything. Make sure your team is relaxed and welcoming. Instruct staff to acknowledge the generosity of the customer's donation. We do giveaways and donation drives with nonprofits throughout the year. A quarter of customers who come in for free flowers end up making a purchase. The free flowers motivate them and bring them into the shop, while that 25 percent conversion rate helps cover the flower costs. Take pictures of the customers with their flowers and donations in your store. These are powerful images that can be used to promote the campaign on social media.

#### Step 6: Follow Up and Make Notes.

Post photos after your event and send thank-you cards or flowers to volunteers and your partner organization. Report on how many goods were collected or how much money was raised. While it's fresh in your mind, develop a list of lessons learned for future events. Check in with the local organization to see if it has suggestions to include. 🌱



**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](mailto:brad@azfamilyflorist.com)**



# 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](http://safnow.org/petalitforward) and view the video at [aboutflowers.com/youtube](http://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

#### Suppliers

Accent Decor, Inc.

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

#### Wholesalers

Pennock Co.

#### 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

Holland America  
Flowers, LLC  
Miaflora Farms LLC  
Ocean View Flowers  
Oregon Flowers, Inc.  
Sun Valley Floral Group  
Washington Bulb Co.,  
Inc.

#### Importers/Distributors

Liberty Blooms

### 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  
Jacobson Floral

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

Dramm & Echter  
Green Point Nurseries,  
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### CONTRIBUTOR: \$50 - \$99

#### Wholesalers

Coward & Glisson  
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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](http://Aboutflowers.com), [AboutflowersBlog.com](http://AboutflowersBlog.com) and [NationalFloristDirectory.com](http://NationalFloristDirectory.com).



**Want to help sell more flowers  
(and see your name on this list)?  
Support the SAF PR Fund!  
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## Fresh Choices TREND-SETTING TIPS FOR BUYING FRESH CUT FLOWERS AND GREENS

### PALETTE CLEANSE

> Even before temperatures drop, several signs point to fall's return: football takes over weekend television, grocers peddle pumpkin-flavored everything and décor adopts the predictable palette of red, yellow, orange and brown.

These cornucopia colors may be tried and true, but they don't leave a lasting impression on discerning customers. "With access to social media, HGTV and creative sites such as Etsy and 1stdibs, consumers are more educated than ever on what's trending," said Michael Skaff, AAF, AIFD, PFCI. "When they search for a florist, they want one who is current."

Skaff, a freelance designer based in Savannah, Georgia, devotes thousands of hours a year to studying what's fashionable in various industries across the globe. "We must remember that popular colors aren't shaped only by seasonality but also by what's happening in the world economically, socially and politically." Staying abreast of trends and marketing them "increases credibility, customer satisfaction and repeat sales," he added.

If global research sounds daunting, don't fret; the Pantone Institute, an internationally known design firm specializing in color, has curated a fall fashion report to serve as your muse. The selection features 12 hues, which include



a few neutrals, a pale pink, an energizing green and several dark, sophisticated shades. "It's a beautiful and balanced palette that really represents consumers' unending love with nature," Skaff said.

When it comes to visual merchandising, color has a major impact, said Carol Bice, AIFD, a retired designer in Colbyville, Texas, who's decorated the Dallas World Trade Center on numerous occasions. "I've watched and analyzed people entering showrooms," she said. "Color is what draws them in. Objects are secondary."

Bice recommends starting with a wall covered in Grenadine paint or fabric. "It's powerful and dynamic," she said. Then she

would set up tables draped in Shaded Spruce, Navy Peony or Tawny Port cloth. "A little subdued, these colors would enhance — not detract from — any pieces you place on them." (Her pick: an arrangement dominated with Autumn Maple and Buttermilk flowers, with a few Marina and Ballet Slipper insertions.)

"As a final touch, I'd look for a painting that incorporates most of these colors and hang it in the background to tie everything together."

Ready to branch out with this new palette? Here's some fresh product that will fit right in. 🌿

**Katie Hendrick** is a contributing writer for Floral Management. [khendrick@safnow.org](mailto:khendrick@safnow.org)

#### Autumn Maple



'DIONE' GERBERA  
Green Valley Floral

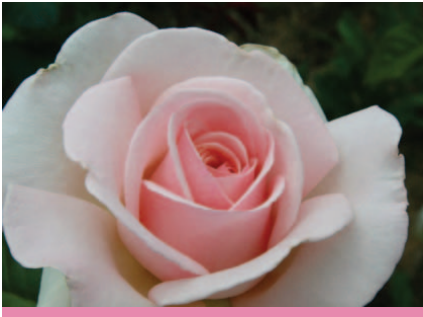


'PALADOV' CHRYSANTHEMUM  
Deliflor



## Fresh Choices

### Ballet Slipper



**'PRINCE JARDINIER' ROSE**

Green Valley Floral



**'SUCCESS HANOI' RANUNCULUS**

Onings Holland/Biacheri

### Shaded Spruce



**TEAL TREE FERN**

William Puckett

### Golden Lime



**CHILEAN PON PON MASK**

FernTrust

### Grenadine



**'KELOS ORANGE' CELOSIA**

Beekenkamp



**'HUMBERTO' GERBERA**

Green Valley Floral



**KOALA FERN**

FernTrust



**'ILE DE FRANCE' TULIP**

Oregon Flowers



**'KARMA FIESTA' DAHLIA**

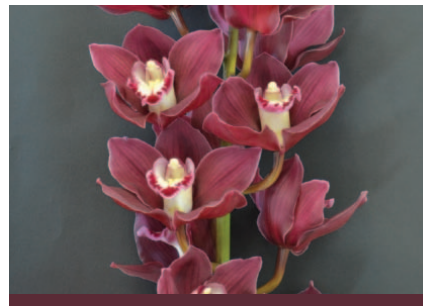
Camflor

### Tawny Port



**'ASCOT' ROSE**

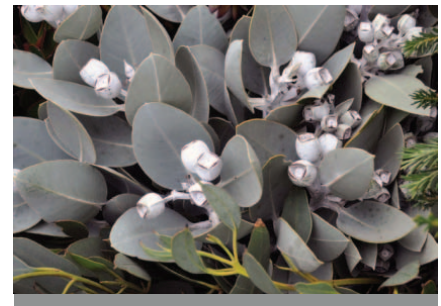
The Elite Flower



**'WYONG RUBY SIREN' CYMBIDIUM ORCHID**

NZ Bloom

### Neutral Gray



**'TETRAGONA' EUCALYPTUS**

Resendiz Brothers









**GENERATIONAL FRONT** Stein Your Florist is 130 years old, but the Kelly family — Jennifer, Patrick, Janet, Jessica and Gavin — are intent on keeping it vibrant. “We’re an old company,” explained Jennifer, “but we don’t want anyone to think of us as ‘that old flower shop.’”

“We feel like we’re more than just a store, we’re a part of the community, the good neighbor that you can call on whenever you need them.” - Jennifer Kelly

# PAST- PERFECT

**Philadelphia shop blends old and new to keep generations coming ‘round for more**

BY MARY WESTBROOK

PHOTOS BY DAVE MOSER PHOTOGRAPHY

Ask a local to describe Stein Your Florist Co. in Philadelphia, and the description likely starts with the retro, neon signs proudly trumpeting the name of the 130-year-old business on the outside of the building. If those signs are a comforting, nostalgia-inducing signal to Philadelphians, the shop’s interior is a familiar high five — or even a warm hug. The staff is welcoming and cheerful. There’s a waterfall and a pond stocked with fish and turtles to entertain the kids. Employees are engaged and excited to talk about new merchandise and store additions. Dogs are welcome. And did we mention the store is open seven days a week, and even on Christmas?



## &gt; STEP INSIDE

If brick-and-mortar is dead, Stein Your Florist hasn't gotten the obit. While the business has a robust, mobile-responsive website and a savvy social media presence, foot traffic remains a primary goal, and foot traffic they have, particularly in Philly. The family also owns an equally welcoming store, Steins at Sunset Florist, in nearby Burlington, New Jersey. The business, led by Patrick and Janet Kelly and their daughters, Jessica and Jennifer, has seen walk-in sales grow in the past few years, to constitute more than a third of overall sales today. Part of their appeal? The Philly shop is undeniably a destination — memorable and enjoyable year-round for customers.

"We're an old company," explained Jennifer, who serves as a manager, designer and head of media. "We're a staple in the business and the neighborhood, but we don't want anyone to think of us as 'that old flower shop.'"

## New Attitudes

That attitude is music to the ears of Jim Dion, a retail consultant and frequent speaker at Society of American Florists' conventions.

Dion admits the latest news in brick-and-mortar has seemed bleak: Toys R Us is bankrupt. The Limited, Payless and Gymboree — all once household names — also declared bankruptcy this year. Other former giants (Sears, Macy's) are closing stores. Each business faced its own unique set of challenges but there are through lines. Malls fail to attract sustainable traffic. Amazon's bite gets bigger daily as its appetite expands to every industry. Millennials don't get why the way they shop should be different than anything else they do: online and likely on their phone.

