

Volume II 2013

the professional florist

**Event
Planning
Primer –
Are You
Ready?**

**Prom
Planning**

**15 Ways to
Cut Costs
on Special
Events and
Promotions**

**Memorable
Remembrances**



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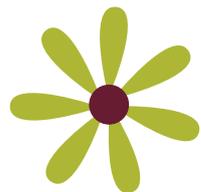


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LEADERSHIPREPORT

Every Order is a Special Event for Someone

BY ALICE WATEROUS, AIFD, CF, PFCI, IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT



As we look at the ever growing “Special Event” segment of the floral industry, it presents tremendous opportunities and challenges.

With a burgeoning number of people who are exclusively special event specialists, how does that affect the floral industry as a whole? Are traditional full service flower shops feeling the pinch? How do you evolve?

Here is my “Jeopardy” version: Everything is in the form of a question, since there are many things to consider.

What profit margins are to be made; is it **worth** it? Do you **want** to be in the game, if so, do you have a basic pricing schedule and contract form? How do you get on the “A” list with wedding planners; do you know who they are? Should every flower shop employ a wedding/special event person, maybe part time? Do you have a **strategy** to handle “walk in” wedding consultations or is it **only** by appointment?

Have you assembled good pictures of your **own** work, in addition to those great commercially available books? When

showing brides or party planners books/pictures do you have prices figured out or do you just guess? **When and how** should you be marketing wedding/party work: social media, bridal shows, **referrals** from other vendors?

.....

Are you and this **client** a good match? (Aka: When should I “fire” Bridezilla?) Do you want to simply be the floral vendor, or the **total** event source? What about social media; how much do you need to track it? How do you respond to the **DIY** thing? Do you have a marketing plan that turns **DIY** into **DIFM** (Do It For Me)? Do you have the staff to get the job done, or should you employ freelance help?

.....

What is a “**special event**” anyway? Whether it’s a big event that takes **months** to plan, or a same day order, isn’t every order a special event to that customer and recipient? With a lot of attention and **energy** devoted to weddings, parties of all kinds and even funeral and memorial services, are you clear what you want to **focus** on?

These are some of the questions. This issue will explore the many faces of today’s event trends and explore ways to serve your clients in a way that will make them raving fans.

MFA Holds Elections - Patterson Is New President

Bob Patterson, Patterson’s Flowers, Big Rapids, Reed City, and Cadillac, has been elected President of the Michigan Floral Association by the MFA Board of Directors. Tim Timinski from FloraCraft, Ludington, was chosen to serve as vice president and Jim Schmidt, Hyacinth House Greenery, Lansing, was appointed Treasurer.

President Patterson was also reelected by the active membership to serve another three year term as a Director at Large. Alice Waterous, AIFD, CF, PFCI from Waterous Floral Consultants, Grand Haven, was elected to serve another three year term as Director of Region 4 by the active membership.



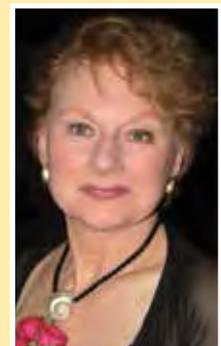
Bob Patterson



Tim Timinski



Jim Schmidt



Alice Waterous

Side Note:

This is my “swan song” message as MFA President. It’s been a great four years of proud service in this leadership position for our terrific organization. Not going away entirely, thanks to being re-elected as Region 4 Director, representing the west side of the state. Please know I remain intensely involved and interested in MFA and its members. My number is in the back of this magazine (card ads). If you have comments, questions, things to share let me know.

Welcome to the new MFA President, Robert Patterson of Patterson’s Flowers, Big Rapids, Reed City and Cadillac. Bob is a personal friend and industry associate whom many of you recognize as one of the friendly, helpful folks at the registration desk for the MFA “Great Lakes Floral Expo” spring conference. Having served previously as a MFA President, and a longtime member of the Workman’s Comp Board, he brings a wealth of knowledge and dedication to our common goal of spreading the wonder and joy of flowers. ✨

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FEATURESTORY

Event Planning Primer – Are You Ready?

BY KEVIN YLVISAKER, AIFD, PFCI, FLORAL TREND CONSULTANT



So you want to get into the wedding and event planning business. That's great, but are you ready to take on this huge challenge? As far as planners go, you can just do the flowers or take on lighting, tents and all the décor. You can even add catering.

Determine what part you want to play and then begin the quest to get things in order. I'll try to take the approach that you want to do it all but at anytime you can just step back to scale it down.

Becoming more than just the florist will require subcontracting, renting additional products and services and knowing all the ins and outs of how to go about this. If you decide to just do the flowers, that's great. Do it well with quality flowers and amazing service. Events are being scaled down with possibly fewer guests, but interestingly enough the price per guest is up so we have higher quality events with less people. There may be more flower profits even though events are smaller than usual.

Here are some tips for expanding your event planning business:

Determine the size of the event that you realistically can handle. This is important because you want to be able to provide excellent service and quality to your client. Be very realistic about this and don't get into the "super florist" mode of "I can do it all".

Start by thinking about how many employees in the shop are able to do event planning, coordinating, designs, set up and tear down. Remember there has to be staff on hand while others are gone for the day. Realize that you need more people especially if you want to take on more than just the flowers, or more than one event at a time. You need a work force.

Get a qualified list of freelance designers who can do the event designs and see if they are available. Remember freelance designers book quickly so it's important to contact them as soon as you





These designs were for the Newport Flower & Garden Show. They are examples of some designs that could be done for any event. The product is from Amy's Orchids, Euphorbia Flowers, Smithers Oasis and Accent Decor.

have the event. Then get a list of people who can prep containers, set up chairs, deliver, etc., and add them to the list. Before you agree to a large event call your outside help to make sure they will be available. Don't sell yourself short on labor and by all means know ahead of time what everyone charges so this can be figured into the budget.

Make sure you have a binder with the site plans for all hotels, churches, synagogues, chapels, wedding and event venues. This can be digital, a photo album or a combination of the two. Meet with the banquet managers of these locations and ask for the site plan. This way you know exactly how many tables fit into a ballroom or just how long the aisle is at a given church. It is important to provide the client with the best location for the event. Know the lighting at these venues and what additional lights are needed and where. Try to visit all of these places personally and snap photos for the site binder. Just the presence of a site binder at the consultation says you are the professional and it makes your job so much easier.

I'm a firm believer in getting the budget done right away so there's not a lot of pulling and pushing on the financial side. If it's up front you know exactly how to break it down to do the best for the client. If there is not enough money obviously the options are to do the best with what they can afford or ask for more.

I had a talk with a floral friend who divides the total budget by the number of attendees and lets the client know that "this is what you are spending per guest". I think it's an interesting approach and one that might work for you. And don't forget that everyone at the event is a potential customer so word of mouth is everything.

OK, so you've met with the client, know the budget and have agreed to do the centerpieces. Now how do we go about figuring this out? Do you have a stock of vases, containers, props, etc., to do the maximum number of tables? If not, rent them. In some markets florists will rent to other florists if they stock large inventories of containers. You may have to use an outside source and then negotiating is possible. Add to the rental cost to make a profit. Find out what others are doing in your market. I hear 20 percent seems to be a good starting point for this.

If you rent an item you have in stock the average rental is 1/3 the retail value. Again, it's different for every shop so find what works for you. The client needs to see photos of the entire inventory whether your property or rental property. Have a nice professional photo album or to keep current I suggest having the photos on a digital tablet. It's much easier to nix old stuff and load up the new ones.

I know throughout this article I've used the term subcontractor but I also realize there are independent contractors and others. Let me back up a bit. Check with your local and state tax gurus to see just how paying them will affect you. What type of IRS form do you need to supply? Does the subcontractor have their own insurance should something unforeseen happen either personally or to property or are you providing that? You need to know this. If you hire them make sure everything's in a contract, no word of mouth. It's just a heads up but a very important one.

So, you've selected all the containers, columns, arbors, etc., needed for the event. The client loves your design concept. Now I'm going to assume that you know how to plan a profit on the flowers. Just remember that you are going to buy in huge quantities so do the numbers accordingly. Discuss with your wholesale florist case lot pricing to get the best deal.

