

floral management

Inside: Smarter Phone Sales, p. 14
Wedding Pricing Breakdown, p. 34
Retargeting Tips, p. 40

THE FLORAL BUSINESS AUTHORITY

MARCH 2018 | VOLUME 35 | NUMBER 1

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22

WEDDING CASHERS

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30

THE ART OF LUXE

Wedding planners and tastemakers say elegance is back.

34

MARCH TOWARD PROFITABILITY

Beautiful weddings should also be profitable affairs.



- | | | | |
|----|------------------|----|-----------------------|
| 2 | VIEWPOINT | 18 | GROWTH |
| 4 | WHAT INSPIRES US | 20 | FRESH CHOICES |
| 4 | MORE ONLINE | 36 | INDUSTRY NEWS |
| 6 | AD INDEX | 38 | FIELD TRIP |
| 8 | MEMBER FORUM | 40 | YOUR DIGITAL STRATEGY |
| 10 | SAF IN ACTION | 42 | BUSINESS OF DESIGN |
| 12 | SNAPSHOT | 44 | NEW PRODUCTS |
| 14 | SMART SELLING | 46 | CLASSIFIEDS |
| 16 | TALENT | 48 | QUALITY |

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A PUBLICATION OF THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FLORISTS
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THE FLORAL BUSINESS AUTHORITY
MARCH 2018 | VOLUME 35 | NUMBER 1

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FLORAL MANAGEMENT (ISSN 1067-4772) (USPS-936-400) IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FLORISTS (SAF), THE ASSOCIATION THAT PROVIDES MARKETING, BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES FOR THE ENTIRE FLORICULTURE INDUSTRY. STATEMENTS OF FACT OR OPINION IN FLORAL MANAGEMENT ARE THOSE OF THE AUTHORS AND MAY NOT REFLECT THE OFFICIAL POLICY OF THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FLORISTS. PERIODICALS POSTAGE IS PAID AT ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314-3406 AND ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. ALL MATERIAL IN THIS MAGAZINE IS COPYRIGHTED 2011 BY SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FLORISTS. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. \$25 OF SAF MEMBERSHIP DUES REPRESENTS A MEMBER'S SUBSCRIPTION TO THIS PUBLICATION. SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR NON-MEMBERS ARE AVAILABLE FOR \$49 PER YEAR. SINGLE COPIES: \$4. MATERIALS MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT WRITTEN PERMISSION.

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THE TIME FOR A NATIONAL PROMOTION EFFORT IS NOW

> Many years ago, the agency that handled the American Floral Marketing Council account wanted to do a study on so-called "heavy flower buyers." Tragically, to get a big enough sample, they needed to include even people who bought flowers only twice a year. There were lots of people who bought flowers on Mother's Day, others who bought on Valentine's Day, but few who consistently used flowers to express their feelings.

The agency asked participating consumers if they would send flowers for a birthday. The answer: Yes. An anniversary? Yes. Holiday gift? Yes. These same people were then asked, "In the last year, have you sent flowers for a birthday?" No. "Anniversary?" No. They just didn't think of flowers on those occasions.

We realized then that we had a product everyone could buy on any day for many reasons. The only reason they didn't was because they hadn't thought of it. That same disconnect exists today. What an opportunity.

University research shows us (and we all know from experience) that flowers make people feel better, even when they are purchased for oneself. Research has also shown this feeling is not only enjoyed by the recipient but also by the sender. There's no better way to share those messages and therefore sell more flowers than through an all-industry, collective marketing program.

There are many creative ideas ready to be implemented. The only thing we need is funding — and that can be achieved in a very fair and painless way.

In 2005, for instance, the Floral Marketing Funding Initiative Coalition organized to write a promotion order through the U.S. Department of Agriculture to put in place a mechanism to collect an assessment of 0.5 percent on all domestically grown and imported flowers. Assessments on the domestically produced flowers would be collected by USDA and on imports by Customs. Since this very small amount would be on every stem, every bunch and every flower, it would be fair to all. The amount would have been included in the cost of the products, as is the case with all other expenses, and passed on

through the distribution chain to the consumer.

The effort was suspended in May 2007 due to serious issues facing the industry and a lack of support from many of the importers and domestic producers: margins were tight, the future of the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act was uncertain; fuel prices were high; and the exchange rate for the peso was unfavorable to Colombian growers.

Since then, the business climate has changed dramatically. The small amount of this assessment is also much less than the normal fluctuation in flower costs. We know the value this kind of effort could produce: The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania did a feasibility study in 2006 and reported, "An integrated national marketing campaign for the floral industry would effectively expand revenue and yield a positive benefit-to-cost ratio." They estimated a return of \$6.45 for every dollar invested.

The time is ripe to reopen this effort and for SAF to lead the way. Through a referendum conducted by USDA, producers and importers would agree to fund the effort — and the rest of the industry would agree and be prepared to support it.

In 2007, an executive with a large supermarket chain said that if importers and producers want to sell more flowers, they must realize that "there are thousands of products in our stores, and the responsibility to build demand lies with the producers and importers." This is even truer for all of us who sell flowers. We must develop and manage a program to get the word out to consumers that there is no better product to bring joy into everyone's lives than flowers. 🌸

Charles Kremp, AAF, of Kremp Florist in the Philadelphia area, is a member of the SAF Floriculture Hall of Fame. He is a past president of SAF and the Floral Marketing Funding Initiative Coalition and a past chairman of the American Floral Marketing Council. charles@kremp.com





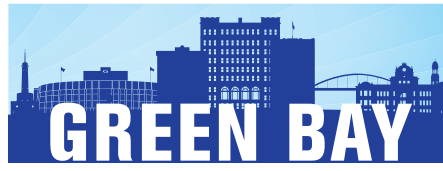
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— Carolyn Minutillo, AIFD, EMC, Lavender Hill, Jeffersonville, Indiana



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> “I have so much to tell you.”

As the Floral Management team worked to put together this month’s issue, I heard a variation of that sentiment over and over again.

Julie Martens Forney said as much after interviewing Jason Kendall of Kendall Farms for Field Trip (p. 38). In that column, we try to shine a light on new technology and processes happening at the grower and breeder level — we’d heard about the steep terrain at the 500-acre Fallbrook, California, farm and thought there might be a story there. Turns out, the hillsides at Kendall Farms are steep — akin to a black diamond ski run — but in reporting the column, Julie also learned about the farm’s use of solar panels, highly efficient drainage system and tactics for leveraging microclimates. All of these things make for a stronger business (and better products), but they’re also a testament to the innovation in our industry, and they’re ideal stories to share with customers who wonder: “Where did these flowers come from?” “How were they grown?” “Who grew them?”

I also heard the same sentiment from contributing writer Kim Wadsworth, who reports this month on trends she picked up during the 2018 Charleston Wedding

Week (p. 30), where a bevy of top wedding planners weighed in on what’s new and different in 2018, and from our senior contributing editor Katie Hendrick, who talked to three very different florists on how they’ve improved, streamlined and right-sized their wedding work, to maximize profits and satisfaction (p. 22). (In fact, Wadsworth picked up so many inspirational photos, we just couldn’t fit them all in the story. Check out additional pictures at safnow.org/moreonline.)

To balance that inspiration with some real-world bottom-line talk, this month we also have veteran contributor and resident CPA Paul Goodman, PFCI, weighing in on best practices in wedding pricing, including common pitfalls to avoid (p. 34).

Speaking of best practices: Does your staff tiptoe around talking price with customers? Worse, when they do talk price, do you hear their voices rising higher and higher? That’s a common practice, and it’s one that doesn’t exactly instill confidence. (Imagine a car dealer doing the same thing — it never happens.) In Smart Selling (p. 14), Tim Huckabee dishes on why you and your team need to focus more on how you’re using your voice when talking to



customers, and what you may inadvertently be doing to turn people off.

And, if you’re looking for just one idea to implement this month to improve your business, may I suggest a tip from Manny Gonzales (p. 18)? Start a book club with your employees. It’s a tactic Gonzales and his wife, Clara, have embraced at Tiger Lily, in Charleston, South Carolina, as a way to get their team thinking bigger regularly — about sales, customer service, and so much more. “This is the least expensive, quickest and most effective way to increase sales,” Gonzales promises. What’s not to like about that? Happy reading. 🌿

[-mwestbrook@safnow.org](mailto:mwestbrook@safnow.org)

More Online

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON WWW.SAFNOW.ORG



WHAT A BLAST

Next best thing to going to SAF’s One-Day Profit Blast is checking out the photos taken while there. You never know who you might see (yourself, for starters, if you were among the attendees). Check out the shots from the January event, in Omaha, at [flickr.com/photos/societyofamericanflorists/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/societyofamericanflorists/)



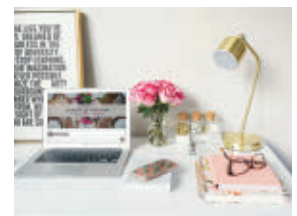
DEAL WITH ‘I DON’T’

Cancelled weddings are a part of being in the bridal business — few florists have never received that dreaded call from a bride, cancelling a wedding you booked months ago. Here’s how to (sensitively) ensure you get your just compensation. safnow.org/moreonline



WAKE-UP CALL

Missing out on sales secrets? Insider news? Have you seen SAF’s Wednesday E-Brief lately? How about the Saturday Sales Wake-Up or Week in Review? If you’re an SAF member and aren’t receiving these vital member benefits, you’re missing the up-to-the-minute industry news and valuable business building tips. If you’re out of the loop, email membermail@safnow.org. Put “Add me” in the subject line and your full name, company, city and state in the body of the message.



PARTNER POWER

To help SAF members improve their wedding businesses, SAF has teamed up with Details Flowers Software. The Details platform streamlines proposals, simplifies the payment process, and ensures clients are profitable down to each arrangement. SAF members who have never signed up for Details can receive a 14-day free trial and a 15 percent discount on the full price monthly or annual subscription rate for the software. safnow.org/moreonline

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What's Working?

In an economic outlook survey conducted in January, the Society of American Florists asked its members to share their most effective recent ideas and promotions. Here are some responses that stood out. Read more about those survey results in Industry News, on p. 36-37.

> “We worked really hard on wedding work and getting reviews from brides by asking for them with a link. [We] have won awards and thus more brides are inquiring about our work. This has helped increase sales during non-holiday times, which is huge.”

Carma White, Four Seasons Flowers and Plants, San Diego, California

> “We are pushing to keep our products, especially nonperishable, ‘fresher’ [with] smaller inventories, so we can offer newer, different products more frequently.”

James Cossairt, Cossairt Florist, Shelbyville, Indiana

> “We teamed up with our local Humane Society, [which] has three different thrift stores throughout the area. We receive all of their basic vases and give them credit on each toward their yearly gala. It’s a win-win. It cuts our supply costs and helps the community, while allowing them to clear out space for more valuable items in their thrift store and have pretty flowers for their gala.”

Martha Aaron, Sedona Mountain High Flowers, Sedona, Arizona

> “I have tried to control cost of goods and really trim the number of items on my website. Also controlling payroll: Everyone is on an hourly rate, and I shortened my business hours since much of the business has shifted to online ordering. Every penny counts in this day and age.”

L. Lynne Moss, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, The Flower Shoppe, Pratt, Kansas

> “We had a nonprofit use our building for their January event. We ended up with 50 women in the shop; some had never been [here] before and some had. They ended up buying lots of our after-Christmas sale items, which was unexpected. We’ve already booked them for next January.”