Many of those through lines reach the floral industry. Most Toys R Us sales happened around one major holiday, Christmas — ring a bell, Valentine's Day? — and the company hadn't really adapted to online competitors: Consumers often consider toys an ideal item to arrive like magic on a doorstep. (Kind of like flowers.)

More than anything, though, Dion wonders if some of these retailers forgot who their customers actually are. With Toys R Us, for example, the real customers aren't the parents who must be begged, pleaded and guilted into the



**CONSTANT COMPANIONS** Being dog-friendly has helped Stein Your Florist create a welcoming atmosphere, but the policy also has generated positive news coverage (and free PR).

**9** <sup>OUT</sup> **10**  
OF  
retail sales  
happen at a  
physical store  
location.

- Forbes

"Foot traffic is our No. 1 goal, and so we keep it fun and happy around here. I think people still really appreciate the face-to-face time."

- Jennifer Kelly

stores (and who are only too happy to be converted to point-click-purchase transactions) but the kids, who want to be in the stores, prowling the aisles, who are hungry for a memorable in-store experience, including employees excited to turn them onto the next big fidget spinner.

There's a message here that Dion says retailers, and especially brick-and-mortar local businesses, need to take to heart. Do what Amazon can't: Create a destination. Give customers an experience. Be part of your community.

## Bend in the Road

The good vibes at Stein Your Florist are by design — and they came, at least in part, from what could have been a tragedy.

In 2001, a fire in the design room gutted the Philadelphia shop, forcing the Kelly family, who had been operating in the building since 1996 to close the location for 10 months and renovate and repair. (The building itself dates to 1949-1950 and was originally half of a twin-home.)

The family took the opportunity to recreate the space in a way that honored its historic charm and make way for modern conveniences and updates for efficiency and experiential shopping. They retained and restored details such as a curved stone staircase and slate floors (which had built-in drains), but they updated windows, opened up space in the showroom and painted like crazy, turning the color palette from a dated celadon green and peach to cream, sky blue and light gray with pops of bright green accent walls.

The waterfall and the pond were both features of the store before the fire. The previous owners had covered the pond area for close to 20 years, but the Kellys "restored it to its former glory," in part to have more interactive elements in the store. (Rule of childhood: All kids love a good turtle.)

"Foot traffic is our No. 1 goal, and so we keep it fun and happy around here," Jennifer said. "I think people still really appreciate the face-to-face time."

Paw traffic helps, too. The Kellys make their "BYODog" policy obvious with water bowls and doggy treats a plenty. The inclusive atmosphere was a no-brainer for the animal-loving family, but their policy and friendly approach has garnered them media attention and placement on a local website that



highlights canine-friendly establishments. ("It's been great free marketing!" Jennifer laughed, "and I love 'free.'")

More recently, the family has added a green roof, to improve energy efficiency. While the space is not open to customers, it has become a preferred lunch space for employees, and the Kelly family and their staff talk frequently about the roof — why they installed it and the benefits they see from it — to customers, many of whom share their eco-consciousness.

In the last year, the family also has installed a beehive on the green roof, with plans to start selling the honey they produce in the future. (Read more about the shop's eco efforts, and the payoff, on p. 12.) They also offer vase recycling

(with a free bouquet for people who participate in the program) and stock local goods and fair trade and cause-related merchandise — for example, socks manufactured by a company that promises to donate the equivalent of 100 days' clean drinking water to African countries for each pair purchased.

"These are things that we feel passionately about, but we're finding that customers, especially millennials, are really curious and interested in them, too," Jennifer said. "They're good, natural talking points." And good business builders, too: Their green and socially minded merchandise routinely sells out.

Another welcoming element? Store hours. The shop is open seven days a

week, and even on Christmas (from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.)

"Even when there's a blizzard, someone always gets in to open up, check on things, shovel the sidewalks and help any of the brave souls bold enough to venture out," Jennifer said. "We feel like we're more than just a store, we're a part of the community, the good neighbor that you can call on whenever you need them. It's important to us to be there every day for that unexpected special."

The Kellys' careful attention to detail and historic preservation of their building paid off in more ways than customer appreciation, too: The building was recently part of an architectural exhibition at the University of Pennsylvania,

**LIGHTS ON** The store's neon signs are "iconic," said Jennifer Kelly (second from left) with Janet Kelly, Jessica Kelly and Patrick Kelly.



### Stein Your Florist Co.

Philadelphia

### Steins at Sunset Florist

Burlington, New Jersey

**Backstory:** The business was founded in 1887. Patrick Kelly has been with the company for 36 years. He took over from Daniel Stein, who was a fourth-generation owner.

### Family members in the business:

*Patrick Kelly, owner operator*

*Janet Kelly, administrative goddess and display specialist*  
*Jessica Kelly, design supervisor*  
*Jennifer Kelly, manager, designer and head of media*

*Gavin Kelly, administrator of smiles and Jessica's toddler*

**Website:** [SteinYourFlorist.com](http://SteinYourFlorist.com) (Teleflora custom design)

**Social media:** [facebook.com/steinyourfloristco](https://facebook.com/steinyourfloristco); [pinterest.com/steinflorist](https://pinterest.com/steinflorist); [twitter.com/steinflorist](https://twitter.com/steinflorist); [instagram.com/steinflorist](https://instagram.com/steinflorist)

**Employees:** 10 full time, about 15 part time

**Annual sales:** Not disclosed

### Sales breakdown:

Walk-in: 35%  
Wedding: 10%  
Sympathy: 25%  
Corporate: 15%  
Wire Service: 15%

### Square footage:

3,000-plus in Philadelphia;  
2,200 in Burlington (plus a 1,100-square-foot greenhouse)



## &gt; STEP INSIDE

“I like that our customers see us as welcoming and inclusive.” - Jennifer Kelly

**IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE**

Honeybees, waterfalls and dog bowls are great for attracting customers, but the Stein family agrees that it's basic customer service that keeps them:

- 1 Greet every customer.
- 2 Give highly personalized gift suggestions.
- 3 Educate customers on flowers, including care and handling.



**ALL STAR** Kimberly Ewing, left, is one of several employees with autism from the nonprofit SPIN to work at Stein Your Florist. Jennifer Kelly said the shop's affiliation with the nonprofit has been a positive relationship — and one that tends to boost morale among staff and customers.

and it's been featured on the website [RetroRoadMap.com](http://RetroRoadMap.com).

**Take a Hint:**

Sure, some customers today want the convenience of online shopping and aren't interested in face-to-face interaction. Serve them with your website. To draw customers in-store, you need to create a sense of place, said Dion. And while a historic building is a big asset, you can create an experience in any location. (The Kelly family's second location, in New Jersey, has a more industrial-modern feel and is in a more suburban location but still has steady walk-in and a convivial atmosphere, Jennifer said.)

Dion points to John Venhuizen, CEO of ACE Hardware for additional inspiration. In August, Venhuizen acknowledged the disruptive threat of Amazon to his company, but he also played up the importance of unique in-store experiences. “Many people like to still physically see and touch and have the five senses,” Venhuizen said. “We [recently] had a big 5,000-store celebration. Many of them were out there smoking meat on a grill. You can't smell that on Amazon.”

**Can You Feel the Love?**

Every new team member at Stein Your Florist Co., gets an assignment — and it's not to sweep the design room floor or take out the trash (important as those tasks are to daily operations). Instead, the Kelly family shares with them the company motto, established in 2006: “Flowers make the moment, let us make a moment for you.”

What's the assignment? Embody the motto.

“We ask them to really think about that statement, and what it means, to them and to our customers,” Jennifer explained. “We have a lot of fun around here, but we take our work seriously. We see people when they are at their happiest and their saddest, and we want our employees to understand how important that is, how we need to show and feel compassion and respect, or happiness. You can't fake that.”

The seemingly simple exercise, Jennifer adds, has helped set the tone in the store. While the family has engaged in third-party staff training in the past, today, their focus is more on year-round informal training, which includes men-





**DO GOOD. FEEL GOOD** Local goods and cause-affiliated merchandise, including socks manufactured by a company that provides clean drinking water in Africa, appeal to the store's socially minded customers.

toring and modeling the behavior they want to see. (Among best practices they embrace: Every customer is greeted upon entry. Gift suggestions are highly personalized based on occasions and relationships and the staff is trained to educate customers on flowers, including care and handling, and the store's history.)

The family also tries to offer new opportunities to employees — which isn't always easy to do within the confines of a small, busy business. For example, the Kellys founded a "Green Team," a group of employees who come up with new eco-friendly initiatives for the shop. One recent project: Recognizing that they are unable to recycle Styrofoam at their Philadelphia location, the team implemented a system to transfer those materials via delivery van to the Burlington store, where the service is available.