If you can sell a look and color and not specific flowers more power to you. That way you get the best product that week without worrying about individual blooms. It takes a bit of time to get to this point with clients but it can be done and it sure takes the headache out of ordering flowers.

You don't have to get all your flowers at one time. I personally worked wholesale for 12 years and, for example, if you get lilies that take two weeks to open, two weeks in advance, that's best. Then get your more delicate blooms closer to the event. Know how long it will take to open the roses you need and get them in on that day. Yep, it's a lot harder that just one truckload of flowers but when you have the opportunity to get blooms to the perfect stage for the event it will be magnificent.

Another thing, are you providing "mock ups" of the designs for the client and if so are you charging them for these? Many shops charge and the client takes them. Again, do what is best for you.

Did you agree to get the DJ? Find the best DJ's in your area and see if they are booked in advance of accepting the event. Here's an interesting tip. Do you realize that the DJ, if hired independently of the planner, is asked what florist they recommend!!! Remember, many times if we are not the planner and just

FEATURESTORY

do flowers we are the last ones in the chain to get the order.

So can you name the top 5 DJ's in your area? If not you need to know who they are and start networking. Ask the client what music they want played and do they need a playlist in advance? What music do they not want played? Is there a moment where they would like certain music to be played? Do they want one kind of music during the meal but different during the dance?

All of this is now on you because you hired the DJ. I do know some planners who put the client directly in touch with the DJ because they are the professionals but remember it all falls on you because you hired them. Make sure you know who you are hiring.

Food, yep, food. For many of us the caterer is hired independently from the flowers, music etc., or it is a part of the venue, but if you want to truly be a planner then you need to deal directly with the caterer. You must know the percentage to charge up to make a profit. Once you know the type of food the client likes you can set up a tasting with the caterer and go from there. It is important to know exactly who you are dealing with just as they have to have trust in you as the event planner.

Time lines are huge and you must provide an exact time line to everyone involved from the designers to the tent people to the DJ and the caterer. Everyone should know when all jobs are to be completed, set up and delivered, served and taken down. Right down to the minute. Your job will be to oversee that all this is happening. Make sure to constantly follow up with everyone as

the event nears so there are no surprises. Of course, in our industry what would a day be without a surprise so just have a couple back up plans just in case.

While I didn't cover marketing yourself in this article make sure to take full advantage of social media once you establish yourself as an event planner. Make sure besides a website there is a Facebook page, a Twitter account to stay on top of current trends and a Pinterest account so you can post all your fantastic designs. One note about posting photos of your work and events. Make sure to watermark all your designs and set ups so you get credit for your work. With social media it's just a simple "right click" to copy the work and take credit for it so a watermark is a must.

There are classes taught all over the country on event planning as well as many conventions you can attend to see the huge scope of this industry. Do your homework before you announce that you are a wedding or event planner. Event planning can be very rewarding both in shop image and financially. Just make sure you have all the necessary tools ready and then enjoy this great experience. ✿

Kevin Ylvisaker, AIFD, PFCI, owner of KLY Floral International, is a freelance designer. He is a Teleflora Education Specialist, Oasis Design Director with Smithers Oasis and has worked with Accent Décor designing their showrooms and producing designs for their catalogs and video series.



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Prom Planning

BY CHRISTA J. KIRCHNER, CF, RIDGEWAY FLORAL AND GIFTS, INC., THREE RIVERS, MI

What better time to showcase your floral expertise than PROM! Not only are you speaking with one generation of floral consumer, but more than likely two. Who isn't looking for new customers; perfect timing to put your best foot forward?

In March you should be putting your prom plan into action. Begin by setting up a display in your store specifically for this event. Offer a smorgasbord buffet of examples and ideas.

Remembering the age of client, keep it fun and colorful. If the prom theme is a summer in Paris...set up an Eiffel Tower...decorate around it with jeweled keepsake bracelets that are so popular. Adorn the table with clusters of shiny gems, beads, wire accents, feathers – every goody you offer. Let the client browse all the choices and fill their plate.



Simple looping bear grass is finished off with fuchsia Oasis® wire in this green cymbidium boutonniere.



A decorative boutonniere with beading accented with gerbera daisy petals is done on Oasis flat wire.

Make sure your staff is well versed in the new trends in color and style since they are representing your business as a floral expert. Each member of your staff should be experienced in suggestive sales. Who wants to make the same old boring sweetheart roses and baby's breath over and over? Display photos of your best and most creative body flowers.

Now that you are confident that you have provided your customer with all the available options and staffing is covered, it's time to talk about the best part!!! Flowers! We suggest starting with the dress and color scheme your customer is working with. From here we like to give suggestions and show off those photos.

The customer has become very savvy, researching internet sites to find the perfect flower and color to compliment their choice. If some of these choices are unavailable to you, be ready to give them the best you have. If miniature carnations and roses are



Elegant white mini cymbidium orchids and white hyacinth blossoms adorn clear gem sprays in this wrist corsage decorated with ribbons of white and pink.

not their style, well how about something more whimsical and fun such as a gerbera daisy.

Once your customer has decided on the perfect flower, begin to go over the items they have chosen from the decorative buffet and discuss how they will compliment the wonderful flower choice they have made. Let your customer guide you in the right choices for them. Everything you display and create including the flower selections should be properly priced.

In closing, remind yourself and your staff that even though this is a stressful time, it can also be fun. You should always have an upbeat attitude, be knowledgeable, and offer the best you have. ✿

Christa J. Kirchner, CF, has been in the floral industry for 10 years, becoming a designer and a Certified Florist in 2008. She is employed by Ridgeway Floral and Gifts, Inc. in Three Rivers, MI.

This wrist corsage contains orange mini carnations and blue delphinium on a decorative lime green Oasis diamond wire base with fuchsia glitter ribbon. For a fun pop of color the Oasis bullion wire was formed into balls and added to the swirls.



MARKETINGFEATURE

15 Ways to Cut Costs on Special Events and Promotions

BY BOB NEGEN, WHIZBANG! TRAINING



Promotions and special events are the salt and pepper in your marketing plan. They spice things up and keep your store fun and exciting.

Promotions are a great way to keep your regular customers interested in your merchandise and give them more reasons to shop with you. Promotions can also be a great way of attracting new customers. It's just

one more way to keep your marketing message in front of your customers and prospects.

But doing promotions on a limited budget can be challenging. You'll need to plan to spend some money to get the word out about your event, to purchase any necessary supplies, materials, or prizes, and to pay for any extra payroll hours needed for the event.

However, you don't have to spend a lot of money – use imagination and hard work instead of cash! If you are prepared to put in a little old fashioned elbow grease, you can dream up some really great promotions that don't cost a fortune.

Here are fifteen tips for keeping your costs down and your sales up.

- **Ask your vendors and sales reps to donate prizes, food, help, or anything else you need.** They are usually delighted to help in some way. Don't forget to invite them to attend the event if you are planning to highlight their product. They are often expert salespeople!

- **Use co-op advertising money to help cover the cost of a mailing.** Getting the word out about your promotion can be a costly expense. If you are planning to use traditional advertising like newspaper or radio, check out how much your manufacturers will contribute to promote their products.
- **Barter with other merchants in town to get prizes, services, customer mailing lists, etc.** We love bartering. If you barter your goods for others goods or services, you've essentially received a 50 percent discount (if you sell your products at a 50 percent margin). Yippee!
- **Keep your merchandise at full price.** There are lots of great promotions that get their impact from fun and added value rather than cash savings. You don't have to sell your stuff on sale to have a great promotion.
- **Co-sponsor the event with local media – newspaper, cable TV, or radio.** They promote your event in exchange for high profile exposure to your customers. A win-win situation!
- **Send out press releases to get free publicity if your event is newsworthy.** Don't forget, the newspapers have to fill up those pages every day! They are frequently delighted if you send them a great story. Your event does need to be newsworthy, however.
- **Stuff every bag with a schedule of events for the entire season.** Hey, they're already getting the bag. Make it work for you in multiple ways.
- **Put signs about the event in your store well ahead of the event date.** This one is a no-brainer, but lots of people don't do it. At the very least, put a small sign at the cash register.

