

marketing & communications TOOLKIT



DESIGNED TO HELP YOU HELP YOUR CUSTOMERS!

The ***WF&FSA Marketing & Communications Toolkit*** is designed to help the local retail florist **raise awareness** of their business with new and existing customers, as well as **highlight the unique skills and expertise** they offer local communities.

Artistry and Local:

First and foremost, florists are truly “artists in residence.” The opportunity to reinforce this concept by leveraging a suite of tools designed to reach customers where they are – at work, at home or on-the-go – will differentiate local retailers from the big box and on-line chains, grocery and convenient stores.

Additionally, the local retail florist lives, works and consumes products and services in the community in which it operates. The credibility that comes with being a neighbor and a true partner in the success of a local is significant, and can be reinforced through strategic communications and marketing channels.

Attributes:

The bottom line is that local florists claim two incredibly powerful attributes: they offer an artistry that is simply unmatched by any other retail channel and they are partners with the communities they serve.

By implementing new or additional communications and marketing practices designed to underscore these attributes, retailers can influence purchasing choices and habits, as well as establish a more personal bond with end customers to ensure they become loyal, lifelong flower buyers.

Approach:

The *Toolkit* is designed to be:

- Easy to grasp and digest
- Cost effective to implement
- Easy to execute

Key components include:

- Community relevance
- Business impact
- Tactics that appeal to consumer’s rational and emotional triggers (i.e. Feeling good about supporting local businesses and feeling happy about buying flowers)

The *Toolkit* is made up of the following sections:

1. Social Media

- a. General Social Media Management Tips
- b. Blogs
- c. Facebook
- d. Twitter
- e. Say it with Pictures
- f. Say it with Video
- g. Get Organized

2. Broadcast Media

- a. Transforming Your House on a Budget
- b. Support Local Businesses
- c. Sample Community Events Calendar Show
- d. Sample Local Morning Show Pitches

3. Print Media

- a. Sample Press Release

4. Opinion Editorials

- a. Sample Op-ed

5. E-Mail and Direct Mail

6. Charitable Tie-Ins

7. Guerrilla Marketing Considerations

- a. Collateral Materials
- b. Flower Trucks
- c. Pop Up Shops

8. List of Holidays and Special Days

Social Media

The use of social media tools and techniques allows the local retail florist to develop relationships with customers in real time. By engaging on topics and trends that you know are of interest to your customers and the broader community, you will increase your relevancy and stay top-of-mind as a resource for flowers, design ideas and tips, special occasions and more.

It's important to remember that people log on to social media for two reasons – to learn something or to be entertained. Posts that are exclusively focused on overt marketing are not as successful as those that really engage consumers in creative ways. As such, we have provided some suggested content designed to create dialogue and engagement from your community.

General Social Media Management Tips

The key to successful social media is frequency, consistency, relevancy, and most importantly, content. Taking a few minutes every day to engage with followers and fans will generate interest in your perspective, broaden your reach as you enlist new audiences, and ultimately drive more traffic to your store. Be sure to use your blog as the hub for most of your content that you publish on your social media platforms to attract leads to your website and ensure that you receive the largest ROI.

When including links, use one of the link shortening sites like bit.ly. This allows you to save character space (critical when limited to 140) and also enables you to track how many people have opened and shared your photos

Last, but not least, one guideline that pertains to all marketing activities - be sure that your business address or at least phone number, city and state along with your contact information is prominently displayed in all of your social media profiles as well as on your website. All customers and/or leads need to know that they are connecting with the correct business and that is hard to do if it is difficult to find out where your business is located.



Blogs

Objective: Post information that differentiates your store from the big chains and general retailers in a digestible and informal way.

Outcome: Enhance the “conversations” you are having with your community (in store and through your other social media channels) and reinforce the value and values of your retail offering.