"I think that gives them a feeling of pride and ownership, which comes through in a positive way in how they do their jobs," Jennifer said, noting that



**THE BUZZ IS REAL** Honeybees are a recent addition to the green roof of Stein Your Florist. One day, the shop hopes to sell the honey in-store.

the formation of the team came at the recommendation of the Green Business Council, a group the business joined this year through an FTD promotion.

Another longtime initiative at the store, to help find job placement for people on the autism spectrum, has also created a warm staff environment that translates to the customers. For nearly 15 years, Stein Your Florist has offered part-time work opportunities to people with autism, first with one student, Jeffrey, through a local high school, and now through SPIN Inc., a nonprofit specializing in such employment and support services. Today, the shop has three employees through SPIN who work three to four hours per week; Jeffrey, the original high school student, still works for the shop.

"I can't tell you how much these employees add to our morale and overall happiness every time they are here," said Jennifer. "And I do think that joy gets through to the customers. I like that our customers see us as welcoming and inclusive."



## &gt; STEP INSIDE

**Take a Hint:**

Training your team and taking the time to talk about your values — your reason for existing— should be a priority for every small business, said Dion. He points to companies such as The Container Store, which famously prioritizes and empowers staff with new opportunities and support.

"They put the employees first in many ways, ahead of the customer, because they realize something important," Dion said.

"If the employees are happy, then the customer is going to be really happy. For too long, independent retailers have phoned this part of the business in: They've opened up the store every morning, cut the flowers, made the arrangements but haven't focused on staff development."

The message: Find ways to give your staff those new opportunities. Listen to their suggestions and talk to them about your big-picture goals. "Don't treat staff

like an expense," Dion said. "Look at them like an asset to develop."

Creating a culture of a caring, happy staff can help you reach another goal that Dion notes Venhuizen, of Ace Hardware, strives for — something he calls "irrational service."

"When a local business provides an irrational level of service to their local neighbors, that's hard to compete with on a big-box or a dotcom national scale,"



**HANDS ON** Waterfall space and a pond are among the interactive elements inside the shop. The family reuses water from the waterfall and the indoor pond.

**Brick and Mortar: It's Aliiiiiiii**

While the news of brick-and-mortar bankruptcies and closures can be worrisome, many experts still aren't completely sold on the inevitable demise of retail.

"A nationwide review of chain operators shows that retailers will open 4,080 more stores than they are closing this year," Tom McGee, who covers retail trends, recently wrote for Forbes. "So many are opening that you could visit a new store or dine at 11 new eateries per day and still not hit every new location over the course of a year. ... If you add in the fast-growing but small chains (those with fewer than 50 stores) the total increase in store openings would surpass 10,000."

Even more encouraging, he writes, is news in the report from IHL Services: "Through July 2017, retail sales were

up more than \$120 billion compared to the same period in 2016. Store counts also are up across several categories, such as cosmetics and automotive parts."

"Some retail locations are struggling, and some chains are pulling back," he adds. "That's not unusual in retail, where competition is fierce and consumer tastes are constantly shifting. ... Nine out of 10 retail sales happen at a physical store location. That's hardly the type of statistic of an industry in retreat. The key to killing this myth is to do what we know works in retail: Know your customers, offer them great service and options, and keep exceeding expectations." **-M.W.**



Venhuizen said. "Every small business can do that." But to get to that level, Dion said, you need to have your staff fully on board.

### Ready, Set, Social

If there's no mistaking Stein's iconic Philadelphia store, there's also no mistaking the business's social media presence (and savvy). The same warm, laidback feel customers experience in the store translates to their Instagram and Facebook accounts, where customers often see pictures of the family and staff, not to mention the shop cat, Polly, alongside beautiful designs. (The shop also has an updated, mobile-responsive website custom designed by Teleflora.)

"It's not about the hard sell on social media," said Jennifer, who manages the shop's platforms, which also include Twitter, Pinterest and Google+. "We do a lot of educational stuff. That helps us stay top of mind."

The business also has a knack for jumping quickly on buzzy pop culture trends, particularly those that can help convert social media fans and followers into customers coming into the store.

In the summer of 2016, for example, a college apprentice told the Kellys the Philadelphia store had become a Pokemon gym. (The family's reaction? Poke what?)

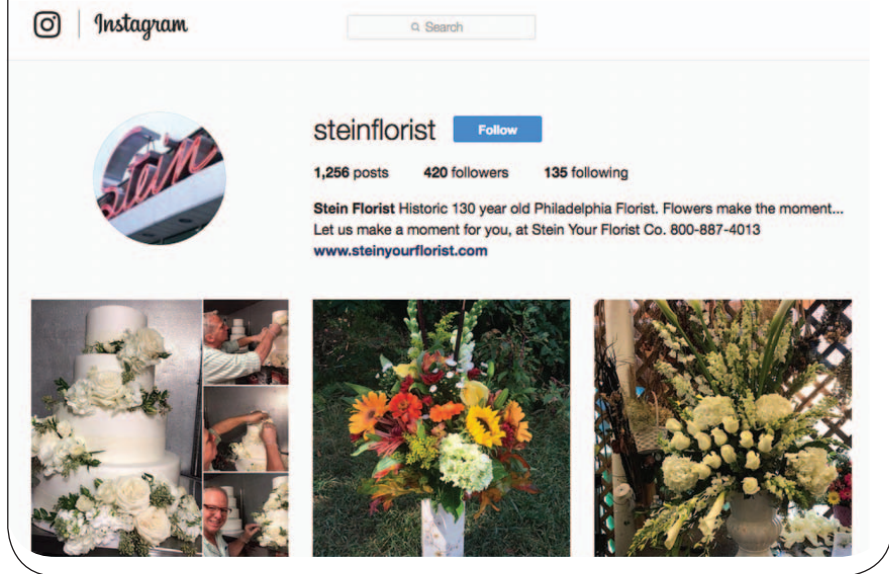
They quickly embraced their role in the augmented reality game, in which players head to local landmarks and businesses that have been designated as meet-up points.

"Within a week we had hired a local artist to paint our shop entrance to look like a Pokémon gym and expanded our product line to include Poke Balls, Pokemon plush and key chains," said Jennifer. "We painted bubble bowls to look like Poke Balls and planted them with succulents and dish gardens and even created our own artificial Poke Ball rose."

They ended up reordering some of that merchandise several times, and the trend was a big hit on social media — all the selfies taken in front of the store included Stein hashtags (#steinfloristpokemon).

"We noticed an increase in the number of young people coming into our store, typically ages 15 to 30, making more impulse purchases, single flowers, small bouquets and, of course, Pokemon items," Jennifer said.

**SOCIAL ORDER** The tone on Stein Your Florist Co.'s social media platforms is friendly, engaging and informative. The shop's rescue cat Polly often makes appearances on the Instagram page.



"It's not about the hard sell on social media. We do a lot of educational stuff. That helps us stay top of mind." - Jennifer Kelly

 [facebook.com/steinyourfloristco](https://facebook.com/steinyourfloristco)

 [pinterest.com/steinflorist](https://pinterest.com/steinflorist)

 [twitter.com/steinflorist](https://twitter.com/steinflorist)

 [instagram.com/steinflorist](https://instagram.com/steinflorist)

### Take a Hint:

The reality of being a brick-and-mortar business today is that you need a robust online presence, said Dion. "You have to do all the things to keep your doors open and then have the right technology to support it," he said, noting that those requirements include a website that provides a "friction-less" experience for customers and a keen understanding on social media of who your customers are, and the kinds of posts and promotions that keep them engaged. 🌻

Mary Westbrook is the senior contributing editor for the Society of American Florists. [mwestbrook@safnow.org](mailto:mwestbrook@safnow.org)



**DIG DEEPER**  
EVENTS PULL 'EM IN

In addition to creating year-round destinations at their stores, the Kelly family hosts in-store events regularly. Read about other businesses that have used workshops, classes and events to build foot traffic, and check out photos of the Kelly family's New Jersey location at [safnow.org/moreonline](https://safnow.org/moreonline).



**THE AFTERMATH** In Seville, Florida — about 40 miles east of Daytona Beach — Jana Register of FernTrust Inc., a co-op made up of 13 family farms, said initial reports from the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences indicate "there is up to 70 percent damage in the cut foliage industry."

When major hurricanes stuck this summer, they left destruction and disruption — and created opportunities for the industry to give back.

BY MARY WESTBROOK

# SUMMER OF STORMS



As Hurricane Harvey made its way toward Houston in late August, Fawn Dellit and her family needed someplace to go. Dellit didn't realize it then, but her work space would soon become her family's refuge.

"We tried to go to one of the shelters, and it was completely full, so we went to my flower studio," said Dellit, the owner of F. Dellit Designs. "My two kids, dog, husband and I set up camp there for two days."

When they returned home — thankfully to a dry house — Dellit didn't miss a beat. She started collecting goods at her studio for harder-hit victims, taking to Facebook to update friends and customers.

"The sun is out, the storm is gone, but unfortunately it's not over for a lot of people," she wrote. "Continue to keep Houston in your thoughts. Don't let your guard down yet, friends!"