MARKETINGFEATURE

- **Take advantage of today's super easy desktop publishing to design your own signs, flyer, postcards, or event calendars instead of using a graphic designer.** Any time or money you invest in acquiring and learning a simple design program will be well worth it. For big, important marketing pieces you may need a graphic designer, but for simple pieces you can do it yourself quickly, easily, cheaply.
- **Put your information about your upcoming event on your register receipt.** Many cash registers and computer POS systems will allow you to put a short message on the receipt. You'd be amazed how many people read them!
- **Write an article about the promotion for the monthly newsletter that's already going to your mailing list.** They are already your customers and the newsletter is already going out...don't forget to plug your promotion.
- **Create a window display highlighting your special event.** An interesting visual display will not only educate your walk-by traffic about your upcoming event, it frequently generates enough curiosity to get people in the door NOW!
- **Send personal invitations to targeted VIP's.** Make absolutely sure your very best customers know about, and will attend, your event. A personal invitation is a powerful draw.
- **Ask your customers to tell a friend about the upcoming event.** Give them a no cost gift if they bring a friend to the event. An easy referral technique that could bring you tons of potential new customers! Make sure you get the names of all the "friends", even if they don't buy.
- **Mention the event on your answering machine message.** Your answering machine should be your marketing machine. It's a quick, easy, and totally free way to let people know about your upcoming events.

There are lots of ways to have fun on a budget. Get creative! Use your noodle! ✻

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SYMPATHY COLUMN

Memorable Remembrances...

BY JEROME RASKA AAF, AIFD, CF, PFCI, BLUMZ...BY JRDESIGNS, DETROIT / FERNDAL, MI

As times have changed so must we in the floral industry. The needs of clients change and we must meet those needs. As professionals we should provide unique, distinctive and memorable options. Many of our clients requesting sympathy floral tributes are often dealing with a loss for the first time, so we need to take the lead in consultations.

Red roses surround the funeral urn on a 12" Stackable full tray from Syndicate Sales.

*Designer:
Derek Woodruff,
AIFD, CF, CFD,
Traverse City, MI.*



Today, memorial services, as opposed to traditional services, have become more commonplace for many regions of the country. Not preparing for this can impact sale volume for the local flower shop. Embrace this change and work with your funeral professionals in creating “celebrations of life” which is one of the fastest growing segments of sympathy services.

In addition to the typical floral arrangement incorporating an urn or photo, we, as professionals, can also offer plant rental, centerpieces for the luncheon guest tables, and linens as well as create memory boards for the family with pictures and other memorabilia.

Given the opportunity, work closely with a local video company to create a memory video to enhance the celebration. This is a celebration of the person’s life, hobbies, family and passions. Depending on the individual the opportunities to create an inspirational and celebratory event are endless.

Although memorial services are on the rise, don’t lose sight of the fact that there are still many traditional services held. Requests to create designs that are personalized are very popular. Making the floral arrangements and incorporating items that can be a keepsake, such as stepping stones, religious and inspirational items or personal items of the deceased such as career or hobby related items are favorites. Something the family members can cherish after the services continues to be a strong option for us as we consult with family members making the service plans.

Trends in the sympathy industry are very regional and vary dramatically from area to area based on ethnicity, religious beliefs and age demographic. Enhance your knowledge of this by meeting with your local funeral service providers and clergy to learn and understand the unique differences and how you can become the “go to” shop when the need arises.

Much like many areas of our industry, staff members can change at these venues as well so periodic visits are required. Keep in mind, too, funeral home staff will appreciate small gestures such as snack baskets, cupcakes and even some small arrangements for them to take home to enjoy. These

SYMPATHY COLUMN



This sympathy piece features a religious keepsake surrounded by roses, alstroemeria, amaranthus, cremone mums, gladiolus, stock and a gerbera daisy. Designer: Jerome Raska.

are all good ways for them to remember who you are the next time your services are needed. Always provide them with your 24/7 contact number. Death knows no time and you may be needed when you least expect it.

As I travel around the country teaching workshops and seminars on floral design it continues to amaze me when florists are singing the blues when it comes to sympathy orders...no need to despair just change. There is plenty of opportunity for us to provide flowers, plants and services to the bereavement industry.

Another great opportunity for additional sales is suggesting to your client that they consider sending the family a floral arrangement a month or so after the services. This lets them know they are still being thought of even though time has passed. If you talk to anyone who has had a loss in their family, they will be certain to agree that everyone reaches out at first and then quickly returns to normal life. The toughest time for a grieving person is the months that follow the loss. What a great way to send a hug or smile with a bouquet to say you care.

If you have great things that you are already doing and would like to share please feel free to post on the MFA Facebook page. We can all learn from each other... ✿

Design Tip: Funeral Work

BY JEANETTE GAUDREAU-BALLIEN, GAUDREAU THE FLORIST, SAGINAW, MI

With the cost of the average funeral slowly rising to alarming numbers, people are addressing the way they plan a loved one's service. Funeral specialists have also found it necessary to find ways to make items affordable for their clients.

The way one casket company has done this is to modify how they construct the casket, specifically the portion where florists pin pieces to the lid. At one time casket manufacturers used foam backing behind their material making it easy for the florist to secure pieces. Now, the material behind the cloth is cardboard or even metal making it impossible to pin and securely attach any floral embellishment.

My floral tip was created after speaking with a local funeral director about some of the other items offered by the casket company. I found that it was possible on parts of the casket lid to slide down a thin piece of plastic or metal between the lid insert and the tuck. He showed me some pieces of hard plastic that held bibles and heavy crosses and this gave me an idea.

My floral tip is this: Take an old used CD and glue a piece of dry Oasis® to the CD off center. Soak it in water until it's saturated; design your lid piece. Keep in mind that the lid piece will be sitting in the corner of the tuck so the flowers should be positioned out and away from the sides in a slight upward pattern from the tuck side of the lid. Do not over fill the Oasis® with too many flowers forcing it to crumble. Be selective with your design.

All the funeral director has to do is to slide the CD down in the corner of the lid making sure that the CD portion is inserted on the side and bottom of the lid. If the insert of the casket lid is metal, a ceramic boutonniere magnet glued to the back of a small or large Oasis® Igloo works well.

I have found that using this tip has helped the funeral directors greatly and reduced their concerns over having to place complicated design pieces. ✿



BRIDALUPDATE

Creating that Special Day!

BY SHELLY JOHNSON, SHELLY'S DESIGNS FLORIST, GRAND RAPIDS, MI

After over 25 years of designing and creating wedding arrangements for my clients, the time had finally come for me to create a one of a kind day for one of my children when my son Tyler became engaged to Erica, his girlfriend of four years.

With the bride in white and the bridesmaids in black, the floral color palette was left wide open. Tyler and Erica chose a natural and branchy feeling for their wedding, with a palate of greens, whites, and browns to tie it all together.

For the bridal party's bouquets and boutonnières, there was a mixture of anemones, stephanotis, cymbidium orchids, calla lilies, lisianthus, hydrangeas, and magnolia foliage. Monkey tails, scabiosa, and lotus pods were added for rustic character.

Erica really wanted to use anemones for her focal flower, but unfortunately they were out of season, so I used a high quality permanent botanical that blended in beautifully with the fresh white callas, stephanotis, lisianthus, green cymbidiums, and hypericum and eucalyptus berries. The bouquet was wrapped with crystal decorated grass.

To add a natural theme in the bridesmaids' bouquets, the stems were wrapped in pieces of burlap and adorned with black pearls. For Erica's bouquet we added a nostalgic touch by hanging her grandmother's wedding ring from it, a personal element that meant a lot to the bride. When they first became engaged, Erica showed me a picture of an arch covered with branches and crystals which she wanted to be the backdrop for the ceremony. It was then my mission to bring her vision to life.

I was lucky enough to find the perfect brown iron arch to give it that really organic, natural feel that Tyler and Erica wanted. Honeysuckle vine and fresh curly willow were entwined all throughout the arch with green hydrangea and white anemones scattered about to add some color and tie in with the bridal party bouquets. Carefully placed crystals gave a lush dripping effect to the arch and added just the right drama.