Penny Kiger, Woodland Floral and Gifts, Kalispell, Montana



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- Why Emotional IQ Matters at Work
- QuickBooks Workshop
- Nitty Gritty Hacks to Extend Vaselife
- Disarm the Disgruntled

DIGITAL MARKETING

- Defending Your Brand
- Stand Out on Social Media
- Photos That Sell
- Using Video to Boost Engagement

PROFITABLE DESIGN

- Rejuvenate Your Yuletide Business
- Holiday Design Workshop
- Sylvia Cup Floral Design Competition

TRENDS & NEW PRODUCTS

- Future of the Retail Florist
- Supplier Expo
- Outstanding Varieties
- Premier Products Showcase



“There is an energy at [SAF’s convention] that will charge you and your business! You will learn, connect with others and have fun in the process! In the end, you will take that positive energy and new knowledge back to your business — priceless.”

Nancy Godbout, Jacques Flowers, Manchester, New Hampshire

“The most inspiring resource for improvement in our industry! Exceptional use of time.

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

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IMMIGRATION, FNRI TOP CONGRESSIONAL ACTION DAYS AGENDA

> Dozens of retailers, wholesalers, growers and suppliers are heading to Washington, D.C., March 12-13, for the Society of American Florists' 38th Annual Congressional Action Days to educate lawmakers about their businesses and the floral industry's legislative priorities.

During congressional meetings, CAD participants will talk about key issues, including immigration reform and the Floriculture and Nursery Research Initiative.

To prepare participants with talking points and defined "asks," SAF recruited two experts to explain the topics. Immigration attorney Laura Foote Reiff and American Floral Endowment research coordinator Terril Nell, Ph.D., AAF, join SAF Senior Director of Government Relations Shawn McBurney, Dr. Joe Bischoff of



Laura Foote Reiff



Terril Nell, Ph.D., AAF

Cornerstone Government Affairs, and professional lobbyist trainer Stephanie Vance at the CAD Issues and Advocacy Training Session.

Reiff, an attorney in the Washington, D.C. and Northern Virginia branches of Greenberg Traurig, co-chairs the firm's Business Immigration and Compliance practice, as well as its International Employment, Immigration and Workplace Strategies group.

Nell, a past SAF president, professor emeritus of floriculture at the University of Florida and Floral Management contributor, is one of the country's top experts in postharvest research — and one of the floral industry's most passionate and respected ambassadors. He has spent more than 40 years not only studying how to improve the lifespan and quality of flowers and plants, but also ardently fundraising to make such research possible, earning him the 2015 Paul Ecke, Jr. Award.



BREAKING NEWS Follow #safcad on social media for CAD updates, like this one from Rep. Dan Kildee of Michigan tweeting about meeting SAF members from his state including Kal Krueger of Vogt's Flowers from Flint in 2017.

"Our goal is to ensure that every CAD participant — especially someone who is joining us for the first time — feels confident and supported when they go for their visits on Capitol Hill," McBurney said. "Ultimately, the best tool we have is our collective stories." 🌸

SAF APPOINTS SIX LEADERS TO CHAIR COUNCILS

> The Society of American Florists appointed six members from its Board of Directors to serve as chairmen on its segment Councils and Joint Councils, which make recommendations on how the national trade association can develop programs and services to meet the needs of its members.

"The council chairmen serve vital roles for SAF and the entire floral industry," said SAF President Bill LaFever, PFCl, of the Bill Doran Company in Rockford, Illinois. "They report to the SAF Board of Directors about trends among growers, wholesalers and retailers as well as advise the association in its government relations, floral promotion and member services activities."

SAF's segment Councils — Growers, Wholesalers and Retailers — identify specific issues affecting their industry segment, recommend how SAF can address the issues and identify candidates for the Board of Directors and Councils.

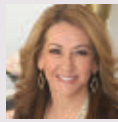
SAF's Joint Councils — Consumer, Member and Government— are a cross-pollination of individuals from all three segment Councils and provide more specific direction in their respective areas. SAF's Consumer Joint Council provides input and guidance in the development of consumer and industry-based marketing, education and information processes to increase the consumption of flowers and plants. The Member Joint Council makes recommendations for SAF's member benefits programs and



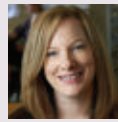
NEW LEADERS Top row: Serving as chairmen of SAF's segment Councils are: (Growers) Mike Mooney of Dramm & Echter, Inc. in Encinitas, California; (Wholesalers) Laura D. Shinall of Syndicate Sales, Inc., in Charleston, South Carolina; and (Retailers) Skip Paal, AAF, of the Rutland Beard Floral Group in Catonsville, Maryland. Bottom Row: Chairing SAF's Joint Councils are: (Consumer) Jo Buttram, AAF, of Shirley's Flowers & Gifts, Inc., in Rogers, Arkansas; (Member) Gustavo Gilchrist of Kennicott Brothers - Chicago in Chicago; and (Government) Marvin N. Miller, Ph.D., AAF, Ball Horticultural Company in West Chicago, Illinois.

services. The Government Joint Council provides input and recommendations on regulations and legislation that affect the floral industry and develops policies favorable to its success and growth. 🌸

SAF PALM SPRINGS 2018 PROGRAM PREVIEW



Cheryl Denham



Heather Waits



Anna Ball



Susan Yoder



Kevin Ylvisaker



Rakini Chinery



Kate Delaney



Nic Faitos



Renato Sogueco

> Eighteen months have passed since SAF Maui 2016, and six months since Hurricane Irma forced the cancelation of SAF Palm Beach 2017, leaving many members champing at the bit to come together for four days of networking, education and inspiration at SAF Palm Springs 2018, the Society of American Florists' 134th Annual Convention, Sept. 12-15 at the Westin Mission Hills in Rancho Mirage, California.

"It's been way too long since I've seen some of my dearest friends and colleagues," said Cheryl Denham, CEO and owner of Arizona Family Florist in Phoenix, who is looking forward to talking with manufacturers, wholesalers and distributors about products, consumer demands and what's on the horizon. "I have left every convention a better and more empowered person, and the information I've learned is immeasurable."

Heather Waits, owner of Bloomtastic Flowers & Events in Columbus, Ohio, echoed those sentiments: "SAF's annual convention is an investment in myself — a great refresh button and a chance to learn what others are doing, and what I can do to better to support my team."

The convention's educational sessions will cover key topics, including attracting talent, profitable design, digital marketing, trends and new products, and management. Here are a few:

- **Breeding Future Floriculturists:** Floriculture Hall of Fame member Anna Ball of Ball Horticultural and Susan E. Yoder of Seed Your Future will share generational research findings and their marketing plan to encourage college and high school students to pursue horticulture and floriculture careers.
- **Rejuvenate Your Yuletide Business:** Kevin Ylvisaker, AIFD, PFCI, CAFA, will outline ways to attract consumers ISO unique, ready-to-go holiday décor, event concepts to entice customers into your shop and ideas to help you merchandise, market and upsell.
- **Defending Your Brand Online:** Rakini Chinery, AAF, AzMF, of Allan's Flowers; Kate Delaney, AAF, of Matlack Florist, Inc.; and Nic Faitos of Starbright Floral Design will divulge what they do to stake their cyber turf and what they do to protect their reputation with customer reviews.
- **The Future of the Retail Florist:** Renato Sogueco, Bloomnet's vice president of digital strategy, will moderate a panel of florists adept at adapting to cultural and technological changes to compete with the search dominance and customer service expectations set by companies such as Amazon, Google, Samsung and Apple.

For details and to register, visit safnow.org/annual-convention. 🌿

TWO-MINUTE TRENDS VIDEOS DAZZLE



MUST-SEE The Two-Minute Trends video "Inspiring Conversation" has reached more than 180K views.

> An informative video series showing how decorating with flowers inspires emotions and enhances commercial and residential spaces has racked up more than 852,000 views, thanks to strategic social media promotions by the Society of American Florists.

SAF's newest marketing program, The Architectural Design of Flowers — created in partnership with Asocolflores — educates the media, interior design community, and consumers about the scientific benefits of living and working among flowers, as well as color trends for residential and commercial spaces.

The program includes a series of seven "Two-Minute Trends" YouTube videos featuring interior designer Kelli Ellis and color trend expert Mark Woodman. Together, they demonstrate the art and science of flowers as a design tool to inspire emotions and actions within public and private living spaces, as well as work environments. The floral designs shown were created by SAF member Tim Farrell, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, of Farrell's Florist in Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania.

Paid promotions from mid-January through early February on YouTube garnered 656,592 views from the four consumer videos boosted. In December and again in early January, SAF ran additional social media campaigns through Facebook, generating more than 542,000 impressions, and nearly 196,000 video views. In addition, traditional public relations has garnered news coverage in influential publications including American Spa and Luxe Daily.

SAF provides members with advice and materials to capitalize on the program at safnow.org/twominutetrends. 🌿

snapshot

MMD Events TAMPA, FLORIDA

GO BIG Allen's showroom is deep in patterns, and that's how she likes it. "In my mind, nothing compliments a complicated pattern like a complicated pattern," she said with a laugh. "To my team and to me, leopard is a neutral." Lighting in the showroom, including overhead, side and spot fixtures, also allow Allen to show off the company's event lighting options to customers.

WILD CHILD

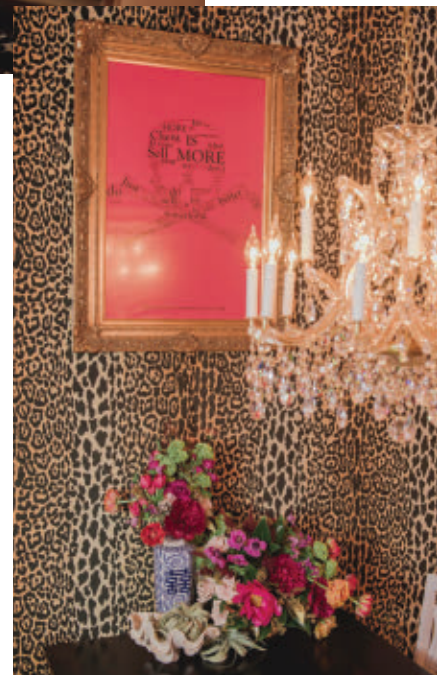
> Two years ago, Amanda Allen of MMD Events in Tampa made a decision: Her showroom needed a makeover. She wanted the space to look less industrial, more upscale. Even more than that, she wanted the room to reflect her personality — specifically, her deep love of pattern and color. The result? When couples stop by for a consultation today, they're met with bold pops of orange and red and pink and textures and patterns galore (including a velvet leopard pattern prominently hanging along one wall). If the looks turn them off? So be it, Allen said. "I've learned over the years that you can never be 'the' person for everyone, when it comes to weddings," she said. "It's better to be yourself, authentically you, so that you'll attract and work with the people who like your style, or want to borrow from it for a day." 🌸

Mary Westbrook is editor in chief of Floral Management. mwestbrook@safnow.org



SIT A SPELL Much of the furniture featured in the space is available for event rental; the sofa is part of a popular lounge set. Allen swaps pillows throughout the year to bump up the contrast and change stories. "The theme now is boho chic," she said.

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST Much of the art featured in the space was created originally for Allen. "Some of it is handmade, and so when we redid the space, we knew we wanted to feature it prominently," she said. One thing she doesn't hang on the walls? Photos of her own work. Instead, she focuses on creating a mood and communicating her point of view. "Brides need to see your style to really be drawn in," she said.





This is the third in a 10-part series aimed at empowering Floral Management readers to build a foundation month by month, sale by sale, for higher sales, more confident employees and happier customers.