"Don't let your guard down yet, friends!" could easily have been a rallying cry for growers, wholesalers, retailers and suppliers around the country this summer, as two major storms, Harvey and Irma, barreled through Texas and Florida, creating paths of destruction, loss and disruption to the supply chain that could have long-lasting effects. At press time, a third storm, Maria, had devastated Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

## Shops Struggle Through

In Miami Beach, Chaim Casper of Surf Florist Inc. lost power at both of his shops ahead of Hurricane Irma, but customers seemed to stop calling days before that. After the storm moved through, Casper relied on his cell phone to communicate and worried about find-



**LOSSES IN THE FIELD** The aftermath of Irma, in Collier County, Florida. "It's way too early to tally the losses, yet we know most of the state's nursery and greenhouse crop growers are impacted," said CEO of the Florida Nursery, Growers & Landscape Association Ben Bolusky. "Almost all have lost some, and some have lost all."

ing an open gas station. The timing of the storm meant Casper would take a hit during Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, his third-busiest day of the year.

"A lot of people flew up north to avoid [the hurricane]," he explained. He ended up being down by about 25 percent for the holiday, although average orders increased from last year (\$103 vs. \$95).

Wallace Bennett wasn't able to fully assess damage at his two locations of Va Va Bloom for days after Harvey. His flagship store in Kingwood was under three feet of water immediately after the storm; his second store was inaccessible due to flooded roads. Tina Smith, a floral designer with HEB grocery stores, was trapped in her apartment for days. "I haven't been

able to get to my floral shop. I have no idea what's happened there," she said in the midst of the cleanup efforts.

Officials in Texas now blame at least 70 deaths on the storm — one of those victims, Rochelle Rogers, was a florist in Katy, Texas, who was killed alongside her husband, Donald, when the couple drove into floodwaters to check on family members.

Even florists who didn't suffer direct hits were affected by the storms.

In Victoria, Texas, located on the coastal plains about 50 miles from the Gulf of Mexico, Clay Atchison said the damage had been minor, compared to other places.

"The usual trees and fences [are] down, and some water got in the house from rain pounding on our chimney — again, minor," said Atchison, the owner of McAdams Floral, who was still without electricity days after the storm.

"We didn't have any catastrophic damage, but the loss of business from pre-evacuation hype to evacuation to after-devastation has been unbearable," said Brooke Raulerson, AIFD, FSMD, CWP, of Artistic Florist and Events on Amelia Island, Florida.

Like many florists in both Florida and Texas, Raulerson has struggled to file claims for some of her losses.

"We tried to claim 'loss of business' on our insurance, [but the company] claimed our electricity had to be out for 72 consecutive hours," she explained, adding that



**OFFICIAL VISIT** Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam visited FernTrust in Seville, Florida, as part of a "fact-finding mission," said Jana Register, second from left, with Victoria Register (far left), Jimmy Register, David Register and Putnam. SAF has a long, productive relationship with Putnam, who supported the organization and the floral industry while he was a U.S. congressman. Putnam also was an SAF Congressional Action Days speaker.



## &gt; SUMMER OF STORMS



## WANT TO HELP? HARVEY FUND AND IRMA FUND

The AIFD Foundation, working with the Texas State Florists' Association and the Florida State Florists' Association, has two relief funds, one for florists hit by Hurricane Harvey and one for those affected by Hurricane Irma. Get more information, apply for help or donate at [aifdfoundation.org](http://aifdfoundation.org).

FNGLA also established a resource page, [fn gla.org/Irma](http://fn gla.org/Irma), for people who want to provide support, including materials and supplier discounts.

Find out more about national companies' responses at [safnow.org/moreonline](http://safnow.org/moreonline). —M.W.



**CLEANUP BEGINS** In Victoria, Texas, located on the coastal plains about 50 miles from the Gulf of Mexico, Clay Atchison said the damage is minor, compared to other places. "The usual trees and fences are down, and some water got in the house from rain pounding on our chimney — again, minor," said Atchison, the owner of McAdams Floral.

## BREAKING NEWS

The effect of the hurricanes on the floral industry supply chain was still a developing story at press time, but companies were already reporting unprecedented backlogs. For updated information, search "hurricane" at [safnow.org](http://safnow.org).

kind of technicality doesn't take into account the reality of the lead-up for a storm such as Irma. "By the time we are under mandatory evacuation, the electricity still will run for two to three [more] days before the storm actually hits."

The storm also brought out some moments of needed humor.

"Two customers called the shop when the phones were forwarded to my cell to ask if we could deliver the day the storm was hitting us," Raulerson explained. "I kindly explained there was an evacuation order and the hurricane was coming through."

## Stress on the Supply Chain

With its path trained on Florida, Hurricane Irma created particular challenges for the floral industry —and caused the cancellation of SAF Palm Beach 2017, the Society of American Florists' annual convention. With flights grounded and Miami

International Airport closed, the flow of product from South America came to a temporary standstill. Between 60 and 70 percent of the cut flowers sold in the U.S. today come from South America.

Christine Boldt, executive vice president of the Association of Floral Importers of Florida, said on Sept. 20 that she was seeing continued progress in Miami; she noted that much — but far from all — of the city had power again.

"Before the storm, many of the airlines left their planes outside of South Florida, and because the airports and seaports were closed for a few days, there was less cargo in Miami to go southbound. So we are suffering through the startup of getting the planes moving again with cargo," she said.

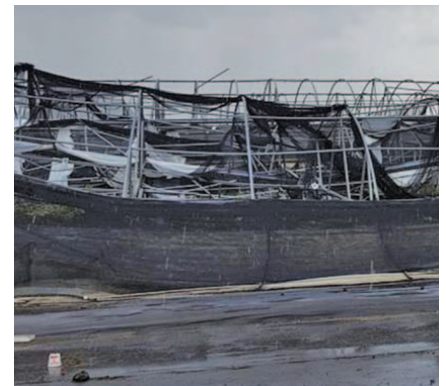
At press time, representatives of wholesale, import and transportation companies were reporting unprecedented delays in cargo service and backlogs in major ports in Colombia and Ecuador. In addition, charter flights that might have eased that burden had been redirected to high-need areas relating to the crisis in Puerto Rico. The same representatives said the industry already is seeing increased rates from ports and airlines, which need to offset the problem of minimal southbound cargo. (For more up-to-date information on this developing story, visit [safnow.org](http://safnow.org).)

Meanwhile, growers also are assessing damage.

Pamela Arnosky of Arnosky Family Farms and Texas Specialty Cut Flowers in Wimberley and Blanco, Texas, experienced the outer bands of the tropical storm-force wind and rain.

"We had four days of wind, and six inches of rain," she said. "The production we expected to harvest is flat to the ground."

"Honestly," she added, "this is Texas, and this is farming, and we have survived other catastrophes. We just have to rally our energy 'round to get it all going again."



**DESTRUCTION AND DAMAGE A** greenhouse destroyed in the Naples/Ft. Myers area of Florida. "Overall, our folks are showing their resiliency," said Jennifer Nelis, of the Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association.



Jennifer Nelis, director of communications and public relations for the Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association, said in mid-September that many growers across the state were back-filling orders and shipping plants.

"Unfortunately, there are a few who are severely impacted — and a handful who seem to have suffered 90 to 95 percent destruction," she said. "We are doing our best to assist these few with their most basic needs. Yet, overall, our folks are showing their resiliency and are working to rebuild what was lost."

In Seville, Florida — about 40 miles east of Daytona Beach — Jana Register of FernTrust Inc., a co-op made up of 13 family farms, said initial reports from the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences indicate "there is up to 70 percent damage in the cut foliage industry."

Register said in mid-September that FernTrust had "made good progress on patching the [damaged] saran structures to try and allow cutters to salvage some of the leatherleaf underneath."

"Tree removal has begun in the hammock ferneries," she added. "We have had a dry week so the wetter fields are beginning to dry out, which will hopefully prevent damage to the root structures of the plants."

## Segments Come Together

One thing was clear after both storms: The floral industry takes care of its own.

Beth O'Reilly, AIFD, TMF, manager of Mayesh Wholesale's Houston location, helped coordinate local communication among industry members with a Facebook page and untold texts, calls and emails. She stayed in frequent communication with the company's customers — hearing stories of bravery and heartache.

"Some florists [lost] everything," she said, adding that her own home had not been flooded — though houses in her neighborhood, just a few streets down, were underwater. "It's unbelievable."

The Mayesh branch itself has been "mostly unaffected by the rain and flooding," said Ben Powell, Mayesh's chief operating and chief financial officer.

"Thankfully, I can report that our employees and their families are safe and unharmed," said Powell, after Harvey hit. "We know, however, that Houston and much of southeast Texas will be struggling with the aftermath of this terrible disaster for a long time."

Greenleaf Wholesale Florist also reported that its Houston facility escaped the storm unharmed — the company reopened its facility soon after the storm with "employees that were safely able to come into work," said Rob Spikol, president. The company made its facility, coolers and design space available at



no charge to customers affected by the storm — one of many examples of generosity in the terrible aftermath.