Upon visiting a local wholesaler, I was drawn to some nest baskets and I knew that I had to have them! I showed them to Erica and she loved the idea, so we ran with it. We used the baskets in the centerpieces, as well as the candy table, and cupcake stand. The nest baskets and burlap overlays of the natural theme were enhanced by dripping crystals, candles, and suspended green cymbidiums.

Some tables had nest baskets cradled on top of 40 inch brown stands filled with flowers and cymbidiums hanging on bullion. Other tables had table top candelabras covered with branches. Around the base of the candelabras were bark wire covered cubes filled with flowers to reflect the natural theme.

A favorite piece constructed for the reception was an eight foot swag that hung over the bar. Curly willow branches were embellished with cymbidiums, crystals, and LED lights which added a striking glow.



An anemone was the featured flower in the bridal bouquet.



The bridesmaids' bouquets were wrapped in burlap accented with black pearl heads.

One of the various table arrangements featured floating candles, in a black container filled with stones, crystals, and cymbidiums. The square candles surrounding it were set on aspidistra leaves.





From left, the father of the groom, Rick, the bride Erica, the groom, Tyler, and the mother of the groom, Shelly, pose for the camera.

Tyler and Erica really wanted to do a small cutting cake with a display of cupcakes. Finding a really unusual and beautiful way to display the cupcakes was something I couldn't stop thinking about. One day my assistant, Marisa Rakowski, and I were brainstorming while working together and it dawned on Marisa that she had a cupcake stand from her wedding 14 years ago. The 7½ foot custom stand with 9 tiers was perfect for my vision.

After spraying it brown and covering it with branches and nest baskets, it fit into the wedding theme perfectly. For extra drama, crystals hung from the nest baskets with randomly tucked in cymbidium orchids. The top tier was finished with a stunning arrangement accented by LED lights.

We knew we wanted to have a self serve candy table as a treat to guests. The nest baskets once again came into play as we arranged them on burlap overlays and filled them with chocolate treats for guests to gather into lovely, personalized cellophane bags. As an added personal touch, Tyler's uncle Scott made bags of caramel corn from his specialty concession business for each of the guests as well.

A lot of hard work and love went into planning Tyler and Erica's special day, and I wouldn't have wanted it any other way. But I could not have done all of this work alone and still have had the energy to dance the night away without the help of my professional florist friends Marisa Rakowski, CF, Linda Berg, Mia Nowak, and Nance Neville. They allowed me to pull off the wedding of my son and daughter-in-law's dreams and still be the "energizer bunny" on the dance floor.

What mother shouldn't enjoy her child's big day? ❁

Shelly Johnson, Shelly's Designs Florist, Grand Rapids, has been in the floral industry over 25 years specializing in weddings and other special events.



Carrying through the rustic theme, the cupcake stand was decorated with branches and nest baskets.

This tall table decoration was done in a nest basket with hanging candles and cymbidiums hanging on bullion.



Two free standing black shepherd's hooks with brown lanterns lit the way down the aisle. They were decorated with fresh green hydrangeas, berries, and a permanent anemone.

Single candles carried through the floral theme at the end of alternating rows at the ceremony.



MEMBERPROFILE

Continuing a 120 Year Michigan Tradition

BY BARBARA GILBERT, EDITOR

Many floral shops start off as a family business and remain that way for several generations. Norton's Flowers and Gifts is a perfect example of this phenomenon.

Frank Norton started growing flowers and vegetables in the 1800s in greenhouses near Eastern Michigan University. In 1892 Norton's Flowers and Gifts began serving the Ypsilanti area. Norton's was passed down through five generations before it was sold to a non family member.

In 1998, Austin and Dennis Norton retired and the company became one of the first nine members of the Gerald Stevens floral conglomerate. The flower shop operation was run by the long-time management team. When Gerald Stevens declared bankruptcy in April of 2001, the flower and gift operation was up for sale.

Tim Galea who purchased the company with two minority partners in August of 2001 has been in the floral industry since he was 14 years old.

"I began as a "jumper" when my father took an extra job delivering flowers for Floyd's Flowers in Redford Township,

Michigan. I would jump out of the van and take arrangements and packages to the front door. When I got my driver's license I became a driver and then learned to design. It was a natural progression."

Tim spent 15 years with Floyd's Flowers beginning in 1968 and then bought Francine's Floral Accents in Garden City. After eight years he had the opportunity to become general manager of Norton's.

He credits his experience at Floyd's and with Gerald Stevens in giving him a foundation for running a successful floral operation. "Floyd Bennett was a great guy to work for and learn from, as evidenced by the fact that former employees opened 19 other flower shops in the Detroit metro area."

Part of his tenure with Gerald Stevens involved serving as hub manager for southeastern Michigan. This allowed him to learn about purchasing, merchandising, finances and distribution which stood him in good stead when he and his partners decided to purchase Norton's.

We Deliver the WOW! is the shop motto and this especially applies to their customer service. Tim feels that it is their responsibility to represent the advantages of the local brick and mortar florist to customers. This includes full-service satisfaction

Delivery trucks lined up outside Norton's main store in Ypsilanti.





The Atrium in Ypsilanti.

guaranteed service by providing an experience that exceeds what the customer can find elsewhere.

“For example,” he noted, “the past two Christmases we joined with Beneva Solutions and 80 other florists across the country to commission and promote a gorgeous holiday arrangement in a limited edition collectible train from Spode.

“Thanks to Beneva, we were able to include all our 2012 holiday customers in a sweepstakes drawing for \$5,000 in cash and other prizes. One of our Ann Arbor customers won \$1,000 and several others won centerpieces and poinsettias. It was very exciting to promote that for almost two months...we like promotions that benefit our customers and get us noticed as well.”

Currently, they have 19 full and part time employees. The Ann Arbor store is staffed by up to two sales associates. All the designers, drivers and other sales personnel work at the 15,000 square foot flagship store and production center in Ypsilanti. The 1,000 foot Ann Arbor store recently moved to a more visible location at one of the city’s busiest intersections.

Norton’s provides not only custom made arrangements but has over 60 ready made designs available at any time. The Ypsilanti Do-It-Yourself area provides customers with the opportunity to design their own arrangements.

Flowers and plants represent 80 percent of Norton’s sales. Best selling gift items include greeting cards, scarves, gloves, jewelry, plush, chocolates, crystal, and an extensive line of African-American gifts, collectibles, and personal accessories.

It took over one and a half years to find the appropriate merchandise for the African-American section of the Ypsilanti store. “We have a significant African-American clientele but the greeting cards that available, were, frankly, not representative of the historical artistry of that community. Then I went to the gift show in Chicago and found a company called African-American Expressions that had beautiful cards in great colors with realistic family interpretations. And they expanded their line to collectibles and other items, including our most popular one, the Bible Book Cover.”

Norton’s started using social media in 1986 when they designed



*The interior of the new Ann Arbor location.
Ann Arbor Christmas display.*





Norton's special holiday promotion.



Tim Galea, right, presents a \$1,000 check to Beneva sweepstakes winner, Bill Sloan.

their e-commerce website. They switched to a customized Teleflora site in 2001. Tim pointed out that they have been developing their email contacts for ten years and using Constant Contact to promote special offers, important news and holiday product lines.

"Facebook is an opportunity for us to stay in more frequent contact with our followers, though we have been unable to generate the same customer enthusiasm for it as we have with email", he said.

Norton's is a member of Teleflora's President's Club and one of the top 100 florists in the country. Tim has great regard for Teleflora's Chairman of the Board Tom Butler and a deep appreciation for Norton's relationship with Teleflora.

"Although most shops probably only need one wire service these days, we have belonged to FTD for 91 years...I think it is important for two wire services competing for the betterment of our industry. I wouldn't look forward to the day when there is only one, because there will be not incentive for technology development or competitive fees, and even the large traditional retailers will definitely be vulnerable at that point."

They have also joined the Flower Shop Network as a show of support for their help with the Florists for Change movement. Tim points out that "many brick and mortar florists are hoping that FFCI will revolutionize the competitive nature of our industry and help to level the playing field between traditional florists and deceptive order gatherers."

As an active member of the Michigan Floral Association, Tim has served on the strategic planning committee as part of Norton's support of the association.

Tim is quite candid about the struggles a retail florist faces in this economy. His take on how Norton's is succeeding:



Candles and cards in Ypsilanti store.