YOUR VOICE IS YOUR BEST TOOL

> Are you caught up? This is the third installment of a very different type of column from me. I am giving you a month-by-month game plan to dramatically improve the sales culture in your store, empowering your staff to offer higher price points more comfortably and easily every day. In January I covered the importance of holding regular meetings with staff and gave some simple guidelines on conducting meetings in your shop. Last month, I talked about how critical it is to treat walk-in customers better — no more of the old-fashioned, ineffective, “How can I help you?”

This month, I am tackling how to make a better phone sale following the principles I teach in shops every week. I want you to practice these techniques to demonstrate to your staff how important it is to truly engage the customer on the phone, not just take their orders.

Be the Expert

What’s Happening: Do you realize that when customers call the shop they are seeking the help of an expert and are predisposed to follow your lead? It’s true: Customers will spend more if you simply allow them to do so.

The floral industry tends to make two critical mistakes while making phone sales: We are afraid to offer higher prices for fear of chasing customers away, and we ask far too many questions.

What Should Happen: Customers often pick up the phone and call you without a specific budget or design in mind. Leverage that to your advantage!

Regardless of the technology you’re using (or, heaven forbid, still taking orders on paper) there is an intelligent, conversational pattern that you must follow when making a phone sale: delivery information, then the card message and then the product (which should be your professional suggestion based on the card). You must sell to the card message because it instantly tells you the occasion, the relationship between the sender and the recipient, and how many people this gift represents.

For example: “To celebrate such an important birthday, coming from all her children and grandchildren, I suggest sending one of our large vase arrangements, perfect for the dining room table and priced from \$X to \$Y.” Don’t be afraid to offer that higher price point. The worst that can happen is the customer says no. Even if that happens, you won’t lose the sale.

Start to monitor how many unnecessary questions you’re asking customers. These questions lengthen the call and, ironically, erode their confidence in you. For example, if you think a customer’s design would benefit from a few red roses, offer that in the form of that professional advice they so desperately want. Say “I recommend adding a few red roses for a splash of color. They’re just \$Y each,” rather than “Would you like to add some red roses to the arrangement?” In general, customers should not be asking you repeatedly, “What do you recommend?” or “What do you suggest?” Ask them fewer questions and offer more of your professional advice!

Still Skeptical? My final nugget of advice is to constantly monitor the pitch of your voice and how you are delivering your advice to customers. I make mystery shopper calls and often hear even seasoned staff tiptoeing around prices, raising their voice by four octaves. That does not instill customer confidence! Here’s the trick I use: Tell a customer a price (even when it’s more than you would spend!) in the same pace and tone as you would say your name. In other words, your name is a fact, so you say it very matter-of-factly. You need to do the same with prices. And customers will spend more! 🌿

Tim Huckabee, FSC, is the president of **FloralStrategies**, which provides customer service, sales and POS system training to retail and wholesale florists.
tim@floralstrategies.com



COMING NEXT ISSUE:

Your action plan for the spring holidays.



“I hear even seasoned staff tiptoeing around prices, raising their voice by four octaves. That does not instill customer confidence.”



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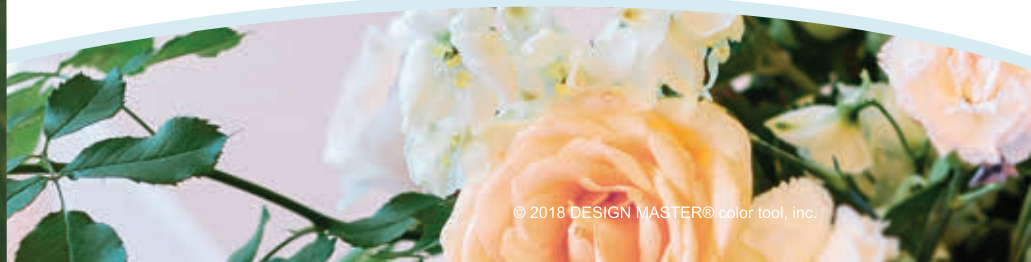
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EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

AMY WILLOUGHBY
Administrative Sales Manager
MMD Events
Tampa, Florida

➤ Since moving to Tampa seven years ago, Amy Willoughby has become part of a dynamic, driven duo at MMD Events. Working hand in hand, Willoughby (pictured above with pup Ava) and owner Amanda Allen share ideas and plan late into the night after business hours — texting and emailing as inspiration strikes. Willoughby, a graduate of the University of Alabama, uses her background in interior design to bring event spaces to life through balance, color and decorative innovation. She also uses computer-aided design and drafting technology to present a detailed layout to her clients, including custom-made pieces such as floral walls, entrance tunnels and dance floors. In addition, Willoughby is the go-to problem solver, devising solutions to balance the space when a vase breaks on-site or when a co-worker needs a second opinion. An experienced designer with an educated eye for detail, she helps MMD create unique events that stay ahead of trends.

How I bring my design dreams into reality:

“The challenge is finding the rentals that we want. We love to think outside of the box, so it can be hard to find things. For instance, we needed iridescent chargers and weren’t able to find anything. Oftentimes, we ask subcon-

tracting companies if they will order brand-new items for us. We ship from anywhere if we can. Right now, we have a cargo ship coming in from China.”

Why I started saying no to certain projects:

“One of the most important things to know in event design is what projects are right for you and to know what you do well. We are selective of the events that we take on. Everyone in the office cares, and we make sure we are all excited about the events. If it’s not something that we’re excited to do and feel creative about, we can decide not to do that one. We go with events that allow us to be ahead of the trend, and that are the most fun.”

How I problem-solve on-site:

“On the day of the event, we are all hands on deck. When problems come up, you have to make quick decisions. Vases break and things change and you have to make it work. If that happens, I redesign the room so that it balances out. I try to prepare and come up with backup plans, and our team is good at troubleshooting.” 🌸

Mackenzie Nichols is a contributing writer.
fmeditor@safnow.org



PRACTICAL HR

Roll Up the Red Carpet

How to handle a diva? You know the type: a designer who isn’t as productive as the rest of the team. A sales team member who makes too many errors. Their behavior can reduce productivity and profitability and hurt morale — but when the owner or manager confronts them about the problems, they refuse to assume responsibility. Roll out the red carpet, people, that’s diva behavior.

If you have these situations in your workplace, it’s probably time to back up and look at the bigger picture. Here are some tips on how to keep diva behavior out of your store:

Start early. During the interview and onboarding, clearly communicate to the potential employee and new hire what their job involves and what results are expected. By doing so, you may eliminate candidates who aren’t a good fit.

Be clear. If your policies and expectations appear open to interpretation, the employee will continue doing the same thing until you clarify your policies or redirect their behavior.

Stick to it. Talk to your employees regularly to ensure they understand the direction and goals for their role. This provides an opportunity to correct behaviors in the moment and avoids frustration, errors and potential performance issues.

Glenna Hecht, SPHR, is a speaker, trainer, consultant and author. Follow her HR blog at glennahecht.com. Glenna@glennahecht.com



floral management's

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Enter Floral Management's 25th Annual Marketer of the Year contest and you could win \$5,000, sponsored by Design Master color tool, inc., and be on the cover of the September 2018 issue of Floral Management.

What makes a winner? Judges look for unique, innovative and successful marketing efforts. It can be a single campaign, or a series of promotional and advertising efforts over the course of a year or more.

Get your entry form today!
Call (800) 336-4743 to request an entry form or get it online at safnow.org/marketeroftheyear.

Entry deadline: June 2, 2018

WEDDING GROWTH THAT MAKES SENSE

➤ Imagine having a wedding consultation, and while you're discussing flowers, colors and textures, you're also consciously earning trust, removing barriers, getting top dollar and — best of all — ending the meeting with a signed contract.

If that's not already happening at your shop consistently, you're doing something wrong. Sales, like floral design, is part art, part science. It's also entirely a skill that can be learned. Closing a sale is a process, and a good salesperson understands that process.

The secret to growing your wedding business is simple: You need to become a better salesperson. Leave your marketing, pricing, products and everything else as they are, but develop yourself and your team into a sales machine. I strongly believe this is true for florists of all sizes, and it's especially true for small shops.

Five Ideas to Try

Based on more than a decade of creating and refining our wedding sales process, here are five ideas any florist can implement.

Create your sales spread. How much do you want to grow your wedding business? Twenty percent? Great. Look back at how many weddings you did in 2017 and the revenue they generated. Now increase both numbers by 20 percent each month for 2018. You now have a 2018 wedding sales spread. Massage the monthly numbers if you want, but the annual total should be 20 percent more than last year. Each month, monitor your results against the sales spread, good or bad. With each victory and setback, ask yourself, "Why did that happen?"

Time-saving tip: Nothing is less motivating than a long, complicated report. If a report is more than one page, break it up into two reports.

Start a book club. Enlist anyone who books weddings for your shop, including owners and managers, into a book club. Buy a copy of a good sales book for each book club member. Instruct members to read 30-40 pages each week. Then meet every week to share your thoughts on the material. Don't have time for a book club? Then you "don't have time"

to increase sales, so stop complaining! This is the least expensive, quickest and most effective way to increase sales. Team members read on their own time, but they're on the clock for the meeting. Some members will learn and come prepared. Others will skim the chapters right before the meeting and try to fake it. Pay attention, and make staff adjustments as necessary.

"By deliberately discussing the sales process, your team will learn and develop together."

Time-saving tip: No meeting should ever last more than hour. Thirty minutes is even better. Boring meetings suck energy and passion out of a good idea. When I worked in the hotel industry, prior to buying Tiger Lily, 20 managers once met for over an hour deciding which cookies we should have at our next meeting. I decided to end my hotel career during that meeting. Literally.

Measure. You already have your wedding sales spread. Now measure how you're doing against your sales spread. At the end of every month, see how you're doing. (You can do it more often if appropriate; we measure every week.) This exercise, more than anything, will help build confidence as you find the right path.

Meet and talk. After two months, you'll have enough knowledge to morph the book club meeting into a sales meeting. During the sales meeting, discuss your "bookings," that is, brides who recently signed contracts, and "actuals," or weddings that recently took place. Stick to the numbers, not the events. Talk about what went right in the sales pro-

cess and how to fix mistakes and repeat successes. By deliberately discussing the sales process, your team will learn and develop together. You'll also again see who is producing and who is posing.

Talk results. Discuss what's happening with your team. You'll see results in the first consultation after your first meeting. You will build on your accomplishments each month. The improvements will compound over time as your salespeople continue to develop. Another important benefit: Quality staff members will love the process. They'll appreciate the time and commitment you're investing in them. They'll feel special and important, and, of course, they are. As the owner, I love seeing our team members make their own path, find their own voice and excel.

A final note: Nothing I'm suggesting requires a major time investment. Growing wedding sales is not about creating a huge master plan, implementing it and waiting for the results. It's about dedicating 15 minutes here, 45 minutes there — and then working on that plan, week after week. 🌿



Manny Gonzales owns Tiger Lily Florist in Charleston, S.C., with his wife, Clara. Among other honors, Tiger Lily has been voted

"Charleston's Best Florist" for 18 consecutive years. Manny and Clara live in Mount Pleasant with their kids, Luke and Ruby. manny@tigerlilyflorist.com



GO DEEPER

READ UP

Find out more about the process the Tiger Lily team uses to close wedding sales, and get a list of Gonzales' favorite sales book, along with sample sales spreads, at safnow.org/moreonline.