Another example: Southern Floral Company offered help and design space to local florists. "We can set up work tables and dedicated cooler space for you," the company wrote on Facebook. Southern Floral also worked with Deborah De La Flor, AIFD, PFCI, of De La Flor Gardens in Cooper City, Florida, to coordinate delivery on badly needed supplies, including toilets and water. (After organizing that effort, De La Flor traveled home to prep her own business and home for Irma.)

In one of the most comprehensive relief efforts, The AIFD Foundation, working with the Texas State Florists' Association and the Florida State Florists' Association, has set up two relief funds, one for victims of Hurricane Harvey and one for victims of Hurricane Irma. At press time, the Hurricane Harvey Florist Fund already had raised \$25,000, including a \$10,000 donation from the California Association of Flower Growers & Shippers (CalFlowers), given the week after the hurricane. The group's board approved the gift unanimously in less than one business day — a timeline that speaks to the urgency of the need and the generosity of the industry, said Michael T. LoBue, CEO.

"I've been in the association management field for 25 years as a multi-client management firm and I've never had a unanimous written consent approved in one day," LoBue said. "They can take weeks with association boards." 🌿

**Mary Westbrook is the senior contributing editor for the Society of American Florists. [mwestbrook@safnow.org](mailto:mwestbrook@safnow.org)**



**STANDING STRONG** Fawn Dellit, the owner of F. Dellit Designs in Houston, had to evacuate to her studio during Harvey; social media became a proactive way for industry members to communicate with each other and customers during recent storms.



BY JENNY SCALA

# The Showcase Must Go On

A catastrophic hurricane can't stop PFCI from talking about premier products

Barbara, Lenzee and Lacey Bilke, owners of Madeline's Flower Shop in Edmond, Oklahoma, always hunt for intriguing containers to raise their designs' perceived value. One solution? The Premier Products Showcase at the Society of American Florists' annual convention.

"The Premier Products Showcase is a 'must do' on our convention itinerary," Lenzee said. "We count on finding products we would not know about otherwise."

Maris Angolia, AAF, president of Karin's Florist in Vienna, Virginia, echoed those sentiments. "I always find at least one new item — usually many more," she said. "And I love seeing the PFCI team present."

Since 2005, SAF's Professional Floral Communicators - International has offered creative tips on how to wow customers and grow businesses during the Premier Products Showcase. It was among the sessions slated for SAF Palm Beach 2017, which was canceled in September due to Hurricane Irma.

Here are some of the premier products that would have been showcased at the 133rd annual convention by Jenny Behlings,



**BEHIND THE SCENES** Members of Professional Floral Communicators - International worked for several days, prepping for the Premier Products Showcase and Sylvia Cup Design Competition, prior to the cancellation of SAF Palm Beach 2017. From left: Marlin Hargrove, Robbin Yelverton, Jenny Behlings, PFCI Chairman D Damon Samuel, and Susan Wilke.

AAF, AIFD, PFCI, SDCF, of Jenny's Floral in Custer, South Dakota; Marlin Hargrove, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, of the Pete Garcia Company in Atlanta; Susan Wilke, AAF, PFCI, of Karthaus & Sons Wholesale Florist in Franklin, Wisconsin; and J. Robbin Yelverton, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, CF, MCF, of Blumz by...JRDesigns in metro Detroit. 🌿

## CARE & HANDLING

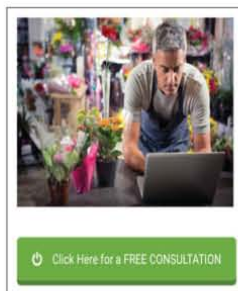


"Chrysal's New Customized Sachets are an awesome way to build your brand, feed flowers and spread the word about your shop," Yelverton said. "Customizable with your logo. It's like a business card without the 'hard sell.'" > [chrysal.com](http://chrysal.com)



"I can't imagine life without Smithers-Oasis," Behlings said. "I am excited about Floralife® Express 300 and the time-saving aspect of it as well as the power of using Floralife consistently to increase the life of cut flowers." > [OasisFloralProducts.com](http://OasisFloralProducts.com)

## TECH TALENT



"Floriology's Digital Marketing Services will help you get your web site functioning," Yelverton said. "They'll train you to use your site and its information more effectively." > [FloriologyInstitute.com](http://FloriologyInstitute.com)



"If I had all the time in the world to tweak the bouquets and prices on my website, I would be more successful," Behlings said of **Web Acceleration Program**, "but **TeamFloral Program**, can help with that task so florists can do what they do best." > [TeamFloral.com](http://TeamFloral.com)



"The **Florist Platform by Details Flowers Software** is great for events and weddings," Yelverton said. "It assists with customer maintenance, project management, and product and supply procurement — all from your smart phone, tablet or computer." > [DetailsFlowers.com](http://DetailsFlowers.com)

## FRESH MOVES



"I absolutely love all of **Rio Roses flowers**, so I would have certainly been gushing over all them during the Showcase," Behlings said. "**Mother of Pearl** is just the right color for today's weddings!" > [rioroses.com](http://rioroses.com)



"This hot pink rose is stunning with over 100 petals," Wilke said of the **Capability English Garden Rose** from **Alexandra Farms**. "It has a nostalgic shape and wonderful fragrance." > [AlexandraFarms.com](http://AlexandraFarms.com)



**COOL CONTAINERS**



"The **Syndicate Sales Plant Amp** — such a trendy glass container," Yelverton said. "It features two side containers for plants or flowers, and a cradle in the middle for a smartphone." > [SyndicateSales.com](http://SyndicateSales.com)



"**Accent Decor** knows home décor," Behlings said. "I can see the **Eleanor Collection** even being used in wedding décor." Mix and match between seven sizes and five patterns. > [AccentDecor.com](http://AccentDecor.com)

**DRESS UP**



"**Design Master's übermatte** is amazing for upgrading utility containers," Yelverton said. "Durable and fashionable, it lets you custom color coordinate glassware and other containers with ease." > [DMColor.com](http://DMColor.com)

**ADDED GIFTS**



"**Pistachio Brittle** by **Pajama Sweets** has a savory sweet taste and a toffee-like texture," Wilke said. "Great for congratulations, graduations and corporate baskets, and Mother's Day." > [PajamaSweets.com](http://PajamaSweets.com)



"These four-inch gifts are wonderful for hospital and sympathy gifts, or to embellish green and flowering plants," Wilke said of the **FTD Art Hearts + Artful Crosses**. "Each comes with an uplifting message." > [FTDi.com](http://FTDi.com)



"Covered in trails of permanent ivy, this hinged lattice stretches from 13" to 100", and makes for an easy partition or wall treatment," Hargrove said of **Ivy Lattice** from **Fitz Design**. > [CreationsByFitzdesign.com](http://CreationsByFitzdesign.com)



"The built-in reservoir on the **Never-Wilt** saddle eliminates water catastrophes, and the Snap Fit forms make for a quick, secure design foundation," Hargrove said of the offering by **Multi Packaging Solutions**. > [jhc.com](http://jhc.com)



"**Double Face Satin Ribbon** comes in 80 color options," Hargrove said. "You can always find the perfect complement for any wedding or event." > [BerwickOffrayWholesale.com](http://BerwickOffrayWholesale.com); [LionRibbon.com](http://LionRibbon.com)

**There's More!**

- Check out all the Premier Products at [safnow.org/pps](http://safnow.org/pps).
- Get your products and services in the next Premier Products Showcase. Contact SAF's Jenny Scala at [jscala@safnow.org](mailto:jscala@safnow.org).
- Learn more about getting certified by PFCI, the floral industry's speakers bureau. Applications are due Jan. 31, 2018, for membership induction at SAF Palm Springs 2018. [safnow.org/pfci](http://safnow.org/pfci)

**Jenny Scala** is SAF's director of marketing and communications and staff liaison to PFCI. [jscala@safnow.org](mailto:jscala@safnow.org)



"All three color choices — pink, white and blue — are grown in Ecuador and available year round," Hargrove said of **Veronica** by **Royal Flowers Inc.** "A fresh bounty of beauty." > [RoyalFlowersGroup.com](http://RoyalFlowersGroup.com)



"**Southern Smilax** is the epitome of a 'southern' style wedding," Yelverton said. "Its graceful drape and dark green foliage adds a lushness to settings and décor." > For **Beautiful Things From Mississippi**, email [j.delprince@msstate.edu](mailto:j.delprince@msstate.edu).