"Well, first of all, I think success, particularly in Michigan, has been largely redefined in the past 10 years. The decline in the number of retail florists, especially the closing of previously successful, multi-generational flower shops, is heartbreaking.

"While, of course, we all strive to grow our business and make a profit, it has almost gotten to the point where simply being able to stay open is a success unto itself. In the past eleven years, we've had about an equal number of growth and decline years, but a couple of the declines right after 9/11 were staggering.

"Economic challenges in Michigan since 9/11 have affected all suppliers. Ypsilanti was an auto town and when plants closed and employees left, our customer base was gone. We have adjusted and learned to streamline our operations.

"We don't take as many chances as we used to with speculative products and certainly everybody is working hard and making sacrifices. We use smaller, more fuel efficient delivery vans and make do with outdated phone equipment. We patch together our cooler and our HVAC systems replacing them only when absolutely necessary. We work closely with our vendors, particularly Tom Figueroa at Nordlie, to keep our COGS at a reasonable rate. I am grateful for the awesome business tips and friend support I get from my peers in the Michigan Floral Association, SAF and especially the Midwest Group.

"But personally, the success I'm most proud of is that our fantastic staff is confidently employed. We have recently lowered their health care costs and we haven't had any layoff in eleven years. Sadly, we sometimes lose good people to other better paying careers, but I'm happy knowing they're leaving with a formidable retail education they can depend on for a lifetime."

Having learned the floral industry literally from the pavement up, Tim can pinpoint his favorite part of the floral industry...an opinion that has changed over the years.

"The first half of my career, I would always have said designing was my favorite part. The past 10-15 years have given me a different perspective on our industry and now I would say that consumers are my favorite. I really get a kick from the pure joy that flowers bring to people, both senders and recipients. We need to be appreciative of the fact that our customers, with the hundreds of gift choices or message options they have, choose to give us the responsibility of expressing their emotions.

"At Norton's our goal is to maximize the emotional impact of our customers message in a way no other gift can. When I know we've succeeded, that is my favorite part!" ❀

Six Secrets of Successful Email Marketing

BY CAROLYNN VAN NAMEN, MBA,
INTEGRA GLOBAL CONSULTING

If you're like most business owners, your inbox is probably crammed with not-so-funny forwards from friends, unwanted offers for medications and countless promotions for shady schemes, which you are unlikely to open and would rather not receive. Given the relative ease and reasonable cost of buying consumer lists and sending email offers to thousands of people with a single click, how do you distinguish an email that's worth opening and reading from the virtual flood of random and undesirable messages?

Email has become a boon to marketers and a bane to consumers. The savvy businessperson must figure out how to compete successfully to get his or her message across and cut through the clutter of hundreds of emails that crowd your customers' inbox.

Here are a few time-tested secrets that will ensure your emails get opened more often – and help build your brand.

1. Use a captivating subject line. This may sound obvious but many email messages never get opened because they lack a powerful and engaging subject line. The subject line is a highly visible and very important piece of virtual real estate. Leverage the three seconds of attention your email receives by writing a compelling and catchy subject line.

Think of the subject line as a mini headline that will grab your reader's attention. If you want your customers to take action and make a limited time purchase, avoid using a generalized title such as "Valentine's Day Flowers." Instead, create motion and motivation with a captivating headline about your holiday promotion, such as "Fall in Love With Our Valentine's Bouquets" or "Try Our BOGO Special –Today Only!" Inspire your customers to open, read and act upon your offer. Grab their attention right away to improve your open rates.

The folks at Constant Contact, an email service provider, offer some helpful tips to guide your email communications. President/CEO Gail Goodman recommends "[keeping] WIIFM (What's In It For Me) in mind when creating every aspect of your emails, in-

cluding the offer, content, images and most definitely the subject line. It's all about them. They know that. Just make sure you know it too!" In email marketing as in all forms of marketing, you have to think like a customer.

Now that you've captured your customers' attention and written engaging content, how do you make sure that you're sending the right message and information to the right person?

2. Personalize your message. Personalized email messages are much more likely to be opened and read than those addressed to a generic recipient. Your email message must be addressed to an individual, not to "Dear Customer." Since email is already a somewhat intrusive communications tool, you end up adding insult to injury when you fail to personalize your message.

"What makes content engaging is relevancy. You need to connect the contact information with the content information." Gail Goodman, President & CEO, Constant Contact.

A basic principle in email marketing is to send email that appears to be directed to just one person, not to an anonymous "customer" or, even worse, a detailed list of recipients. Sending a templated email to your entire customer list with all the names and addresses visible in the "to" line is a major violation of email etiquette and creates an unprofessional image.

"It's hard to target a message to a generic 35-year-old middle-class working mother of two. It's much easier to target a message to Jennifer, who has two children under four, works as a paralegal, and is always looking for quick but healthy dinners and ways to spend more time with her kids and less time on housework." Elizabeth Gardner, Internet Retailer.

When you visualize who your recipient is and give him or her an identity, you will find it much easier to craft a meaningful and relevant message that will resonate with your target audience.

"It no longer makes economic sense to send an advertising message to the many in hopes of persuading the few." M. Lawrence Light, former Chief Marketing Officer, McDonald's.

If your database contains first and last names, include the recipient's first name in the opening line of the email. Most email services enable the first few lines of an email to be viewed without opening the whole email – so make the most of that window of opportunity! Remember, you only have a few moments to attract your readers' attention, get them to open and click through.

3. Keep it short, succinct and simple. Sounds easy, right? But many business owners forget that unless there's a good reason to keep reading, your email message will end up in the virtual trash. Your customers are bombarded with so much information that they have little time to linger over your elaborate email messages.

"In this age of micro-blogging and two-second sound bites, almost no one has the attention span, or time, to read more than a few sentences." Tim Frick, author of *Return On Engagement*.

The same rules that apply to direct mail also go for email messages: short, simple and easy-to-scan text is better than long, involved sentences that take forever to get to the point. Your writing may be inspired, but if it's too long and no one bothers to read it, you've missed a chance to connect with your customers.

MARKETING TIP

The experts at Baymard Institute suggest “keeping [your line length] within the range of 50–75 characters per line...to avoid the drawbacks of too long and too short lines, but still energize your readers and keep them engaged.”

Try using shorter and fewer words. Make your sentences punchy and precise. Skip the long introduction and get right to the point: “Favorite Flowers is having a sale on roses – two days only!” Perhaps you want to remind your customers about your extended store hours for the holidays, a new product you’re introducing or invite them to a special demonstration. Whatever the purpose of your email, make sure the most important facts are the first thing people read.

4. When in doubt, don’t. Have you ever sent an email without taking time to review what you wrote, or you sent it before it was finished? Perhaps you started to type in a name and the auto-complete function inserted the wrong one. The great thing about email is that it’s a quick and easy way to reach many people at one time; the downside is that it’s a quick and easy way to reach many people at one time – even those you weren’t intending to reach!

If you find yourself writing an email in an emotional moment of excitement, anger or frustration, the best option is to send it to yourself or to a trusted employee first. Better yet, save it as a draft and go back to it the next day. That will give you time to reassess the impact of your words and help you avoid that sinking “uh-oh” feeling that sometimes follows after sending an email message written in haste.

Maybe your message would have been better left unsaid. An inappropriate email sent to just one person – even by mistake – could create a ripple effect throughout your entire customer base. Unfortunately, there is no “cancel” feature that allows you to recall your email once it’s gone and someone has already opened it. For more information on recalling sent email, check out this post on [chow.com](#).

5. Review, review, review. Nothing supports your brand like a well-written email message. You can highlight your unique offers, create a personal connection, and effectively build customer loyalty. If you forget to spell check your message, accidentally paste the same paragraph more than once, or fail to punctuate properly, you are definitely sending the wrong message! And it’s all there in black and white, reminding everyone of your carelessness and showing your customers that you don’t value them enough to proofread your outbound email.

You can easily protect yourself against these avoidable errors, which can harm your professional reputation and diminish your brand in the eyes of your customers. Ask someone else to proofread your message to catch those omitted or repeated words, misspellings and unintended apostrophes. Because your mind knows what you meant to say, it’s difficult for your eye to detect the seemingly minor errors that can undermine even the best writing.