ALEXANDRA

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WEARABLE ART

> A decade ago, Julia Marie Schmitt, AIFD, EMC, co-owner of Busy Bee Florist and Gifts in Marceline, Missouri, was a brand-new designer, content to arrange basic, traditional pieces. That all changed when her sister attended a corsage and decorative wire workshop at their local wholesaler and passed on all she learned. “An entirely new world opened up to me,” Schmitt said. These days, she’s built a reputation for her necklaces and bracelets, which she attributes to increasing her perceived value and shop sales. “Creating floral jewelry says two things to your customers: you are an artist and you can create something unique for just for them,” she said.

Zoë Gallina, AAF, creative director of Botanica International Design Studio in Tampa, Florida, expressed similar sentiments. “Floral jewelry is a way to offer clients something completely customized and personal,” she said.

Chicago designer Walter Fedyshyn, AIFD, PFCI, of Kehoe Designs, constantly scouts for products perfect for floral jewelry. “Half the fun is picking unusual things to work with,” he said. “In general, though, I reach for the smallest, lightweight material I can find.” Among his favorites: small leaves, such as silver dollar and seeded eucalyptus (“both dry well and lend a cool, grey-green color,” he said), hypericum and privet berries, small pieces of cockscomb celosia and proteas, and accent flowers, particularly statice, limonium and thistle (“awesome texture”). “Jewelry’s a great opportunity to really wow customers,” he said. “So details really matter!”

Floral Management asked several floral jewelry aficionados to name their favorite “gems.” Here are a few of their picks. 🌸

Katie Hendrick is senior contributing editor of Floral Management. khendrick@safnow.org



‘WHITE MEADOW’ KALANCHOE
Danziger



BLUE THISTLE
Esprit Miami



‘CHERRY TESSINO’ MINI CARNATION
DVFlora



'WHITE LABEL' MINI GERBERA
Green Valley Floral



'GALAXY' FREESIA
Holland America Flowers



'ANNA MARIE' HYACINTH
Oregon Flowers



'BOMBAY PINK' COCKSCOMB CELOSIA
PanAmerican See



'WHITE CUSHION' MATRICARIA
Sun Valley Farms



'LEMON' HYPERICUM
Sun Valley Farms



Wedding Cashers

Put yourself on the invite list with couples ready to spend big

BY KATIE HENDRICK



ANNIE DUNCAN PHOTOGRAPHY

TEAM SPIRIT Jennifer Pryor, owner of White House Florist and Winston's Gift Shop in Lexington, South Carolina, has grown her bridal business by more than 50 percent over the past five years — an uptick she attributes largely to camaraderie with her fellow wedding vendors.

Meet the Cashers



Amanda Allen
MMD Events
Tampa, Florida

Years in Business: 12
Weddings in 2017: 54
Wedding Sales: \$25,000 and up (median: \$50,000-75,000)



Maggie Bailey
Bramble and Bee
Tomball, Texas

Years in Business: 3
Weddings in 2017: 92
Wedding Sales: \$5,000 and up (median: \$4,900*)
*includes sales prior to implementation of minimum



Jennifer Pryor
White House Florist & Winston's Gift Shop
Lexington, South Carolina

Years in Business: 18
Weddings in 2017: 50
Wedding Sales: \$700 to \$14,000 (median: \$2,500)

> WEDDING CASHERS

Like millions of Americans, Amanda Allen sets New Year's resolutions. Unlike the masses, she actually enjoys hers. Rather than committing to something torturous (purge the pantry of sugar, set the alarm for 5 a.m. spin class), the owner of MMD Events in Tampa, Florida, treats early January as a period of creative renewal. She pores through her Instagram feed (which is populated with upscale floral, fashion, interior and event designers from around the world), taking screen shots of looks that excite her and texting them to her second-in-command, Amy Willoughby, who weighs in and responds with her own inspirational images. Together, they curate a handful of wedding styles for "the ultimate client" — one who appreciates bold and unexpected designs, recognizes her vendors' expertise, grants them freedom to work their magic and pays handsomely for it.

Abiding by Walt Disney's mantra — "If you can dream it, you can do it" — Allen started this exercise in January 2015. It came on the heels of five straight years with 150-plus events (the bulk of which were weddings). "It was crazy with a capital C," she said, recalling the challenge of storing and transporting flowers and props and staffing for simultaneous parties. "Plus, who wants to work every single weekend? That's valuable family time and your chance to recharge."

Determined to regain her sanity, Allen abandoned her original business model (take

everything that comes through the door), choosing instead to focus on high-end brides. In 2017, she did just 54 weddings, averaging \$50,000 a pop, for a total of \$1.3 million — nearly double what she made when she handled three times the volume. "Absolutely thrilled," she said of those results. "We have found our sweet spot!"

Across the Gulf of Mexico, in Tomball, Texas (a suburb of Houston), Maggie Bailey and her team at Bramble and Bee had a similar epiphany. During their annual goal-setting meeting in January, the group of four agreed the shop should do fewer weddings and aim to make each one more profitable. "The consensus was to work smarter, not harder," Bailey said. Entering her third year of business, she recently raised her wedding minimum (\$5,000, up from \$3,500) for the second time (she originally had no parameters). "The idea of turning away business is scary," she said. "But we believe wholeheartedly that to grow the brand, we have to cultivate a niche."

According to The Knot's latest statistics, the average U.S. wedding costs \$35,329, with approximately \$2,500 (roughly 7 percent) of that spent on flowers and decor. Florists who've increased their portion of the bride's budget say their success ultimately boils down to attitude and resolve.

To grab the proverbial brass ring, you have to be genial, reliable, enthusiastic and, above all else, confident.



PRETTY AND PRACTICAL Maggie Bailey of Bramble and Bee asks clients scores of questions about their weddings, such as the timing of their photos, to ensure she steers them to blooms that can withstand the Texas heat.

DANA FERNANDEZ PHOTOGRAPHY



PARTY TIME Jennifer Pryor of White House Florist & Winston's Gift Shop hosts an "engagement party" for brides-to-be and wedding vendors to mingle in a cheerful, laidback setting.

Befriend Other Wedding Pros

Behind every high-roller florist is a planner who advocates for flowers and their chunk of the ceremonial change.

"Planners have so much influence on how brides allocate their budgets," Bailey said. "Most people have no idea how much things cost, so they look to the planner for guidance."

Bailey volunteers as her church's wedding coordinator, a position that puts her on a first-name basis with many of Houston's wedding planners. Among them, she's found at least four who proclaim flowers to be the most powerful piece of the event. "You need to align with people who get it — planners who'll tell brides, 'There are only so many venues in this city, so if you want to distinguish your wedding from your friends', the answer is floral décor," she said. Her key to winning over said planners? "Be warm and friendly," Bailey said. "Church representatives in our community, unfortunately, tend to be a bit stern. A smile goes a long way." She also always has business cards — bearing her Instagram handle — on hand.

The majority of MMD Events' clients arrive through a handful of wedding planners. That profitable funnel is kept full by Allen's commitment to making wedding planners a part of her business strategy. Once Allen has her aspirational wedding concepts hammered

out, she sets up brunch dates with the region's most high-end planners to brainstorm and collaborate. "I say, 'Here's what I'd like to do in the next 12 to 18 months. What do you think?' It plants ideas in their minds," she said. "Eventually someone will wander into their web, and they'll just know she's right for us."

As an added bonus, these relationships allow Allen to completely sidestep the budget conversation during her consultations. "My planner friends cull clients who want to make a big statement and can definitely afford my services," she said. "Plus, they are very upfront about expenses in their initial meetings. By the time a bride gets to me, she knows what to expect, so I hardly ever encounter sticker shock."

Over the past five years, Jennifer Pryor, owner of White House Florist & Winston's Gift Shop in Lexington, South Carolina, has seen a 53 percent uptick in her wedding business, thanks in large part to photographers, caterers, bakers and deejays who sing her praises. Most of her networking occurs during the thick of the action, setting up before a wedding.

"A lot of people don't think about 'day-of networking,' but I've found nothing beats that face-to-face time," she said, explaining that when things get hectic, people show their true colors. "If you're punctual, work hard and have a positive outlook, other vendors will take note and recommend you

"If you're punctual, work hard and have a positive outlook, other vendors will take note and recommend you because you're someone they'd like to work with again."

JENNIFER PRYOR

because you're someone they'd like to work with again," she said. "The trick is to remember you're part of a team and to embrace the camaraderie."

Each June, Pryor celebrates these connections during her shop's Engagement Party Summer Social. She recreates a mock wedding reception, complete with a tent, dance floor, tables and chairs, photo booth, loads of food and adult beverages, cake and music. She invites newly engaged couples and all her vendor contacts, helping the two groups mingle in a relaxed, cheerful setting. "My main motivation with the party is getting my name out in front of prospective clients," she said, "but a side benefit has been strengthening vendor relationships."

In addition to referrals, she's received large canvas prints of her work from one of the photographers, which now hang in her consultation room. "He got a nice, subtle advertisement in my shop," she said. "I got some quality art to show brides what I can do."

To show prospective clients what she can do — and to get her name out in front of as

many people as possible — Bailey schedules four inspirational photo shoots with her favorite photographers, stylists, stationers and calligraphers, which they share in blog posts and on Instagram. "We love to collaborate creatively, and it's very effective advertising," she said.

If You Can, Do It All

Weddings come with a dizzying amount of moving pieces. If you're someone who loves having a handle on as many as possible, keep reading. If you'd rather not have to set up hundreds of chargers or calculate how many amps a spotlight draws, this approach may not be your route to more money. But for those discerning, detail-oriented florists, being that one calm center of decision-making and logistics juggling has made them an invaluable part of expensive ceremonies.

Tracie Domino, a Tampa-based wedding planner, caters to an exceptionally affluent crowd. Her weddings range from \$150,000 to \$500,000, and her customers typically devote a whopping 20 to 40 percent of their budget to décor. To

\$35,329
average spent on
U.S. weddings

SOURCE: THE KNOT

Social Sites



SCREEN TIME Maggie Bailey of Bramble and Bee and Jennifer Pryor of White House Florist & Winston's Gift Shop both use Instagram to connect with current and potential wedding clients.

Pinterest remains as popular as ever with brides-to-be fishing for — and bookmarking — style ideas. When it comes to finding a florist, however, they turn to Instagram.

"If a bride hasn't come to us through a referral, she almost always saw us on Instagram," Jennifer Pryor said. "Which is great, because it's a place we can advertise our work without paying a dime."

Amanda Allen and Maggie Bailey have experienced the same phenomenon. "Most of the brides right now are

millennials, and they adore Instagram," Bailey said.

Here's how our sources stand out on the social media site:

Post regularly. "I know it changes a lot, but I'm pretty convinced that Instagram's algorithm favors accounts that post consistently," said Bailey, who posts a shot (sometimes bridal-themed, sometimes everyday work) each morning.

Post batches of images. "I dump six to 10 images at a time," Allen said. "That's because one photo can't capture

the big picture. I want people to see lots of angles from an event so they can appreciate how everything flowed together."

Use the portrait mode and natural light. Need an excuse to upgrade your smartphone? Here you go: "The latest versions of the iPhone have remarkable capabilities," Bailey said. "The portrait function blurs out the background to give my simple images a professional feel."

Be selective. Only show examples of styles you'd like to do again. "Will I use baby's breath

if the bride requests it? Sure. Will I post it? Heck no!" Allen said. "I only post photos that match my brand."

Tag, tag, tag. You can extend your reach exponentially by tagging the wedding planner, photographer, caterer, calligrapher, etc. Pryor also includes the bride. Also be sure to include a location (a popular search tool for prospective clients) and use relevant hashtags, such as #Houstonflorist, #gardenroses or #glamfloridawedding.

- K.H.