"Hand out flowers with your shop name printed on them," Wilke said of **Personalized/Customized Print Flowers** by **Heaven Scent Expressions**. Customized printing can be used on fresh, artificial, dried, waxed or gold-dipped flowers. > [HeavenScentExpressions.com](http://HeavenScentExpressions.com)



"Fresh or preserved, this moss should be featured as a decorative design component and not just for covering mechanics," Hargrove said of **Fresh From Florida Spanish Moss** by **MossMan, Inc.** > [MossManInc.com](http://MossManInc.com)



"**Charmelia** by **Gardens America** has all the pluses of regular alstroemeria," Yelverton said, "and it's the perfect size for body flowers, with long 'breaks' for those times you need to cut it apart, and a major visual impact with its multi-floret inflorescence." > [GardensAmerica.com](http://GardensAmerica.com)



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](mailto:fmeditor@safnow.org), and we'll challenge the experts to tackle them in an upcoming article.*



**A solid business plan that accounts for all variables can help you add in an extra location seamlessly.**

BY PAUL GOODMAN, CPA

# Is It Time to Expand?

> You own your own business. You've steadily increased sales and profits. Now, suddenly, you're thinking about the "e" word: expansion. It's all a part of the dream; you're achieving the successes you had hoped for. But is a second or third location worth the risk? Before you boldly go where you have not gone before, take time to better appreciate the rewards and risks of adding locations.

What starts out as an exciting road to more customers, more sales, increased profitability and greater financial security can end up with a far different reality: long hours, employee problems and decreased profitability. Many have trod this road before — some successfully, others not. Before you take the leap, consider the variables.

## The Benefits of Adding Sites

The first and most important benefit of an additional location is increased sales. Greater volume makes everything else happen. You certainly wouldn't add a location simply to serve your present customers better. That wouldn't make economic sense.

The second location is supposed to add customers and sales volume. That added volume will cover the added expenses of the additional location and hopefully leave enough for profit.



As your volume increases, you also will be buying more product. That should give you better leverage with your suppliers and translate into lower prices, another benefit.

In addition, the larger the sales volume, the more money you should have available to spend on marketing and advertising. Scale brings efficiencies. Generating sales for two stores off the same advertising allows you to get more for each advertising dollar.

Most important, the purpose for most business operations is to make a profit. Added locations should bring more dollars to the bottom line. The added profitability can be used to increase your salary and help you put more away for your retirement.

## The Risks of Growth

Of course, benefits are only one side of the equation. There are also many risks associated with opening additional locations. Life has a way of balancing the scales. You never get something for nothing. Along with the increased benefits of larger size come costs and risks.

What was a relatively simple operation, for instance, will become much more complex. This will be true at all levels. Take a look at accounting — something you probably haven't even thought about.

Instead of maintaining proper information to produce one income statement, you will now need to produce two: one for each location. In fact, you will actually produce three: two separate statements plus one combined.

Combining all sales and expenses to produce just one income statement would be dangerous to your financial health. It is critical to know how each location is doing separately. For example, if your facilities' expenses get out of control, you need to know where to look to solve the problem.

More employees also means more personalities and greater potential for conflict. Managing people is never easy. The greater the number, the greater the probability of poor performance that has to be handled. Your second location will not manage itself. You will have to hire a manager. Finding a good manager at the right price is not easy. Hiring a poor manager can mean a loss of all those extra profit dollars and more.

Every business owner will tell you that good, capable and reliable employees are the key to success. An added location compounds the need for quality staff.

Invariably, adding a second location will also mean more work for the owner. Are you ready to add hours to your work schedule? If not, don't even think about a second location.

In addition, opening a second location will require more cash. First, you'll need money just to get the second location open. Then there are inventory, equipment and supplies.

Theoretically, the second location will make money; however, there will always be those lean times when sales are slow. You'll have to have enough cash in reserve to meet the payroll and expenses of two locations during a cash crunch.

## Make a Pro/Con List. Check It Twice.

There is no question that a single-location operation is easier. For the same volume of sales, it is also more profitable. In other words, you will make more money doing \$1 million in sales at one location than you will doing \$1 million at two locations.

So if you can increase sales sufficiently at your present location, you will be better off than increasing sales by adding a location.

Having said that, there are many multiple-location operations that have been, and are, very successful. In fact, the largest operations all have multiple locations. There is only so much you can do out of one retail location.

Consequently, if you want to become really big, you must plan for multiple locations.

If this is the direction you want to take, be careful, do your homework and go slowly.

Here are some final questions to work through as you make your decision:

### 1. Does your management team have the business skills to run multiple locations?

You'll be hard-pressed to find a financially successful multiple-location operation that is headed up by an individual who is primarily a creative designer. Instead, they are usually run by someone who has business skills and knowledge.

Being successful at business is more important than being known as a creative designer. The bottom line must be the primary focus.

Multiple locations are more complex to run. To be successful, the owner/manager must be good operationally. Designers who open second shops usually end up making less money, not more, because the business operational issues swamp them.

### 2. Do you have a business plan and a budget ready?

Before you open that second location, make sure you know exactly what the costs are going to be. You need to know how you are going to staff and what sales volume is needed to break even.

You'll have to have a marketing plan that details how you will achieve your sales targets — a plan that also covers contingencies. What will you do if sales lag expectations?

These plans and budgets are not just for the owner's benefit. To the extent that money needs to be borrowed to open the new location, the bankers or investors will want to know how they will be repaid.

### 3. Can you accurately forecast cash flow?

When you are opening an additional location, you're upping the ante. Cash will flow out at a much higher rate to meet the payroll, expenses and product needs of a larger business.

You need to know in advance whether you will have excess cash or need cash for each month. It's one thing to plan for additional cash; it's another thing to get it in an emergency. Lack of cash planning has driven more than one businessperson under.

### 4. Do you know who your new customers will be?

Who will you serve out of the new location? It's just like opening your first shop. You must ask: Who will the customers be? What kind of shop do you want? 🌿

**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](mailto:plgoodman@aol.com)



## Industry News

### FLORAL INDUSTRY MEMBERS EXPRESS GRATITUDE TO LONGTIME SAF CEO



**DISTINGUISHED CAREER** Peter Moran joined SAF in 1985 and became SAF's executive vice president and CEO in 1991. He will retire at the end of the year from his post.

> Among the many celebrations planned for SAF Palm Beach 2017 but thwarted by Hurricane Irma: A fond, industry farewell to Peter Moran, the Society of American Florists' longtime CEO who will retire at year's end.

"Few people spend their entire career working for just one cause," said former SAF Chairman Shirley Lyons, AAF, PFCI, of Dandelion's Flowers & Gifts in Eugene, Oregon, during a taped address to Moran, who joined SAF in 1985 and became the group's executive vice president and CEO in 1991. "You've guided SAF and this industry through tumultuous times. Under your leadership, we've always been on course to bloom and grow."

SAF volunteer leaders, including other former chairmen and presidents, joined Lyons in wishing Moran well in his retirement, recounting moments of shared collaboration, tough challenges and lasting friendship.

Red Kennicott, AAF, of Kennicott Brothers Wholesale in Chicago, recounted giving Moran his first tour of a wholesale florist, at the start of Moran's SAF career, and credited Moran for creating a "marvelous and unique" culture at SAF.

Kennicott also expressed deep admiration for Moran's biannual — and highly anticipated — State of the Industry addresses at SAF conventions. Those presentations helped industry members contextualize economic and social trends at the local, national and global level.

"But most of all, we'll miss you," Kennicott said.

Kate Penn, currently chief content officer and editor-in-chief of SAF's flagship publication, Floral Management, will assume the role of CEO effective Nov. 1, after which Moran will help work through the transition through the end of the year. 🌿

### COURT STRIKES DOWN OVERTIME RULE

> A federal judge in Texas recently struck down the controversial Obama-era overtime rule that would have more than doubled the minimum salary level required to exempt executive, administrative and professional employees from eligibility for overtime. Previously, a federal judge had blocked the rule.

In his ruling striking down the rule, the judge said, "the Department does not have the authority to use a salary-level test that will effectively eliminate the duties test."

Under President Trump, the Department of Labor said that while it has the authority to set a salary threshold, the department will not advocate for the specific salary level (\$913 per week) established by the Obama administration and instead "intends to undertake further rulemaking to determine what the salary level should be." 🌿



**WORK IT** The Department of Labor said that while it has the authority to set a salary threshold, the department will not advocate for the specific salary level (\$913 per week) established by the Obama administration.

### TELEFLORA PRESENTS BALTIMORE FLORIST WITH TOM BUTLER AWARD

> A longtime floral industry leader and the owner of one of Maryland's largest florists has been named Teleflora's 2017 recipient of the Tom Butler "Floral Retailer of the Year" Award.

Raimondi's Florist is a third-generation, family-owned and -operated floral business that's been serving the Baltimore, Maryland, community for more than 83 years. Paul Raimondi grew up in his family's legacy and worked his way to the top, assuming full control of the business in 1985, at which point he expanded the brand into multiple store locations throughout Maryland.

The honorary award recognizes a retail florist and Teleflora member who best embodies the legacy of Teleflora's former chairman, Tom Butler. Jack Howard, executive vice president of national accounts at Teleflora, presented the award in Baltimore. 🌿



#### WINNING SMILES

Teleflora's Jack Howard and the staff of Raimondi's Florist honor Paul Raimondi, named the recipient of Teleflora's third annual Tom Butler "Floral Retailer of the Year" Award.