Retail value/values:

- **VALUE:** Right price for the right product. No hidden fees or charges.
- **VALUES:** Consistently high quality service and personal attention.
 Overview: While it might appear that social networks like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others have overtaken the blogosphere, the impact of a blog is still significant. Social networks can push out information in real-time, driving traffic to and awareness of blogs. The key to a successful blog is relevant, useful and distinctive content. Focus on and highlight the key brand attributes of the local retail florist to reinforce your role in the day-to-day world of your customers, including:
 - We are a member and partner of the community in which we work.
 - We have a personal interest in the quality of our product because we bring artistry to the equation – we don’t sell flowers, we sell experiences.
 - We are accessible solution providers. You have a need? We can fill it with the right product – at the right price – every time.
 - We are completely transparent in our pricing – no hidden fees or “convenience” charges.
 - Answer frequently asked questions.
 - Highlight wedding, event, and corporate work while explaining how you came up with the final concept/design.
 - Review trends and provide examples of your work that are relevant to those trends.

The below blog post samples can be used verbatim or as directional guides for future topics and approaches. This copy can also be used on other social media platforms, for instance, as a Facebook post or to support a picture on Pinterest or Instagram. The key is to tie flowers into the everyday lives of your customers in a relevant and useful way.

If you don’t already have a blog, it’s an easy way to engage your customers on your website and via e-mail. We recommend posting new blog copy 1-2 times a week. Often times this can be highlighting an industry blog post or interesting local community activity the store may be supporting or engaged in in some way. Coming up with unique and proprietary content every time is not necessary; as long as the topic is relevant to flowers and your retail outlet, it will be relevant to your followers and customers.

Blogging is essential to your website’s Search Engine Optimization (SEO) making it easier for customers and potential new clients to find you. Be sure to include appropriate keywords, as well as geo-specific words to get the most out of your blog posts (blog title example: Cleveland Florist - Everyday Garden Roses). SEO could have a whole guide dedicated to it, so if you are new to SEO and want to learn more use this link: <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/seo-friendly-blog-post-checklist-ht>

Questions? Here is a link to an excellent overview on platforms – many of them free – to consider and a few key insights to help you be successful in your blogging efforts.
<http://thenextweb.com/apps/2013/08/16/best-blogging-services/>

If you’d like some tips on how to enhance your blog with plug-ins for Facebook, Twitter and more, below is a link to a good article filled with information for blog page upgrades.

<http://www.theblogwidgets.com/2010/02/facebook-widgets-and-tools-for-your.html>

Sample Blog Posts:

What's Blooming Today?

We got a fresh delivery of flowers today, and they are gorgeous. While we'll miss the colorful summer blooms, it's that time of year when we transition from primary colors to the more modest palette of fall. Deep orange, rich purple, muted red and burnt yellow. We are putting together some exquisite arrangements with our new products, including (list flower types). Many of these can be used for centerpieces at family dinners or events, which we know are big at this time of year. We'll be putting together some of our own arrangements this week, and welcome any ideas you may have.

Join Us at May Fair!

This weekend we will have a flower design specialist at the xyz park's May Fair extravaganza (at xyz Street) to arm visitors with critical skills and tips for making any flower arrangement a true work of art. From delicate floral balls to feature at garden parties or unique table centerpieces, matching the right colors and varieties can make all the difference. Any specific requests? Let us know at xyzflorist.com!

Flowers and Food: A Winning Combo

This Wednesday, xyz Floral Shop is hosting a food drive for the (local community) food bank. ABC Food Bank works hard to alleviate the stress of food insecurity for hundreds of families in our community. We have committed to contributing 50 pounds of food – but we need your help! So, for every can or box of non-perishable food you drop off at our store, we will give you a fun floral token in appreciation! We will also be serving lemonade and encourage you to check out the new blooms in our cooler. Thanks for helping out and, more importantly, for helping hungry families.

Want Great Emotional Intelligence? Buy Flowers!

According to a research conducted at Rutgers University, people who send flowers as opposed to other gifts are viewed as successful, caring and emotionally intelligent. As flower purchasers, they give the impression they can effectively express their feelings and take time to understand the feelings of others. Nothing can put a smile on someone's face like fresh flowers. Come see how we can help!

Facebook

Objective: Facebook allows you to feature your store's personality online in a highly visual and dynamic platform. "Likes" and comments among your community of "friends" drives additional interest among their own "friends" and fans, generating new followers.