Better yet, engage the services of a professional marketing writer to do the job for you. Outsourcing your marketing communications allows you to focus on what you do best – run your business and delight your customers.

While you may think that a few misspelled words or the incorrect use of “their” for “there” is insignificant, you have to

recognize that everything you say, write and do is a reflection of, and on, your brand. In business and in life, your words and actions reveal your character and either support or undermine your reputation. When your email communications are well crafted and error free, you demonstrate that you are careful, trustworthy and professional – which is just what you want your customers to believe about you.

“Your culture is your brand.” Tony Hsieh, CEO, Zappos.com online shoes and clothing retailer.

It only takes a few extra minutes to proofread your message and eliminate anything that doesn’t convey your company and your brand in a positive way. Likewise, it only takes a minute to hit the “send” button and inadvertently mail the wrong message to the wrong people.

6. Good design gets read. Resist the urge to embellish your emails with fancy fonts, ALL CAPS, or too much formatting such as underlining, italicizing and bolding. The purpose of your email message is to get customers to open, read and act upon your offer, not to demonstrate the wide range of fonts and formatting available.

Choose fonts that don’t get in the eye’s way of reading the message. Use clean, sans serif fonts (like Calibri, Lucida Grande, or Arial) for your text and headings. Keep in mind that just because you can do something, doesn’t mean you should.

In terms of email etiquette, using all caps is considered “shouting” – similar to the way an amusement park “barker” used to lure customers in to their shows. It’s difficult to read and comprehend information that’s typed in all caps so stick to sentence case within your text. Similarly, if everything is bold, nothing is emphasized. Use formatting judiciously to underscore an important point or piece of information that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Choose a font size that’s easy for most people to read, like 11 or 12 point. Leave a space between paragraphs to indicate a new idea or section. Don’t make your margins too small and your line too long because it’s difficult for the eye to track a long line. For more information, read these “Tips to Increase Your Email Deliverability” from Constant Contact’s website, [www.constantcontact.com](#).



There’s really no “secret” to successful email marketing if you follow these basic rules. Your emails should communicate to your customers that you care about them and respect their time. Don’t flood your customers’ email inboxes with poorly designed and error-riddled messages. Not only will you fail to sell them anything, you could risk offending them and severing the delicate cord of customer loyalty forever.

By honoring your customers and understanding what they expect from you, you will distinguish yourself and your company. Do that and they will not only read your emails, but also look forward to hearing from you. And that is the real secret to email success! ✿

Carolynn Van Namen, MBA, is principal and founder of Integra Global Consulting based in the Chicago area, specializing in end-to-end online content strategy, including copywriting and editorial direction. For help with your online marketing and messaging, contact her at Carolynn@integra-gc.com. You can also view her profile at [Linkedin.com/in/carolynnvannamen](#) and follow her on Twitter @cvannamen.

DESIGNERSPOTLIGHT

Making Funeral Flowers Personal

BY DOUG BATES, CF, FROM DESIGN'S BY VOGT'S, STURGIS, MI – 2012 MFA DESIGNER OF THE YEAR

Just have to be honest. I scope out flowers at funeral services. Maybe you do, too. I've been able to gather new ideas and get inspiration, but also see what not to do. I'm always a bit perplexed when I see arrangements there that are the same style, shape, and design. It makes me wonder if the florist ran out of time and felt the need to assembly line the designs.

But, will anyone from the funeral remember which fan-shaped spray arrangement was theirs? Not likely. There is something lacking when the majority of the designs that leave your shop are of the same style. Push yourself to do something different. Stylize! You'll be remembered for it.

A great friend and mentor once told me to fill funeral orders as if I were filling them for a member of my family. That's what I've done here. The sweet lady in the black and white photo is my Grandma Bea, and I hope she would have been proud of me displaying this arrangement at her funeral. Traditional? Nope. Unique and bold and graceful? Just like Grandma!

To begin, craft a curly willow armature, banding and binding unobtrusively to create this U-shaped design. Anchor deep into the foam, then add Oasis® flat cane to accentuate the twists, curves and coils of the curly willow, again binding in spots where it is less noticeable.

Add your floral product, basing with Green Trick carnations to fill any gaps. Pop the butterflies exactly where you want them in the design with a dash of U-Glu. The finishing touch is lengths of bouillon wire to which we've added "falling" rose petals with

more U-Glu. This helps to frame the photo and add emphasis to it. The silver container complements the silver frame.

This is not, of course, a traditional funeral arrangement, and not every customer will order it. But you can bet they will remember it! *



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CFREPORT

Chairman's Report



Professional Development... Always Room to Grow

BY TIM LATIMER, CF, CF CHAIRMAN



In our professional life things move at a very fast pace and we often don't have time to step back and reflect on the big picture. We all love our industry, but over time our industry can start to pass us by.

"You'll never know everything about anything, especially something you love."

— Julia Child

Julia was right! There is always something new to learn. You are already taking steps to learn what is new in your industry by reading this magazine, but there are many more learning opportunities available. Books, magazines, internet sites; look around and see what is happening in the industry and keep learning.

You might even consider buying a Certified Florist manual and studying for certification. You are never too old!

"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young."

— Henry Ford ✿

What CF Means to Me!

"What does CF mean to me? It gives me national credibility in the industry. Putting it on my business card shows people that I am a professional and if customers don't know what it means it is a conversation starter. This leads to teaching and educating the public, which often leads to a new customer. It's not just a bunch of initials. It becomes clear when attending industry events that those people who have attained credentials are successful in the floral industry. The CF program contains well- rounded information covering everything from care and handling, design, customer service, and display to pricing, accounting, marketing and more. It's been very beneficial and I would highly recommend going through the program."



—Victor West, CF, Vanessa's Flowers, Plymouth, MI

CF FLOWER of the Month ACACIA (*Acacia Dealbata*)



Also Known as Mimosa, Wattle.

In Italy, Albania, Russia and Georgia the flowers are frequently given to women on International Women's Day. In France, the flowers are used as a fixative in high grade perfume production. Acacia is also a symbol for everlasting life.

Availability: December through March.

Design Tips: The small bright fluffy fragrant flowers are excellent filler in designs and whole branches add a dramatic touch to large designs. Stems should remain in their plastic bag for storage to retain humidity and prevent drying of the blooms.

FLORAL TIP: What Are You In Business For?

From the CF manual, page 119

You're there to help people enjoy the end result benefit of flowers. In other words you're in business to help people express their emotions through floral purchases. You'll help substitute flowers for an absence, express guilt, celebrate milestones or achievements, or decorate a home or office.

In a real sense the florist business is first about the people and their emotions and needs. Always remember Flowers = Feelings!



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Retail Florist, Grand Rapids, MI

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COMPANYPROFILE

BloomNet® Focuses on Education, Service and Technology

BY BARBARA GILBERT, EDITOR

Education, service, and technology are the key components contributing to the continued success of BloomNet®, the 7,000 member wire service launched in 2005 by 1-800-Flowers.

Company president, Mark Nance, AAF, sees BloomNet not just as a wire service but as a comprehensive business services provider. "I have built BloomNet around service for our florists. We provide educational programs, consulting services, and point of sale applications; if our florists have a problem or question, such as setting up their websites, there is always staff available to help. They can call me, as well..."

Nance has been in the flower industry for over 25 years. He started with American Floral Services in 1983, and worked at Teleflora after they purchased AFS. In 2004, Jim and Chris McCann of 1-800-Flowers asked him to head up BloomNet.

The company has made a commitment to education through its Floriology Institute in Jacksonville, FL. Nance emphasized that "Education is the backbone of the industry, particularly during these challenging economic times, and florists can differentiate themselves by continually updating and expanding their artistic design talents. Education is the key to success. As well, we have 30-35 florists who serve on different councils and provide guidance and ideas on technology and education that will benefit our florists."

In 2012, The American Institute of Floral Designers (AIFD) approved the Floriology Institute as an AIFD Professional Floral Design Evaluation (PFDE) Pathway Provider. The Institute offers courses covering subjects such as wedding trends, sympathy styles, party and event work and basic design. In addition there are profitable strategies for running a retail flower shop. The monthly "floriology" magazine is filled with articles about everything from marketing, technology and customer service, to the latest design tips.