## Industry News

## OLIN AUGUST WETZEL, AAF: 1924-2017



> A member of the Society of American Florists' Floriculture Hall of Fame and an influential leader behind the company that is today the largest insurer for the

floral industry died Aug. 24 in Carbon, Illinois, at the age of 93.

Olin Wetzel, AAF, was born Jan. 24, 1924, in Alhambra, Illinois. He started his career as a salesman with the Florists' Hail Association of America, working in Pennsylvania and on the East Coast. He returned to Edwardsville, Illinois, in 1952 to begin working in the home of-

florists' Mutual Insurance Company began operating as Hortica.)

Ultimately, he rose to the position of executive vice president and CEO, a position that he held for 28 years before retiring in 1985.

Under Wetzel's leadership, the once small association grew to become the largest insurer of the florists, growers and wholesale florists industry in the world. He also helped to design, and oversaw the construction of, the iconic Florists Insurance Center building on St. Louis Street, which now serves as the Madison County Criminal Justice Center. (In 1955, Florists' Hail Association changed its name to Florists' Mutual Insurance Company; in 2001,

Florists' Mutual Insurance Company began operating as Hortica.)

A prolific and generous industry member, Wetzel served as vice chairman of the Alliance of American Insurers, and on the board of the Illinois State Association of Mutual Insurance Companies. He served as a volunteer leader for SAF, the Illinois State Florists Association and Roses Inc., and was a charter member and served on the board and as treasurer of the American Floral Endowment. He was inducted into the American Academy of Floriculture in 1972 and to the Floriculture Hall of Fame in 1987. 🌻

INDUSTRY ECONOMIST QUESTIONS  
3 PERCENT GROWTH GOAL

> Can the U.S. economy finally get to 3 percent growth under the Trump administration — and is that target even a worthy goal?

Floral industry financial analyst Charlie Hall, Ph.D., recently tackled those questions (and much more) during "The Economic Effects of Trumponomics," a policy-focused, decidedly nonpartisan, free webinar for Society of American Florists members. During the 30-minute session, Hall presented detailed analysis of the current economy and risk of future recession.

"We are still in recovery, and the rate of recovery is slower than it has been historically," said Hall, a professor and Ellison Chair in the Department of Horticultural Sciences at Texas A&M University. "But here are some silver linings."

The overall economy faces one major hurdle: Gen X, people ages 37 to 52, is a small generation.

"Mathematics are a major headwind in growth of GDP," he said. "We're basically a plow horse economy growing at 2 percent because of demographics."

Given the country's demographics, it would take a tremendous effort — and maybe even some magic — to get to 3 percent, he explained.

"We'd have to have 30-40 million more workers," he said. "Every business in America would need to invest like they did in the 1990s, and we'd need to increase the productivity of the current workforce, much like we saw in the 1960s."

Hall's point? The 3 percent goal may be an unnecessary distraction from an economy that, overall, is "stable." 🌻



## UP AND UP

Pointing to SAF member data collected after Valentine's Day and Mother's Day this year, Floral industry financial analyst Charlie Hall, Ph.D., noted "both holidays were pretty good — and that's good news for florists."

## FLORISTS JOIN ECLIPSE MANIA

> Quick-thinking florists around the country leveraged the excitement surrounding the recent solar eclipse, with designs themed around the singular event.

In Sacramento, California, Relles Florist promoted a "Total Eclipse of the Heart Bouquet," a \$59.99 playful design with a prominent sunflower and ISO-approved eyewear.

"We sold out before we opened on Saturday," said Alicia Relles, the shop's chief creative officer, who placed the order for the store's glasses 30 minutes before that online vendor sold out. National chains in the city also had moved through their entire inventory of glasses, creating a lot of excitement around the store's designs. "From a marketing standpoint, it was a great campaign with great ROI, in one of the slower times of year."

Thanks to some fast media outreach by Relles, the promotion landed in the local newspaper and on TV. "In hindsight, I wish that I had bought 100 more pairs [of glasses]," she said. 🌻



## MOON LOVE

In Sacramento, California, Relles Florist sold all of its "Total Eclipse of the Heart Bouquets." Alicia Relles, the shop's chief creative officer, said the business fielded many calls from potential customers scrambling to find the ISO-approved eyewear included with the design.



## Your Digital Brand BY CRYSTAL VILKAITIS

### 'TIS THE SEASON TO GET SOCIAL

➤ If online retailers and big-box stores are a challenge to small-business owners year-round, they can be a terror come Christmas, with poinsettias in every Walmart and Home Depot and hostess gifts delivered in hours from Amazon.

And yet for many customers the season — for all its hustle and stress — centers on emotions and loved ones. Sound familiar? Those are two things local florists are built around, too.

Social media marketing can help you connect with your customers during the holiday season on an emotional level that big, national companies can't touch. That's important: According to HubSpot, 81 percent of people say posts from their friends directly influence their purchasing decisions.

Here's how you can tweak your social presence in the buildup to the holiday season for maximum effect.

#### Make Facebook Ads Timely

I write a lot about Facebook Ads in this column, and for good reason: They're important. If you aren't advertising your posts to current and potential customers, no one is seeing them.

The same ads you run year-round will make an impact for the holidays, but an "offer ad" specifically is a great way to drive trackable traffic to your store while providing a discount to customers. You'll want to start running holiday ads when you begin to post about the holidays on Facebook or when you begin to get holiday items in your store. The easiest way to advertise is simply by boosting/promoting your holiday posts.

#### Promo *Everything* You Offer

Put your unique selling points (USP) front and center. Remind customers of what you have that the megastores don't. This may be a unique flower selection, additional gifts to go along with their flowers, free delivery or something completely different. Highlight products and services you offer that customers may not know about — festive poinsettias and plants in unexpected shades and textures, home décor or tree decorating services, customized centerpieces and mantelpieces, gourmet gift baskets, etc.

Brainstorm how to best share your USP, whether you choose a text and image post, infographic, video or blog post. Don't forget to feature products in your USP posts.

If you do offer services that customers generally only expect from big-box stores (e.g., free shipping), make that known. According to BigCommerce, 66 percent of online shoppers have decided against an item because of shipping costs.

#### Create New Twists on Holiday Traditions

Customers find "ordinary" holiday gift and décor items lots of places. Your holiday posts should show how you add unique twists to classic traditions.

Last year in Princeton, New Jersey, for example, Monday Morning Flower and Balloon Co. shared a photo of its "Santa Puppy" bouquet, an adorable design of white carnations arranged to look like a puppy wearing a traditional Santa hat.

Gift baskets that include seasonal or local items that may bring back memories for customers also fall into this

category, as do community partnerships with popular businesses.

#### Create Buzz with Videos and Events

Few Facebook tools and resources for businesses are as simple and effective as live videos, prerecorded videos and Event pages. These should be in heavy rotation year-round.

Live video gets a higher reach than prerecorded video, so it's a great way to show off products to more people for free. Go live for announcements big and small — new poinsettias are in, or you have the winner of your holiday open house drawing. (For more on how to decide whether to use a recorded video or go live, check out [safnow.org/moreonline](http://safnow.org/moreonline).)

Event pages serve as invitations, reminders and RSVP counts. They make it easy for customers to keep track of your event and for you to predict turnout. If you advertise your event with Facebook Ads, it will be easier to reach people in your area who are likely to attend.

#### Humanize the Holidays

People make your business what it is, so feature plenty of photos of yourself, your staff and your families taking part in holiday activities in and out of the store.

Share customer feedback and stories or add albums of your favorite past holiday work. You can also share any holiday press your business has gotten. These posts will subtly drive home the warm and fuzzy point that yours is a business fueled by real people.

Another thing to remember: In the lead-up to the holiday season, reporters often are on the hunt for topical stories about holiday trends and events. Small-business owners who are in the habit of sharing those things stand a better chance of landing free press and positive PR. 🐾

**Crystal Vilkaitis**, founder of the **Social Edge** (formerly called **Crystal Media**), teaches social media to independent retailers and is a featured presenter at SAF events. **Social Edge** provides Facebook and Instagram ads management and social media content. [crystal@socialedge.co](mailto:crystal@socialedge.co)



**MORE TO SEE** At Monday Morning Flower and Balloon Co. in Princeton, New Jersey, social posts leading up to the holiday season remind customers of gifts and services beyond "just" flowers and plants.



SAF **1 DAY PROFIT BLAST** LOUISVILLE

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2017**

**Marriott Louisville Downtown**

Special thanks to the Bill Doran Company for sponsoring SAF's 1-Day Profit Blast in Louisville.