THE BIG PICTURE Amanda Allen, of MMD Events in Tampa, Florida, caters to affluent, detail-obsessed clients by building custom furniture and decorative pieces for their weddings. She posts batches of photos of her work so people can appreciate an event's overall aesthetic.

pull off these major productions, she turns — almost exclusively — to MMD Events or Botanica International (a design studio Floral Management has profiled several times). “I choose them because they can do anything and everything — flowers, lighting, furniture, flooring, table settings, you name it — and I know everything will look cohesive,” she said. “I’m the contractor, and they’re my interior designers. They take care of all those details I don’t want to worry about.”

Working with a full-service florist is especially helpful when a bride decides she needs to whittle her budget. “Because Amanda has the whole vision in her head, I don’t have to figure it out. I can punt it to her,” Domino said. She’ll tell Allen the amount they need to cut and leave it up to her to do it as seamlessly as possible, usually with flower or container substitutions that the customer would never detect. By contrast, a florist only involved in floral décor might suggest eliminating pew markers or flowers on the bar, “places that don’t often receive much attention from guests,” Domino said. “But if it’s a long, formal ceremony or you’re paying a fortune to bring in a famous mixologist, then those are actually focal points of the wedding. I need someone who knows what’s a priority.”

Allen cautions that her business approach is not for the faint of heart. For starters, it requires a hefty amount of storage space (her warehouse is 14,000 square feet) and a passion for construc-

tion (MMD Events specializes in custom-made pieces that they break down and repurpose). “I’m a humongous DIY nerd. My husband and I live in a house from the 1950s that we’ve spent a ton of time personally remodeling,” she said. “If there’s not some part of your brain that conceptualizes three-dimensional objects, this is not for you.”

Allen also put in a lot of sweat equity to reach her goals. She spent several years building pieces on spec and offering them gratis at all sorts of events around town, just to generate awareness about what she could do. In 2006, her first year in business, she did zero weddings, then she had five in 2007 and 17 in 2008. “Back then, we were very lucky to get \$3,000 to \$8,000 per wedding,” she said. “Now, most fall in the \$50,000 to \$75,000 range. But it was not a quick ascent.”

Bailey strikes a happy medium. Not ready to go fully into furniture, she added linen services six months ago. She shows clients sample fabrics, then rents them from a third party, charging for steaming and setup. Up-selling wasn’t even her primary impetus; she was simply tired of waiting on tardy vendors to set the tables so she could put out her centerpieces — and she wanted to play with more colors and textures. “But as it turns out, it’s an easy opportunity for additional income,” she said. “I’m finding that a lot of brides don’t mind that we’re not the cheapest choice for linens. They like the convenience of combining it with their floral décor.”

“Conveying a strong foundation of logistical knowledge inspires trust. Clients see I’m not trying to jack up the bill; I’m suggesting things for the right reasons.”

AMANDA ALLEN

Know Your Property Value

Studying your venues inside and out can help you get way more out of them. The more nooks and crannies you know by heart, the more places your product can shine. When you know just that “perfect spot,” you can turn unused square footage into valuable real estate.

“If you’re familiar with a venue, you have the ability to pitch something incredible to blow the client away,” Bailey said. “For example, there’s one with an epic fireplace that begs for something grand and lush, like a garland or a huge centerpiece on the mantel.” And if a room has rafters, she’ll talk about wrapping them with smilax — “something that looks really attractive, and that most brides don’t think of,” she said.

Additionally, Bailey asks a lot of questions that have nothing to do with the bride’s personal tastes, but rather the details of the day, such as: Do you want flowers delivered to the church or the hotel? How long will your service be? Are you taking bridal party photos before or

“Planners have so much influence on how brides allocate their budgets. Most people have no idea how much things cost, so they look to the planner for guidance.”

MAGGIE BAILEY

after the ceremony? (“For summer weddings in Houston, this is a huge factor for what flowers you’ll use,” she said.) Do you want flowers on your cake? (Make sure you know what’s food safe!) She has also learned the rules for various religious denominations, so she can make appropriate recommendations.

“Conveying a strong foundation of logistical knowledge inspires trust,” Allen echoed. “Clients see I’m not trying to jack up the bill; I’m suggesting things for the right reasons.”

For example, one popular venue is a waterfront hotel with an expansive terrace. For most weddings, Allen suggests scaling back on décor for the ceremony or the cocktail hour because they’re brief and most people pay attention to the reception. At this hotel, however, there’s room to set up these two events in the same vicinity, so she advises the bride “go to town with flowers,” because guests will be hanging around, watching the bridal party take photos, and snapping selfies when that’s done.



BECCA LEE PHOTOGRAPHY

SPATIAL INTELLIGENCE Knowing venues inside and out helps Maggie Bailey of Bramble and Bee upsell by pitching show-stopping pieces perfect for a particular space.

"These conversations are the reason our clients don't shop around," Allen said. "They want to work with us not only because we're talented, but because they see us as experts who will help them make smart choices."

Get REALLY Into It

If you want to land a big, show-stopping wedding, you've gotta have heart (miles and miles and miles of heart).

"You're helping the bride plan the biggest day of her life," Allen said. "You need to mirror her excitement. If you come across as jaded or blasé, why would she book with you?"

Allen dishes about design ideas as though she were picking out pieces for her own nuptials. She gesticulates, whips out inspirational photos and gets a little boisterous. "Attitude is contagious," she said. "If I'm animated, they're likely to think whatever I'm suggesting is really cool."

To bring her ideas to life, Bailey invested in an iPad Pro, which has a sketching app and a special pencil, so she can illustrate concepts on the screen. "When you're trying to be innovative, you're often pitching something that has no pre-existing images," she explained. "But people need visuals. Sketching has turned out to be a really critical skill for me." This activity, she finds, builds momentum in the consultation.

Get in Their Business Beyond the Big Day

A wedding isn't a one-day fling. Anyone who's tied the knot or served as an attendant knows the meaning (and cost) of "engagement season" and wedding weekends. The nuptials themselves are but a grand finale to a long string of celebrations (and the pre-game to a day-after brunch).

Pryor makes an effort to be a part of ancillary events too, such as bridal showers and the rehearsal dinner. "Brides rarely think about those things — they have tunnel vision imagining their reception — so I'll try to nonchalantly ask if they'd like me to talk to the person planning those parties," she said. Rehearsal dinners, in particular, are rather easy sales. "I tell the client I can do something that's consistent with the rest of the wedding and won't upstage the flowers for the main event," she said. "Mothers-in-law, particularly those from out of town, really appreciate me taking the burden off of their hands."

Another big seller: portrait bouquets. "A lot of photographers in my area include a portrait session in their package," Pryor said. She points out how holding the bridal bouquet



CLARK BERRY PHOTOGRAPHY

PICTURE PERFECT Jennifer Pryor of White House Florist & Winston's Gift Shop picks up extra business by pitching a trial-run bouquet for brides to hold during a pre-wedding portrait session.

would make that photo even more beautiful and special. "Plus, it serves as a trial run to make sure they're completely satisfied," a pitch that has an "almost 100 percent" success rate, she said.

Lastly, Pryor makes sure to plug her gift shop as a place where brides can register and purchase presents for the bridal party. Her consultation room is strategically placed in the back of the shop (a large, antebellum-style house), so brides wind up walking through rooms of giftware when they meet with her. Boutique items, particularly Nora Fleming serving pieces, catch their eyes. "We end a lot of consultations by scheduling a follow-up appointment for the bride to work on her registry," she said. 🌿

Katie Hendrick is the senior contributing editor of *Floral Management*.
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\$2,500
average spent on
wedding flowers
and decor
SOURCE: THE KNOT





THE ART *Of Luxe*

Wedding planners and tastemakers say elegance is back

BY KIM WADSWORTH

➤ Gathering the greatest gurus of the wedding industry together is no easy feat. Leave it to the Holy City of Charleston to offer a litany of signature presentations by the maestros and mistresses of the bridal world. Such was the experience at the 2018 Charleston Wedding Week, a gathering in January that drew thousands. At the event, a wide range of the industry's most notable influencers — from Colin Cowie and Marcy Blum to Tara Guérard and David Beahm — weighed in on the future of this lucrative business, where florals and decor continue to be featured prominently.

The pervasive source of inspiration for upcoming nuptials? A return to elegance, influenced not just by Pinterest and Instagram, but by visual opportunities present in home decor, bridal fashion and the arts.

While wedding experts were quick to reference current trends as an important part of connecting with what is relevant to brides in the present culture, they also urged vendors, including florists, to expand on everything from metallic moments and Pantone-inspired colors to textural elements and defining eras.



DAVID SCHWARTZ

A stronger economic environment has ignited a shift in the wedding industry, and pros in the know remarked that for the first time, there is a discernable return to luxe and a more formal approach to weddings. With that comes the challenge of showing couples something new that goes beyond the barns, beaches and vineyards they've already experienced through their friends' nuptials.

Deliver the Wow

According to Marcy Blum of Marcy Blum Associates — and a wedding planner for many celebrities — everything in weddings is about experiences: "The new definition means brides want the 'wow' without anyone knowing what they spent." Making it posh and polished means understanding what resonates with your couple and what they can afford. Personalization is a big trend, and it goes beyond the literal monogram. Guiding a couple to discover their taste in decor and style for their event and helping them find uniqueness, not only in the florals they choose but in the ambient details, is key to creating that story.

Elegance Elevated

Today's weddings are all about the "feel" of a couple's celebration. Bespoke luxury event planner Colin Cowie believes that couples are far smarter and savvier today. "Luxury is how you make them feel, and it should come in doses," said Cowie. "Elegance elevates the level of the experience." Wedding themes often embrace oxymorons, such as "Rustic Romantic" or "Retro Metallic," as couples try to communicate their vision. According to Tara Guérard of Tara Guérard Soirée, "Brides are taking the time to really think about what matters most to them on their big day." As a vendor, paying attention ensures that nothing gets lost in translation.

Textural Mashups

As part of the luxe trend, mixing textures is strong. According to Heather Hanson of La Tavola Linen, brides have a crush on velvet in rich jewel tones as well as marbled linens with veins of silver or gold. With large farm tables still strong, everything from oversized runners to full-size overlays continues to be part of tablescapes. Lisa Thomas of Ooh! Events believes in setting the stage without being obvious when introducing couples to a color pal-

ette or choosing signature flowers that will grace the tables. Thomas states, "I refer to floral design as an art form, much like a painter or sculptor. It takes a relationship to execute their aesthetic."

Color Meets Form

There's a return to boldness and vibrancy with a "no holds barred" approach when it comes to sultry color combinations, according to weddingwire.com. Watch for a surge of yellow and orange flowers in arrangements and whimsical bouquets. "Apricot orange" could be the new "blush pink," while "butter yellow" gives the right dose of "happy" to blooms. But don't think blush tones are getting the boot. Pastel colors in soft lavender may eventually take over Millennial Pink, that powdery shade younger consumers have recently coveted. The moody hue of Pantone's Ultra Violet will set deep tones of burgundy and plum in motion as fall and winter weddings explore creative design options. The shape of weddings is coming full circle, according to weddingwire.com. The round shape will define the future of 2018 wedding decor, with wreaths being a popular trend not just as door accents but as a floral circle replacing bouquets. Consider suspended hoops, giant circular backdrops, and any circle motif accented with greenery and flowers as the current symbol of unity for couples.