BloomNet also offers a series of Fresh Forum events throughout the country, during which florists can learn about the latest developments affecting the floral industry and share ideas with fellow florists. The educational



Students, staff, designers, and instructors help BloomNet President Mark Nance, AAF, center, cut the ribbon at the 2010 grand opening of the Floriology Institute.



Brent Eggleston, regional vice president, left, and Mark Nance, AAF, president, present a \$1,500 Floriology scholarship to Sheri Jentsch at the Arkansas State Floral Association meeting.

videos link on the Napco, BloomNet subsidiary, website (www.napcoimports.com) cover topics such as emerging trends, ways to design for different seasons and how to create designs using specific containers, accessories and other products.

BloomNet has an excellent relationship with the Michigan Floral Association, Nance, in fact, attended his first Michigan convention in 1984 in Dearborn, MI, when he was with

AFS. Interestingly enough, probably the first person who greeted him there was Bobbi Ecker Blatchford, AAF, AIFD, PFCI.

Subsequently, BloomNet has sponsored designers, commentators, and business sessions at the Great Lakes Floral Expo and the golf outing. "We have a special connection with Michigan," said Nance. "There is added value in helping the organization. Supporting the MFA is supporting florists. We are happy they appreciate what we do."

Quality

As a way of increasing business, the BloomNet Quality Care Program was developed to assure optimal quality. Instrumental in the program is the BloomNet Florist Quality Care Board. Board members play a pivotal role in establishing, monitoring and continually updating stringent quality and performance standards with the goal of achieving 100 percent customer satisfaction on all floral wire orders. Florists and their staff members who exhibit quality excellence can be nominated for an Award of Quality Achievement.

Technology

In collaboration with technology provider SinglePlatform, BloomNet began offering a way for florists to increase their sales as more

WHOLESALE CONNECTION

and more consumers utilize web-capable digital devices to search for local retailers. The program enables florists to publish information such as product photos, pricing and promotional offers throughout the Internet via multiple online channels including search engines, online review sites, business listing sites and social media.

Nance's philosophy is to work with partnerships that are mutually beneficial. In September 2012 BloomNet bought the BloomNet Management System from Atlanta company, Core Rewards. This allows the tech team to stay on top of developments and meet their florists' needs more quickly. They have also built good relationships with companies such as Square, and Oracle which has provided customer management data bases. Napco was acquired to provide members with unique and everyday containers.

"I have pushed to build an infrastructure, a virtual organization that will offer better services to florists," noted Nance. "Our One to One program is customer service based. We track our florists as a matter of course to see what they need. In the future we are looking to new innovative products that florists can afford and that help them be more profitable.

"For example, geofencing, the ability to establish a perimeter around an area, and send advertising to the iPhone or iPad, is an important way reach the younger segment of the buying public. These are the people we need to involve in the industry."

Products

BloomNet's product offerings include Napco containers, gourmet gift baskets, Harry London® chocolates, plush products, and balloons. Virtually all types of fresh flowers and arrangements are available including products from 1-800-Flowers.com such as the exclusive a-Dog-able® line of floral creations and the whimsical Happy Hour Collection™ of floral "cocktail" bouquets.

The Future

As to the future, Nance expects BloomNet to innovate, grow and offer more opportunities for florists to improve and become more profitable. "We see positive growth if we keep meeting florists needs. Those needs can be met in four ways: product development, technology, quality, and education." ✻

For further information about BloomNet, visit www.bloomnet.net.

JOIN with Your Wholesaler and Make Your Spring a Blooming Success!



BY TRISH LILLY, WF&FSA

One of the bright spots of winter is the knowledge that spring will eventually arrive...and spring brings a wealth of opportunity for the floral industry – Easter, Mother's Day, weddings, proms, and graduations – all prime selling occasions.

While gearing up for the spring season is exciting, it can also be challenging as you attempt to determine what customers will want, what the latest trends in color and design will mean for your customers, and what price points will be the most appealing. These are all key components and your local wholesaler can provide the help and guidance you may need.

First, you want to ensure your customer's satisfaction with the quality of product purchased. Wholesalers are recognized for delivering high quality flowers; they understand that their reputation rests on delivering superior product. To assure the product, they have created and developed relationships with growers and importers known for cut flower quality and selection.

Not only that, your wholesaler is the expert who possesses the knowledge about critical elements such as storage temperature and delivery to ensure you receive the blooms you need at the time you need them in order to provide the freshest and most attractive designs and displays.

Additionally, the wholesaler's staff immerses themselves in the latest cut flower trends and keeps abreast of what's "hot" at any given moment. Central to the development of their knowledge base is the networking and education they continually seek within the industry; this expertise is yours for the asking. You can rest assured that your wholesaler will be able to provide the exceptional stems and accessories in the quantities you want when you need them.

While many retailers like to spend time in the coolers at their local wholesaler checking the latest inventory, you also know that you can rely on timely and accurate delivery of your order. Working closely with your

wholesaler will help to ensure that product arrives on schedule so that you can satisfy and exceed your customer's needs.

To Work Most Effectively with Your Wholesaler:

- Meet with your wholesaler regularly to discuss your business. Do you have any special events that you wish to discuss with them? Are you marketing to any particular audiences – do you need assistance from your wholesaler? Building a relationship with your sales rep will go a long way to helping manage your business more effectively.
- Talk about how you order flowers. Is there any way you can work more closely with your wholesaler to ensure you get what you need when you need it? Can they provide you some tips on how to maximize buying power?
- Can your wholesaler help you with services beyond product? Do you need a design area to work in? Can they help you? Do you need marketing tips?
- In addition to cut flowers, your wholesaler inventories a wide selection of accessories including vases, ribbons, supplies and more. Be sure to stay on top of what is new in the market by asking for tips and ideas.

Remember that a strong relationship with your local wholesaler engages them in taking a personal interest in the success of your business. Be sure to take advantage of their flower quality, reliable and accurate delivery, expert knowledge, convenience and cost effectiveness. Your wholesaler is waiting to serve you! Give them a call today. ✻

Patricia A. Lilly is the Executive Vice President of the Wholesale Florist & Florist Supplier Association, a business organization dedicated to providing members with the information, services and support they need to remain competitive in today's constantly changing market. Visit WF&FSA at www.wffsa.org.



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Spend a day at “Nature’s Creative Edge Design Studio” in Fruitport, Michigan, and come away with improved skills in natural design techniques and mechanics to use in your everyday and party work.

The team of Bob Friese and James Lutke are known for their innovative approach to design. The studio is located on a wooded site near Fruitport, north of Grand Haven, and southeast of Muskegon. This is a relaxed setting that will let your creative side stretch and expand.

So open your mind to nature’s bounty, and come away with fresh design inspiration, and sharpened skills. Registration includes materials and a fabulous lunch prepared by gourmet cook Bob Friese...yum!

**Bring your tools, including a pruner,
wire cutter, scissor, and knife.**

**Lodging recommendation:
Spring Lake Holiday Inn.
Phone: 616-846-1000.**

**Visit www.michiganfloral.org
or call the MFA office
at (517) 575-0110 for more
information and to register!**

Floral Holiday Calendar

Floral Holidays	2013	2014
New Year’s Day	Tuesday, January 1	Wednesday, January 1
Valentine’s Day	Thursday, February 14	Friday, February 14
St. Patrick’s Day	Sunday, March 17	Monday, March 17
Passover	Tuesday, March 26	Tuesday, April 15
Easter Sunday	Sunday, March 31	Sunday, April 20
Administrative Professional (Secretaries) Day	Wednesday, April 24	Wednesday, April 23
Cinco de Mayo	Sunday, May 5	Monday, May 5
National Teachers Day	Tuesday, May 7	Tuesday, May 6
Dia de Las Madres (Mexico)	Friday, May 10	Saturday, May 10
Mother’s Day (US/Canada)	Sunday, May 12	Sunday, May 11
Memorial Day	Monday, May 27	Tuesday, May 27
Father’s Day	Sunday, June 16	Sunday, June 15
Rosh Hashanah	Wednesday, September 4	Wednesday September 24
Grandparents’ Day	Sunday, September 8	Sunday, September 7
Yom Kippur	Friday, September 13	Friday, October 3
Thanksgiving Day (Canada)	Monday, October 14	Monday, October 13
Bosses’ Day (US)	Wednesday, October 16	Thursday, October 16
Sweetest Day	Saturday, October 19	Saturday, October 18
Halloween	Thursday October 31	Friday, October 31
Thanksgiving Day	Thursday, November 28	Thursday, November 27
Hanukkah	November, 27 – December 5	December 16 - 24
Christmas Day	Wednesday, December 25	Thursday, December 25
Kwanzaa	December 26 – January 1	December 26 – January 1