**Register by Oct. 26 and save \$60!**

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**Tiny Houses, Big Design Opportunities**

*Helen Miller, AIFD, CAFA, CF, Flowers & Such*

Sponsored by: **Syndicate sales inc.**

**You'll learn:**

- How to create chic designs perfect for small spaces
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- How to set up a terrarium bar in your shop



**Eventology: The Science of Profitable Events**

*Derrick Myers, CPA, CFP, PFCI, Crockett, Myers & Associates, Inc.*

**You'll learn:**

- Event pricing formulas that guarantee profitability
- Ways to ensure you're paid for delivery, setup, teardown — even handholding a bride
- What you need to know about each venue — before you price the job



**Build the Perfect Sales Script**

*Tim Huckabee, FloralStrategies, LLC*

**You'll learn:**

- Key elements of a successful encounter with a customer
- New techniques to give each facet of the conversation energy and a polished presentation
- How to create a natural-sounding script — and take it home so you can put it to work in your shop right away

**Plus listen in as Tim makes mystery shopper calls to real florist shops!**



**ABCs of Social Media Advertising**

*Crystal Vilkaitis, Crystal Media*

**You'll learn:**

- Marketing techniques that will save you time and money, and get you seen
- Targeted strategies for the top sites, including Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn
- How to make paid advertising on social media pay off



**SAF** SOCIETY of AMERICAN FLORISTS  
Your Growth is Our Business



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## Business of Design

### CHIC CHOICES FOR THE YEAR'S END



JOYCE  
MASON-  
MONHEIM

> Twice a year, the Pantone Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based design firm regarded as the global expert on color, issues a seasonal forecast of trending hues. This fall, the colors include neutrals, along with deep reds and blues. "If you look around, you'll see this palette all around us, from fashion to interior design," said Tucson, Arizona, florist Joyce Mason-Monheim, AAF, AIFD, PFCI. We challenged the 2013 Sylvia Cup champion and 2014 Tommy Bright Award recipient to create two novel pieces for fall and winter that play with these popular pigments. Customers craving something fresh and refined will flip for these designs. 🌿

See [safnow.org/moreonline](http://safnow.org/moreonline) for complete recipes.

**Katie Hendrick** [khendrick@safnow.org](mailto:khendrick@safnow.org)



#### SOPHISTICATED STATURE

Mason-Monheim chose echinops and eryngium to mimic the container's inky blue mystique, which she accentuated with complementary shades of orange and peach (also part of Pantone's palette). A framing technique "maximizes negative space, increasing perceived value," she said. Additionally, the design features dramatic foliage, another major trend. Design time: 10-15 minutes. Wholesale costs: \$16. Suggested retail price: \$65.



#### GRAY GARDENS

A weathered rectangular planter sets the stage for an English garden arrangement. "This style appeals to millennials and has become a mainstay for weddings and other events," Mason-Monheim said. Varying shades of blue, red and green pop against the neutral container. Branches and foliage provide graceful arches for visual interest, and a sprig of juniper transitions the arrangement from autumn to winter. Design time: 10 to 15 minutes. Wholesale costs: \$30. Suggested retail price: \$132.





M

— MAGNUM —



# MAGNUM

**XXL FLOWER****HUNDREDS OF PETALS****STRONG STEM****LONG LASTING BEAUTY**

The word 'magnum' means 'big', and this is exactly why we called this disbudded chrysanthemum Magnum.

Its flower is huge: to call Magnum a size XXL is no exaggeration! Not only does its flower get even bigger in the vase as the weeks go by, but it also becomes more spherical. This large eye-catching white flower with bright green at its centre is simply packed with petals. In fact, Magnum has so many ray petals that the flower never opens completely to reveal any disc petals in its centre, even after weeks in the vase. Magnum is an ultra-strong variety that has passed every transport and post-harvest shelf life test with ease – and without any sign of petal damage or loss. These chrysanthemums are delivered in a net – not to prevent any damage but simply to get enough of these large flowers into their box. This unique flower with its high petal count, sturdy stems and beautiful green leaves has already reaped rave reviews. With the introduction of Magnum, Deliflor is taking a new step in chrysanthemums. Magnum will become available in quantities of around 40,000 stems a week early in April.

**More information**

[www.deliflor.com](http://www.deliflor.com), [info@deliflor.com](mailto:info@deliflor.com), [www.facebook.com/deliflor](https://www.facebook.com/deliflor)

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While the 2017 American Floral Endowment (AFE) Annual Fundraising Dinner in Palm Beach, Fla., was canceled due to Hurricane Irma, AFE wishes to express our sincere thanks to the generous event sponsors and industry donors who support AFE's floriculture programs to advance and promote our industry.

Download the 2017 AFE Dinner Program to see for yourself the many floral industry successes made possible through AFE support. The Program also highlights:

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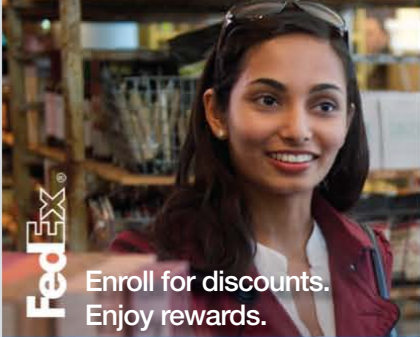
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## Quality BY GAY SMITH



### A (SMALL) CHANGE COULD DO YOU GOOD

> What's stopping your customers from buying more flowers? They could be intimidated. Consumers are often stumped by species — anything beyond roses and carnations. Latin names are hard to remember. Common names are confusing. In many retail flower shops, product origin and availability are unknown, and handling details are obscure. Consumers aren't sure how to combine products or treat blooms at home.

The biggest hurdle? Consumers don't know how long the flowers will last. They can't determine if the blooms are worth the price.

That's a biggie. Research shows that, out of all the flower characteristics, consumers care most about flower longevity and quality. When flowers have a five- to seven-day vase life, consumers consider them a worthwhile purchase. Shops that provide practical care information — as well as info about origin, certification programs, background on flowers and research — reduce the intimidation factor and decrease barriers to purchase.

#### Small Changes, Big Payoffs

Talking about and promoting your care practices are small changes to your marketing and merchandising that could make a big difference. Likewise, incorporating a few targeted changes in processing methods will send more profit to your bottom line.

For example, flowers last 50 percent longer when treated in food, but that benefit can be eclipsed if you embrace a one-size-fits-all bucket prep mentality and aren't taking each species' traits into account. Poinsettias suffer irreversible bract droop if plants are pushed up and out of paper sleeves. (A better approach: tearing sleeves open to free the plant.) Epinasty, or poinsettia bract droop,

caused by internal ethylene production, is irreversible; changing how plants are unsleeved reduces shrink.

Here are other small changes that add up to big savings:

- **Proteas.** Research at the University of California-Davis, conducted under Michael Reid, Ph.D., in 1989, determined that high light and carbohydrates helped stop leaf blackening on *Protea eximia* and *Protea neriifolia*. Protea researchers later determined that powdered formulas of vase food controlled leaf blackening better than liquid food. The takeaway: Process stems into powdered vase flower food and leave the cooler light on where the protea are held.
- **Gerberas.** Sick of tossing out gerbera stems that are rotted or broken? Handling hacks reduce losses. Gerberas, the Mr. Clean of the flower world, fare best when stems are processed in clean buckets filled a quarter of the way (shallow) with gerbera pill solution. Avoid dripping on flower face as stems are rotated into use.
- **Bulbous flowers.** The bulbous family, which includes flowers from bulbs, tubers, corms and rhizomes, suffers imbalanced hormones when stems are cut from mother plants. Symptoms include: short vase life, yellow foliage, unopened buds and loss of color vibrancy in petals and leaves. Rebalance the hormones and you eliminate symptoms, improve vase life and reduce shrink.
- **Celosia, zinnias and dahlias.** These flowers share a sensitivity to stem clogging when bacteria colonies explode. These blooms are "dirty," meaning they foul the water. Some flowers "bleed" juices, enzymes,

carbohydrates and dead cell bits into the bucket solution, which excites bacteria. Explosions happen fast, within an hour or two. For flowers that are especially sensitive to contaminated water or those blooms that bleed when cut, prepare the first drink solution with a gerbera pill. The pills sanitize stems and provide a clean first drink. Allow blooms to drink at least two hours or as long as two days before transferring into a holding or vase solution. The sugar component in flower food stabilizes petal color and provides the energy blooms need.

- **Orchids.** Phalaenopsis, dendrobium, cymbidium and oncidium all look delicate, but they're fairly tough. Orchids don't like cold temperatures (>50 F). Remember that cut stems arrive thirsty and require a fresh cut and clean drink of holding flower food solution. Leave sleeves intact to protect against dehydration. Potted orchids need water every eight to 10 days (not more), and they like crowded roots. Do not repot for at least a year. Finally, all orchids (cut stems and plants) are very susceptible to ethylene damage. Avoid sources of ethylene, including smoke, rotting green bits or diseased petals, auto exhaust, fruits and veggies. Orchids require ethylene protection during transit so look for small sachets labeled EthylBloc or Ethylene Buster in trays of cuts or in plant boxes. How the flowers are cared for from postharvest to the wholesaler and finally in the retail shop plays a key role in maximizing longevity. 🌸

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