Creative Collaborations

Floral designers can act as storytellers by using blooms in compositions that inspire even invitation designers to set the mood and tone of the day. From the Save the Date card forward, design and branding expert Ceci Johnson of Ceci New York believes in collaboration with a bride's team of talents to create a beautiful wedding. "When you collaborate," Johnson explained, "the magic happens. Ideas blossom and together innovation and a creative, visual connection occurs that you can never achieve on your own. Let each respective talent do what they do best, and suddenly the creative possibilities take the event to a whole new level."

Romance the Gown

Everything's coming up florals, especially in the world of bridal couture. The "haute-st" looks take their inspiration from blooms, and designers are taking that cue and creating hand-painted silk confections,



CORBIN GURKIN

OUTSIDE IN Event planner Tara Guérard recommends bringing the outdoors in, as with this garden trellis, which became the backdrop for photos and selfies at a recent wedding.

*\$245: average
spent per guest
— up from
\$194 in 2009*

-The Knot

strong floral prints, three-dimensional flower applique fabrics and original floral lace designs for jaw-dropping beauty down the aisle. According to bridal gown designer Berta Balilti, “It all comes down to the materials used and the inspiration behind it — the starting point to every piece of work. This is where the magic happens.”

Everything is Possible

According to Guérard, flowers should be incorporated into every part of a wedding event. “Offer flowers for bridesmaid luncheons, rehearsal dinners and even in

guest rooms,” she advised. Guérard suggests making creative florals beyond tables in a reception space as well. Bringing the outdoors in, she created a garden trellis on the entire back tent wall that became the backdrop for photos and selfie moments throughout the evening. Thomas sees floral decor moving toward one big “wow” factor. “Whether it’s a big focal surprise over the dance floor, a show-stopping ceremony installation, a drop-dead head table or the back wall behind the band,” she said, “inspire your couple to see the possibilities that create their signature event.”

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GET MORE INSPIRATION

Find additional photos, including gorgeous tablescapes, to inspire your team at safnow.org/moreonline.



MIKE COLON

GARDEN GOWN Florals are showing up more in bridal couture, with fashion taking cues from flowers.

EDITORS' NOTE *Paul Goodman, CPA, PFCI, and Derrick Myers, CPA, CFP, love a good financial management challenge, however big or small. Send your questions to fmeditor@safnow.org, and we'll challenge the experts to tackle them in an upcoming article.*



MARCH TOWARD *PROFITABILITY*

Beautiful weddings should also be profitable affairs

BY PAUL GOODMAN, CPA, PFCI



> When it comes to weddings, beauty is usually not a problem for the floral industry. Retail florists excel at beauty. Profitability is another story. Although many florists make good money on wedding work, others avoid it for fear of losing money.

Why? To begin, weddings are complicated. There are lots of moving parts. To be profitable, you must understand each part and price it accordingly. In addition to having various types of floral work, labor is a large component of weddings. If you don't price properly, weddings will be a drain on your bottom line. Let's look at each area separately.

Organize by Arrangements

There are three basic types of arrangements that require three different pricing formulas. The difference is all about labor.

The first is the **standard arrangement**. This is your normal, everyday arrangement. The most common pricing formula for the standard arrangement is the following: **20 percent of the retail price for labor, 2x markup on the container and supplies, and a 3.5x markup on the flowers and foliage.**

A lot of wedding work falls under this category. Large altar pieces and table centerpieces for the reception are the best examples. You can even use production techniques for centerpieces to bring your labor costs down.

The second type is an arrangement that is **hand-wired and taped**. The labor charge for this kind of work should be **50 percent of the retail price.**

The third type of arrangement is the **handheld bouquet**. Some florists use a premade bouquet holder and charge a **35 percent labor charge**. Others feel brides' bouquets, no matter the holder, should all have a **50 percent labor charge**.

Get a Handle on Labor

Aside from the need for pricing the different arrangements separately, the central problem with wedding work is that it is so labor intensive. More steps, more time, more costs.

Initially, there is the time it takes to **consult with the bride**, the planning. Next is the actual **design work**, much of it considerably more time consuming than standard arrangements. **Delivery** and **setup** can require several employees. And don't forget the time required to **pick up** the flowers and **dismantle** the equipment after it's all over. Often, employees will have to stay at the church during the ceremony and move flowers from the church to the reception.

Understanding the additional labor costs and problems these jobs bring is the first step. Charging enough for your time is the difference between making a profit and losing money.

Think Through Your Pricing

The next step is to make sure you charge enough for the extra labor for

delivery, setup, teardown and moving any arrangements from the church to the reception or being present during the taking of pictures to make sure the flowers are "perfect." For all these tasks you will need to charge an hourly rate that not only covers your actual labor costs but actually contributes to overhead and profit.

It is standard practice to set your labor charge at **double your actual cost**. For example, suppose you pay your designer \$18 per hour. Add 15 percent to that for taxes and benefits (or more if you have significant benefits such as health insurance). That brings the hourly cost up to \$20.70. Now, double that cost to \$41.40, and that is a reasonable hourly charge for labor.

Florists in larger cities that are paying \$20 to \$25 per hour for designers will have to charge \$46 to \$55.20. If you are using individuals with varying hourly rates, you could charge different rates or settle on one overall average rate. If you have to pay overtime to handle the wedding, your hourly rate must go up accordingly.

Most brides are not going to want to pay you by the hour after the fact. They will want a firm price up front for all the labor charges. So you need to estimate the amount of time that will be involved in the various tasks, multiply that by your hourly rate and add a few hours to cover any unexpected time. From there, you will have your labor charge.

Don't forget delivery. To make sure you are not losing money on delivery, **add all the miles that you will drive, and charge \$1.10 per mile, which is about double your actual cost**. Then remember to charge for the driver's time as well at double your cost, just like you should do with designers.

If a wedding is fairly close to the shop, some florists charge a flat 10 percent on top of the wedding to cover delivery and setup. Before you settle on this "easy" method, do a workup where you add mileage and time separately and see how it compares. Then there are the wedding venues that are not close by. You certainly need to charge for the added mileage and time.

Create the Bill

Customers usually want to know how much they are paying for your differ-

ent products and services. Outlining the various costs and what is involved helps them understand why the charges are what they are. However, some florists want to simply charge a higher price per arranged piece to cover all the labor. This may work financially, but you run the risk of making your arrangements appear to be very expensive. Don't forget to **consider the flower prices** for the date of the wedding when pricing the various arrangements.

Remember, don't start work until you get a **deposit**. Some florists use a percentage of the total anticipated bill — usually 10 to 25 percent. Others charge a fixed fee, say \$200 to \$500. Set up a payment program that will have the entire wedding paid for **at least one week** before the wedding takes place. No exceptions. You're on the line for all the money you will put out. Given the size of these orders, you can't afford to expose yourself to such a large debt. Too great a risk.

Where You Can Lose

Remember to control your Cost of Goods Sold. Make sure you have **counted every flower** that is going into each arrangement to make sure you are charging for each one. A wedding is no time to go wild and add flowers just to make things look prettier. Many florists find the best way to control flower and foliage cost is to buy separately for large weddings or events. Set that material aside exclusively for doing the wedding or event. 🌿

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WHAT ABOUT EVENTS?

Florists who specialize in weddings consider parties and events in the same category. They have similar characteristics and require the same kind of handling. Consequently, much of the advice shared this month about weddings also holds true for large party/event work. **-P.G.**

SAF RESPONDS TO 28 CASES OF HARMFUL FLORAL PUBLICITY

> This Valentine's Day season, the Society of American Florists responded to 28 instances of harmful floral publicity. By way of comparison, in 2017, SAF responded to 23 cases of negative floral publicity at Valentine's Day. In 2016, SAF responded to 23 cases; 16 cases in 2015; 16 in 2014; 10 cases in 2013; 18 in 2012; and 39 in 2011.

As the voice of the floral industry, SAF contacts companies that disparage flowers and asks them to reconsider their approach.

"The main point of SAF's response is to bring attention to the disparaging floral statements and ask advertisers to promote products on their own merits," said SAF's Jenny Scala, director of marketing and communications. "Success comes when the advertiser ceases running that particular promotion or at least takes note not to go that route in the future."

Among the companies SAF contacted this year: **Best Buy, Dairy Queen, Danbury Mint, Etsy, the International Animal Rescue, Léon & George, SeatGeek, Simply Tan Sunless Tanning, Sony Electronics, Springer's Jewelers, Star Registration, 2 Buckets Cleaning, Unilad, WomenWorking and Verilux.**

Some SAF appeals generated fast responses.

Wixon Jewelers advertised in the StarTribune "Skip the flowers and candy this Valentine's Day" and posted on Facebook "Roses die and chocolates melt."

After SAF reached out, the company's Director of Marketing Jayme Pretzloff replied two hours later: "I completely understand your position and I agree with the sentiments in your message. Although the ad copy wasn't meant to trivialize other industries or portray negativity, you're right in that it did have a negative undertone. I apologize for the inherent negative nature of the ad because we always aim for our marketing to be light and amusing. Our intention was for the messaging to be tongue-in-cheek and cute, rather than insulting florists and chocolatiers."

The thorough response resonated with SAF members.

"I cannot tell you how impressed I am with your work on behalf of all florists," wrote Jake Ziebarth to SAF. Ziebarth is a sales representative at Len Busch Roses who reported the Wixon Jewelers ad. "You are out there going to bat for the florist when they do not have the time or resources to do so!"

SAF Members Engage

Fast action by a member florist also got a major mobile communications brand to change its Valentine's Day promotion. Nic Faitos, senior partner at Starbright Floral Design in New York City, did not like what he saw on T-Mobile.com: "Flowers die."

He contacted his **T-Mobile** rep immediately: "I am cancelling my T-Mobile account! Flowers die?" Hours later, Faitos reported to SAF that his T-Mobile rep had promised the ad would be removed.

"Here is proof that feedback from a loyal customer can truly make a company take notice," said Scala.

Positive Press

Meanwhile, some companies plugged flower-friendly messages this year.

LOFT posted a photo on Instagram with a caption that read: "1. Buy yourself flowers. 2. Put on your cutest outfit. 3. Take yourself on a date tonight." The photo has received more than 6,000 likes at press time. SAF sent a thank-you note: "On behalf of the entire floral industry, thank you for reminding your followers about the joy of treating yourself to flowers."

Ann Taylor also sponsored a Facebook ad on Feb. 9 telling consumers, "Every Woman Deserves Flowers." In addition, the company shared a photo of flowers with Facebook followers. The message "Because a fresh bouquet is always a good idea."

These floral-friendly promotions are an about face from May 2017, when SAF contacted LOFT about in-store signs that read: "Why buy flowers when you can wear them instead?"

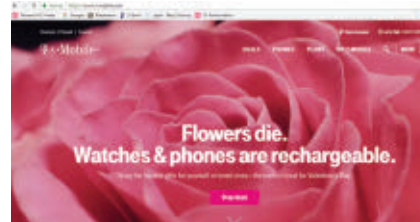
Oui by Yoplait also shared flower love this Valentine's Day season, with lids that read, "Buy yourself flowers." The message

is part of the yogurt brand's campaign to help busy consumers find their "me" moments. SAF sent a thank-you email to General Mills, which owns Yoplait.

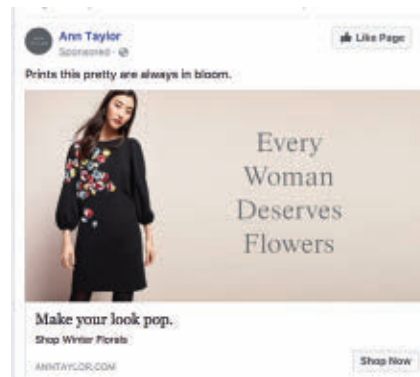
For more information, contact Jenny Scala at jscala@safnow.org



BE POLITE This Valentine's Day season, SAF responded to 28 instances of harmful floral publicity. Here are a few of them.