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Certified Florist Manual & Testing

Did you know? MFA's Certified Florist (CF) program is a comprehensive program that covers all aspects of professional floristry and is the most affordable program available to florists today. And the most convenient: You can self-study at your own pace with this great manual/reference resource. The Certified Florist accreditation is nationally recognized and an approved pathway to AIFD accreditation. MFA offers an optional, educational "Steps to Certification" class to help prepare for certification. Other Certification or Certified Floral Designer programs available today would cost you over \$1,000 and could take you years to accomplish! But not this program:

***Cost for manual and one round of CF testing is \$599.99 (includes tax & S/H)**

***Cost for manual only is \$399.99 (includes tax & S/H)**

Consumers today are offered more and more options for purchasing flowers and are looking for your credentials or certification to help them justify spending their money with you. Let them discover you are a Certified Florist when they look into your business!

Get your CF manual today and prepare for the CF exam, which consists of 2-1/2 hours of hands-on design (you make five designs: one duplicate for incoming wire service orders, one vase, one pin-on corsage, one wrist corsage and one wedding bouquet,) and two hours of written work (30 product ID and 120 multiple choice questions). If you pass each section with a score of 80 percent or better, you become a Certified Florist!

The CF Manual consists of the following chapters and books:

1. Care & Handling
2. Product Identification
3. Customer Relations/Sales
4. Delivery
5. Marketing
6. Accounting
7. Gluing
8. Lighting
9. Basic Floral Design (this topic is covered using two books that are included with your manual purchase.)
Florists' Review Design School and
Flower Arranging... Step by Step Instructions for Everyday Designs
10. Study Guide & Evaluation Forms



**Visit www.michiganfloral.org
or call 517-575-0110
and register today!**

CLASSIFIED ADS

HELP WANTED

Manager: Experienced manager needed to run Terry's Enchanted Garden. Please give us a call and fax us your resume if you want to apply. Must have previous experience running a business, great communication and leadership skills. Great customer service skills are also required. Floral knowledge is preferred but not required. Ph: 310-707-5695 Fax: 281-664-5832.

Designer: Terry's Enchanted Garden is looking for an experienced designer. If you feel you have what it takes to complement our store with your creative designs, please set up an appointment to grace us with your talent. We have a pleasant work environment and we would be excited to see what you can do. Please give us a call. Ph: 310-707-5695 Fax: 281-664-5832.

Full Time Floral Designer Wanted: Teleflora shop in Hastings, MI needs someone with training and/or experience. Send resume to Barlow Florist 109 W. State St. Hastings, MI 49058, Fax to: (269) 945-0469 or email: barlowflorist@barlowflorist.com.

Wholesale Job Opportunities: Nordlie, Inc., Michigan's largest wholesaler, has excellent opportunities for high energy staff in numerous capacities. Inside sales, route sales, designing, or merchandising – stop by our Warren, Flint, or Grandville stores. Full benefit program. Contact any one of our store managers: Tom Figueroa, AIFD, MCF, Warren, 586-755-4200. Cathy Davison, Flint, 810-767-8883. Leslie Walton / Deb Durrant, Grandville, 616-534-6883.

**Look for a Review of the
2013 Great Lakes Floral Expo
In the Next Issue of
*The Professional Florist***



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MISSION STATEMENT

To provide education and professional partnerships which help to position Michigan Floral Association members at the forefront of the floral industry.

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Looking for a fun, easy and FREE way to network with fellow floral professionals and keep in touch with friends? Join Facebook today at www.facebook.com. The Michigan Floral Association has a group page on Facebook and we'd like you to join! You'll learn about upcoming Professional Education Center classes, view pictures from the Great Lakes Floral Expo, share tips and learn from industry professionals, and so much more. Have questions? E-mail Rod Crittenden at rod@michiganfloral.org to get started.



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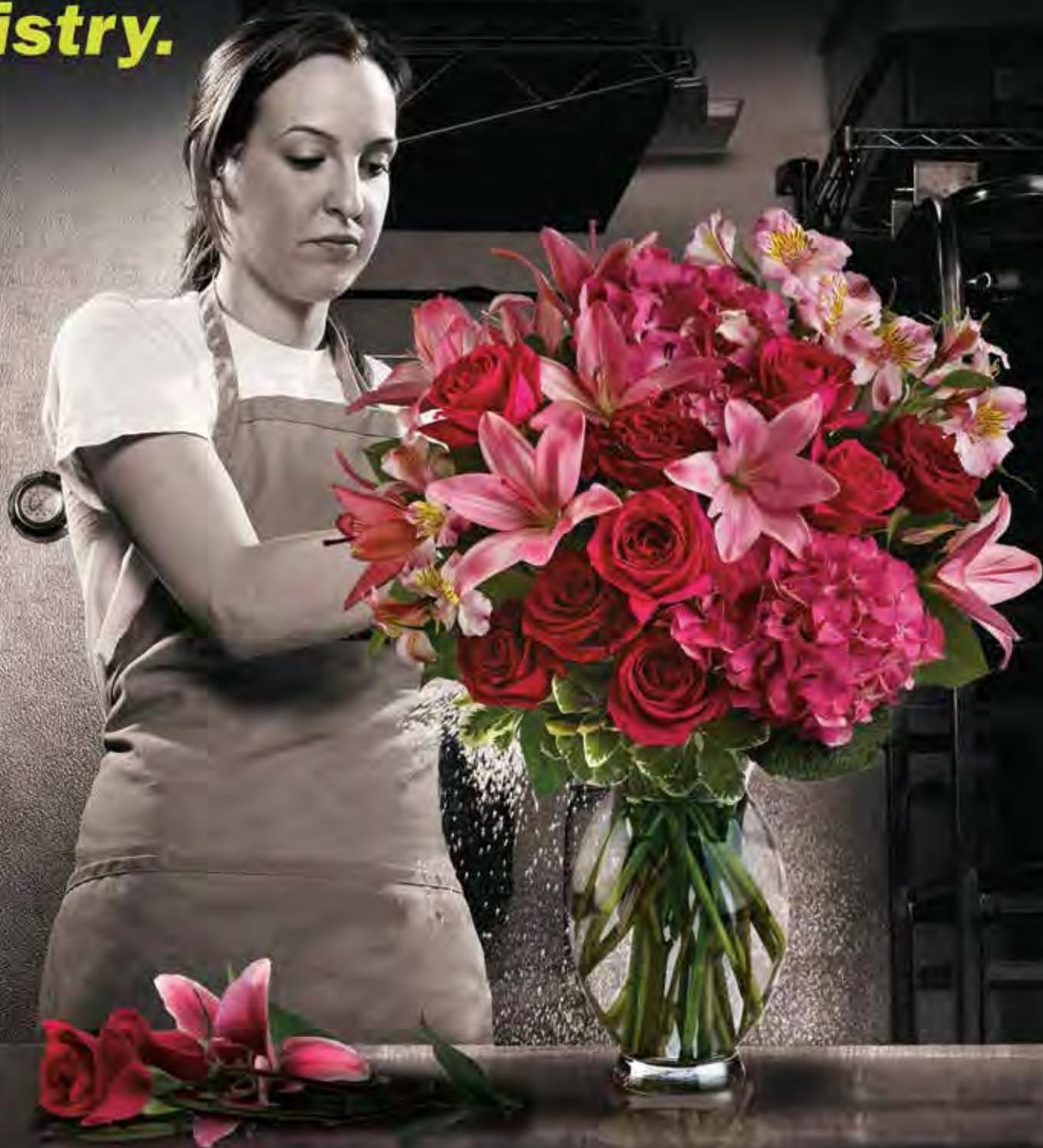


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