BAD CALL T-Mobile removed this promotion from its website after hearing from Nic Faitos of Starbright Floral Design.



GOOD LOOKS This Ann Taylor sponsored Facebook ad tells consumers, "Every Woman Deserves Flowers."

48 PERCENT OF FLORAL INDUSTRY MEMBERS ‘OPTIMISTIC’ ABOUT 2018 SALES

> Many floral industry members headed into the new year with high expectations.

Forty-eight percent of respondents to the Society of American Florists’ recent Economic Outlook Survey said they are “optimistic” about sales expectations in 2018 — another **16 percent** said they are “very optimistic.” About **30 percent** classified their feelings as “neutral/uncertain.” **Five percent** said they are “pessimistic”; almost **2 percent** said they are “very pessimistic.”

Overall, **49 percent** of respondents said business right now is “good,” and **nine percent** said it’s “excellent.” **Thirty-eight percent** said it’s “okay.” Meanwhile, 3 percent called business “poor” and, for **1 percent**, it’s “terrible.”

Even among those who expressed optimism for 2018, discipline and vigilance became constant themes — few industry members appear to be taking any sales or profit margins for granted.

“We are focusing on better measurements of margins and productivity, as we can no longer expect sustainability unless major changes are made,” explained one retailer in Illinois.

“I have tried to control cost of goods and really trim the number of items on my web site, yet still offering a nice variety,” said another retailer, in Kansas. “[We’re] also controlling payroll.”

Sales Trends: Up for Many

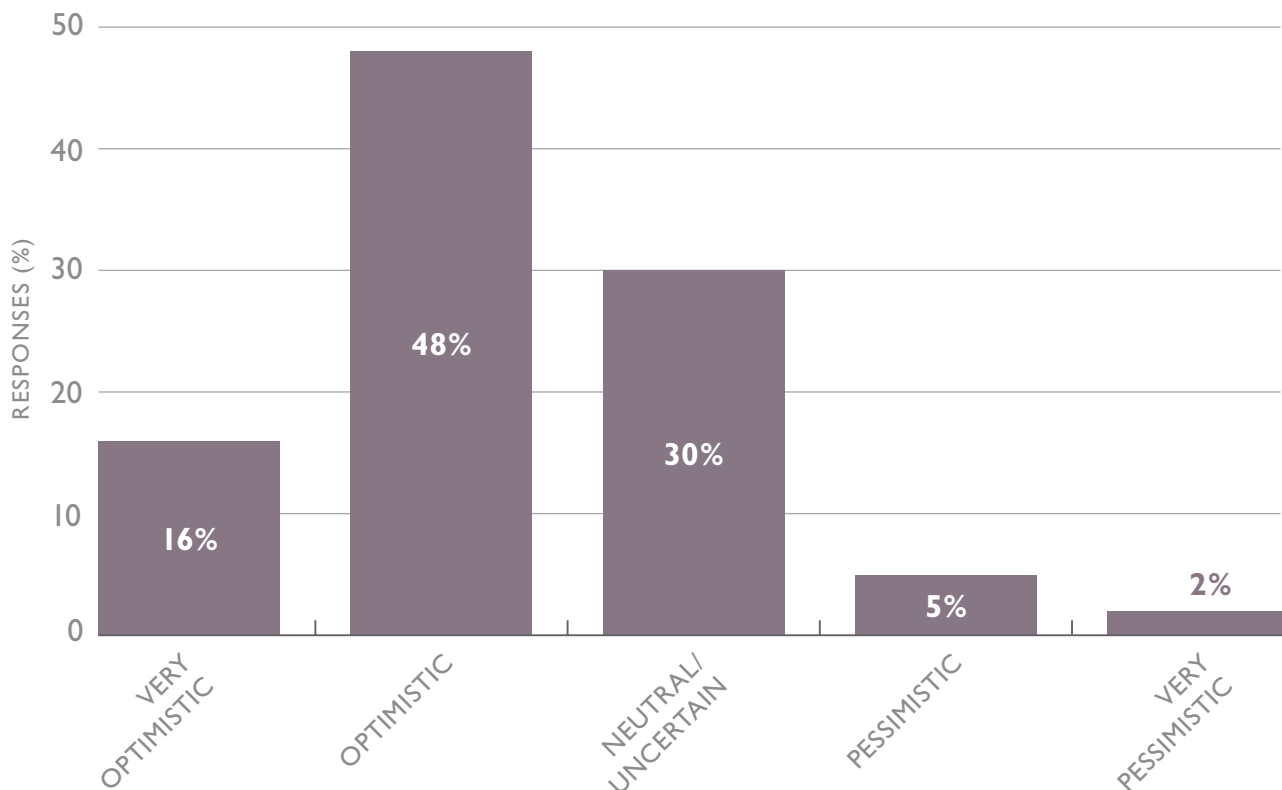
Fifty-one percent of all respondents said gross sales for 2017 increased over 2016. About **24 percent** said those sales were the same and another **24 percent** said they dropped.

Among those who saw gross sales drop, around **72 percent** said the decrease was fairly small, between 1 and 10 percent. About **23 percent** charted a steeper drop-off (11 to 20 percent). The remaining respondents said sales dropped by 21 percent or more.

Among those who saw gross sales increase, about **three-quarters** said the uptick was between 1 and 10 percent. About **19 percent** experienced an increase of 11 to 20 percent, **5 percent** saw an increase of 21 to 30 percent, **2 percent** saw gains of 31 to 50 percent and **almost 1 percent** saw increases of 51 percent or more.

Retailers said their average transaction is **slightly more than \$66**. 🌿

Sales Expectations 2018



SOURCE: SAF ECONOMIC OUTLOOK, EMAILED JANUARY 21, 2018, TO SAF MEMBERS. 11% RESPONSE RATE.

GO DEEPER

KEEP ON READING

Check out more info on SAF’s recent economic survey and read detailed responses to negative floral references at safnow.org/moreonline.



GREAT BIG WORLD The steep terrain at Kendall Farms serves up both challenge and opportunity.

MAKING THE MOST OF MOTHER NATURE

> Keeping the family farm going — and growing — strong is no small feat in any age, let alone in today's rigorous business environment. Kendall Farms is a second-generation flower farm trying to make the most of every new challenge. The wholesale and retail farm started in 1987 with 50 acres and a father's dream, when David Kendall moved his family from the Los Angeles suburbs to the high desert of San Diego County. Thirty years later, his son Jason runs the family farm, which has grown to 10 times its original size.

Jason jumped from general manager to CEO when his dad passed away in 2004. His cousin Troy Conner handles the day-to-day operations while Jason tackles the visionary role. "My dad and I were really close," he says. "He was my hero. His vision was huge, and he established a huge base that's enabling us to take the farm to new heights."

Indeed, this farm team has conquered all kinds of challenges, including 2007 wildfires that wiped out 75 percent of the farm. After the fires, Jason and the team rebuilt, modernizing and streamlining production and processes.

Resources Put to Work

Kendall Farms specializes in making the most of the resources at hand. "Sustainability is just code for long-term profitability," Jason says. For instance, the high desert location delivers plenty of sunshine, which the farm harvests with 2,300 solar panels. "Those panels provide most of our electric usage," Jason says.

That same desert climate (annual rainfall of 10 to 16 inches) also makes

water a valuable resource. "It's precious, like oil in its value," Jason says. Farm infrastructure includes a drainage system that captures all cooler water, sending it to an on-site reservoir for recycling and reuse. "We probably have 5,000 gallons of water sitting in buckets in the cooler at any given time," Jason says. "When we dump those buckets, we capture every drop of water. It's financially worth it to recycle that."

Look Up

The pitch on the steepest hillsides is akin to a black diamond ski run. It's tricky to navigate, let alone plant, but it's also a key to Kendall Farms' success. The terrain at the farm serves up both challenge and opportunity. Flat growing areas host fast-cropping annuals like sunflowers and dianthus, which are planted three times each year. The 60-day turn on those plants makes it fiscally impossible to justify tucking them into sloping areas, which are devoted to drought-tolerant perennials that crave sharp drainage, including wax flower, protea, eucalyptus and pincushion flower. "The perennials get planted once, are harvested once a year and yield for years on end," Jason says. "The average wax flower plant produces for 10 to 15 years. That yield makes it incredibly profitable to grow plants on those steep slopes."

The hillsides also create microclimates, which Kendall Farms manages to yield the most stems per acre. "It took us years to figure this out, but now we plant wax flower at the higher altitude, outside the frost zone," Jason explains. Frost-tolerant eucalyptus fills in lower areas of slopes, where cold air gathers.

"Sustainability is just code for long-term profitability."
Jason Kendall

Harvesters work the steep slopes with the sure-footed ease of mountain goats. "Our harvesters are the best," Jason says. "They get bonuses based on speed, and we post the scores every two weeks or so. It's very competitive. Like any sport, you always have top players who score the most points. Those are the pros we count on to train new harvesters."

The sloping farmland delivers more return on investment. Each acre of pitched growing space provides more land per acre — more surface area — for growing. "With our local land prices, that's a huge advantage. It's basically getting more land for the money," Jason says. "You can't beat that." 🌿

Julie Martens Forney is a contributing writer. fmeditor@safnow.org



QUICK TAKE

Company: Kendall Farms, Fallbrook, California

Size: 500 acres

Crops: World's largest producer of wax flower. Other crops include protea, pincushion flower and eucalyptus.

What's unique: Kendall Farms is adept at managing its natural resources, including steep hillsides, for flower growing.



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FOLLOW WEDDING LEADS WITH RETARGETING

> Looking for a way to draw in more engaged couples to your store?

Here are a few stats to consider, from the 2016 American Wedding Study, a survey of engaged and newlywed women: Social media is the No. 1 way engaged women are connecting with wedding brands and products during planning, with 82 percent doing so in 2016, compared to 75 percent in 2014. (2016 is the most recent year the study published — but you can bet that number is going up, not down.) Meanwhile 70 percent of the surveyed women used social media to find wedding inspiration and their wedding style.

Translation: Brides (and, increasingly, grooms) are spending a lot of time online planning their wedding. That time almost certainly includes visits to vendor websites, including florists.

Those visits represent lucrative leads, but the question is: How do you capitalize on the visits? Engaged couples who check out your online portfolio are interested in pictures and testimonials — they're not clicking and buying and only a few are filling out online forms for follow-up. That's where retargeting comes in.

Retargeting Defined

Retargeting — also called remarketing — is a simple technology that allows

you to “follow” your web visitors after they leave your site, all over the web. If you've ever checked out a pair of shoes on a website, and then seen those same shoes appear over and over again as you browsed the web, you know exactly what the tech does. It works because it helps you stay top-of-mind with couples who have visited your site.

Here's how retargeting works, as explained by the pros at the website **retargeter.com**, “you place a small, unobtrusive piece of code on your website. The code is unnoticeable to your site visitors and won't affect your site's performance. Every time a new visitor comes to your site, the code drops an anonymous browser cookie. Later, when your 'cooked' visitors browse the Web, the cookie will let your retargeting provider know when to serve ads, ensuring that your ads are served to only to people who have previously visited your site.”

Because you only pay when someone clicks the ad, it's best to think of retargets like an online billboard. In that sense, they're one of the best values for your wedding marketing dollars: As couples surf the web, you surf alongside them, appearing on pages of all kinds, even national sites that have ad space to fill, but you only pay for the outreach when the customer clicks.

Points to Consider

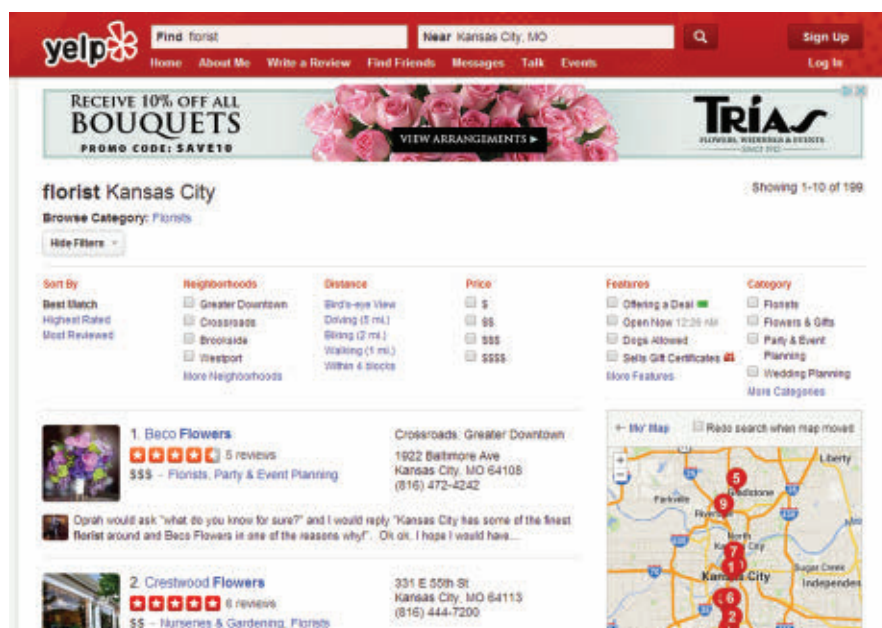
Ready to get started? Good. Here are a few things to be aware of.

- You set up and manage retargeting campaigns through Google AdWords. The first time you set up a campaign, you'll also complete a two-step process to create your tag and lists.
- Google has many rules about retargeting, including the number of images you can create and the duration of campaigns. You can familiarize yourself with the rules at **support.google.com/adwords** (type “retargeting” in the search box). You can also hire a third-party with expertise in digital marketing to help navigate the rules.
- Once you get started, Google will create your retargeting code. You can customize your code to behave in many different ways — take time to explore and experiment.
- Once you launch your campaign, you must wait for 100 people to visit your site before the retargeting effort goes live. (Google needs that number to help establish patterns.)

You can also direct your retargeting to go after people searching with traditional keywords, but I don't like this strategy: People performing direct searches to buy a product will most likely react to a Google AdWords result or an organic result. The image ads used in retargeting have never traditionally worked in converting searches.

Retargeted ads work best on people who already are familiar with your brand. You want to stay high on their radar as they plan their wedding. As they continue searching online for inspiration and vendors, they keep being reminded of your floral brand. They don't know they have been targeted — you just happen to be everywhere they go. It's like you have so much in common. 🌸

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FLORAL COUTURE

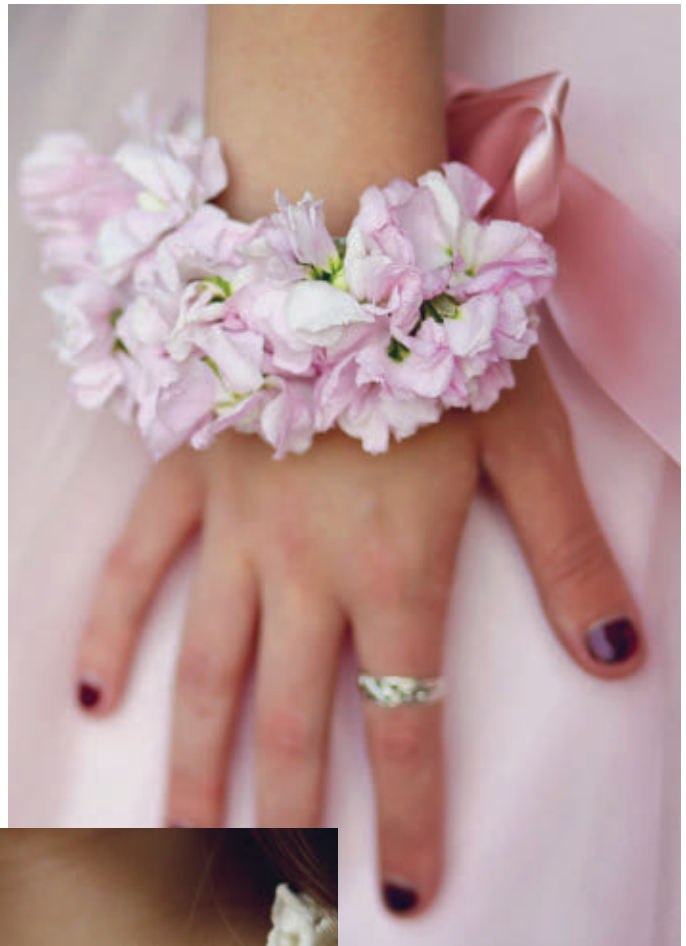
> There's no denying the popularity of floral jewelry. Flower crowns, rings and necklaces have enjoyed starring roles in proms, music festivals and celebrities' Instagram posts (Beyoncé and Reese Witherspoon are big fans). Naturally, the trend has trickled into matrimonial affairs.

"We get a lot of brides who forgo a veil in favor of wearing flowers in their hair," said Lenzee Bilke, OACF, of Madeline's Flowers in Edmond, Oklahoma. These same women also tend to pick designs that are "fun and different" for their bridal party and swoon when they see photos of flower bracelets or earrings in the shop's portfolio. These ornate accessories make upselling a cinch, Bilke said. Here are two of the shop's most popular designs. 🌸

For complete recipes, visit safnow.org/moreonline.

Katie Hendrick is the senior contributing editor of *Floral Management*. khendrick@safnow.org

HEAVENLY HYACINTH Because scent can trigger powerful memories, a lot of brides gravitate to fragrant flowers for their big day, Bilke said. This elegant necklace of hyacinth, accented with a sparkly brooch, "is a little laborious, but very simple to create," she said. "It's basically just stringing blossoms — in other words, something you can delegate to less experienced designers." Design time: 30 to 40 minutes. Wholesale cost: \$28. Suggested retail price: \$80 (\$50, if using the client's own jewelry).



MANDY STANSBERRY



COMELY CUFF This lightweight bracelet is especially suited for flower girls and mothers of the bride and groom, Bilke said. "It's a customer favorite, and one of mine as well," she said. Why? "It's fast and easy, plus stock comes in such a wide range of colors that it works for almost any wedding palette," she said. Design time: 10 to 15 minutes. Wholesale cost: \$10. Suggested retail price: \$45.



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, info@deliflor.com, www.facebook.com/deliflor



MATRIMONIAL MUST-HAVES



ROYAL TOPPER

Every bride wants to feel like Meghan Markle or Kate Middleton on her wedding day — and a floral tiara is just the trick. Design by Conception's line of headbands and crowns features handmade or painted silk flowers, hand-sewn embellishments and other intricate details that will complement, not overtake, her bouquet. > DbyConception.com



PERSONAL TREASURES

Nothing says "thinking of you" quite like seeing your monogram or name printed on a gift. The Vintage Pearl offers an expansive collection of handmade necklaces, bracelets and rings that brides can personalize with their loved one's moniker, connecting with them heart and soul. > TVPwholesale.com



BLING RINGS

Look no further! Here is the perfect party favor for bridal showers and bachelorette parties. These interlocking rings are sculpted from dark chocolate and finished with a thin sugar shell brushed with silver coloring. Packaged in a small acrylic cube, this gift includes two sets of platinum rings set atop a bed of white rock candy. > Sugarfina.com



CHIC STYLUS

These glamorous pens make every facet of the wedding planning process — jotting notes during vendor meetings, mapping out seating charts and crossing things off the to-do list — a whole lot more fun. Available in a range of colors, this pen comes topped with glass shaped like a diamond and makes the ultimate gift for a fashionista. > AccessoryDrawer.com



WRAP ARTISTS

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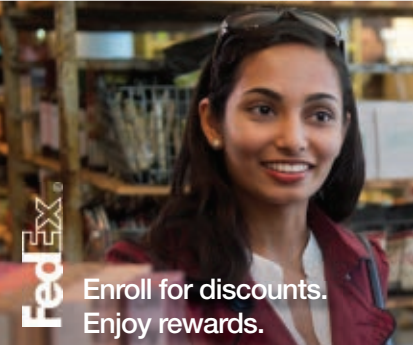
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Flower School: This month we're kicking off a 5-part series on extending flower life and maintaining flower quality.

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE

➤ Like people, flowers are mostly water, with 60 to 70 percent of each cell comprised of water. Water allows flowers to maintain normal metabolism, so they can use stored sugars for flower opening and for energy to move water up the stem. Water absorbed by cut flowers expands the cells in the petals, just as air inflates a balloon. Flower petals will open only partially if they do not have adequate water. The importance of water to flowers is often taken for granted. Just submerging stems in buckets is not sufficient.

If cut flowers lose 10 to 15 percent of their internal water supply, premature death becomes a likely possibility. Flowers lose water during shipping and storage and — when shipped long distances — can lose roughly half this amount (4 to 6 percent). Dry storage for extended periods may cause them to lose even more, **so proper re-hydration, with clean water and the right additives, is critical.** Commercial hydration and flower food solutions have a proven track record when it comes to improving flower quality and longevity. And don't forget storing flowers in coolers with high humidity (80 percent) and using clean tools will also help assure that water moves up the stem and into the leaves and flowers.

The Science Behind Hydration

How does water move from the base of the stem to the leaves and flowers?

Water is pulled up the stem by pressure differences between the leaves and the base of the stem. As the stomata (pores) on the leaves and petals open, water is pulled up the stem in the xylem. Think of the xylem as a series of straws that go from the base of the stem into the leaves and petals. As the water runs up the stem, it moves into the cells of leaves and petals. And when you use flower foods, the cells also get a boost from sugar for extra energy and optimum flower longevity.

Bacterial Blockage

Any blockage of the stem (xylem) restricts water uptake and lowers the amount of water that can reach the flower petals. Most commonly, the xylem is blocked by bacteria — microbes that can build up in holding or vase solutions. Microbes can collect on dirty buckets, knives and clippers or they might already be present on flower stems and leaves themselves. Commercial hydration solutions or flower foods lower the solution pH, which restricts the growth of these microbes. They also contain wetting agents to accelerate water absorption. That is why they are so effective.

To Cut Or Not To Cut?

When flower stems are cut under water (a common practice in many floral operations), stem parts, dirt or other minute materials in the water may

also block the stem. To address this problem, researchers have developed new hydration and flower food solution technologies that increase water absorption without the need to cut stems. Wholesale and retail florists have found these new products to be effective.

If you don't use these new products, we recommend cutting 1 to 1.5 inches from the base of the stem with a sharp knife or clippers to remove dried out tissue at the base of the stem. Do not, however, recut stems underwater, since microbes and stem cells in the tank will also get sucked into the stems, thus restricting water uptake.

And please do not even consider the old practice of smashing woody stems with a hammer to expose more water-absorbing tissue! This damages the xylem in the stems and releases many fine plant pieces in the water that cause blockage and reduce water uptake.

Natural science writer Loren Eiseley once said, "if there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water." Take his words to heart. Share the magic with your flowers, and they will thank you. 🌸

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


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