Outcome: Create a place for customers to comment on store experiences, product purchases and more, driving interest in your offering and, ideally, in-store traffic.

Overview: Facebook is a must-have for any retail florist. If you do not already have a Facebook page, [setting one up](#) is simple. Facebook allows you to manage your customer relationships in a low-pressure environment in real time. By posting information that resonates with customers – from in-store activities to specials to community events – you can spark engagement and build awareness with an active and plugged-in community.

Facebook is also the perfect platform for showcasing customer testimonials. Happy, satisfied customers are the best ads for any retail operation. While some customers will proactively post their own feedback, you should feel free to ask your customers to post their experiences. Getting familiar with the Facebook platform is important. Here are links to a few floral industry Facebook pages that do a really nice job communicating to their followers:

<https://www.facebook.com/MayeshWholesale>
<https://www.facebook.com/nortonsflowers>
<https://www.facebook.com/bostonflorist>
<https://www.facebook.com/WisteriaDesign>
<https://www.facebook.com/UrbanOrchid?fref=ts>

Promote your Facebook page link/widget/plugin to customers via e-mail correspondence, direct mail or advertising platforms, your website and on existing or new social media networks.

Remember to always try to post your content on your blog/website, especially content with more depth, and then post the link to your content on your social media platforms, like Facebook and Twitter. This will ensure that you are consistently leading prospects to your website. For example, customer testimonials would be great content to house directly on your website/blog while posting pictures directly to social platforms would be a sound strategy to keep in mind.

Twitter

Objective: Twitter allows you to engage with your customers on a daily basis in a fun format, driving conversation and building relationships. In addition, it can reinforce your special artistic attributes, driving interest and, ultimately, store traffic.

Outcome: Establish a regular, daily “conversation” on your store and its activities. By creating compelling and relevant tweets, you can engage existing customers and entice others to follow and, ideally, visit you. Create a place for customers to comment on store experiences, product purchases and more, driving interest in your offering and, ideally, in-store traffic.

Overview: If you do not already have a Twitter feed, it is a very easy way – in literally minutes a day – to push out information quickly and efficiently to current and prospective customers.



Twitter should be considered a conversation – you want to post content that engages a reaction from your followers. Below are sample tweets that you can copy or use as a guide to direct your own tweets. The goal is to push out – in 140 characters or less – communications about what’s going on in the store, in the community and in the world of flowers generally.

Sample Tweets:

- Today our shop smells like Irises. Stop by for a pick me up. #flowersrock
- Did you know that the beautiful scent of Gardenias means, “You are lovely”? Do you know anyone that needs to hear that today? #flowermeanings
- Hottest trend for wedding flowers this year? The Dahlia – can you see why (insert link to photo). #weddingflowers

- Perfect for Fall centerpieces, Chrysanthemums (“mums”) are also the longest lasting cut flowers – up to 20 days! #flowertips
- Is your son starting his first job? A Camellia is the traditional good luck gift for men.
- Perfect for Fall, our in house designer can do a custom wreath for your door (photo attached). #flowerrends
- What goes great with spiced apple cider? A beautiful centerpiece of orange and yellow ranunculus. (As a bonus: It means “You are dazzling!”)
- Stop by today! One day deal only on Zinnias. #flowergifts
- Can anyone name this flower? (insert photo)
- Yellow rose for friendship, but what flower means “please forgive me.” #flowermeanings
- Don’t forget a bouquet for your favorite soloists at the school concert this weekend.
- Want to buy local? These flowers are just in California. (insert photo) #localflorists #golocal
- Lavender by the front door can make coming home that much better.
- We’ll be at the ABC Farmers market this weekend. Stop by. #localflowers

Other Creative Ideas:

We've developed the following list of fun plays on words all using a flower variety as the attraction. We think these can and should be used in a variety of ways, including (but not limited to): on promotional materials, printed on coupons or gift cards and in social media. We've included sample tweets below each one as well:

IRIS you a Happy Mother’s Day

- Tweet: IRIS you a Happy Mother's Day. #flowersformom

Tulips are Better than One – Happy Valentines Day.

- Tweet: Tulips are better than One #happyvalentinesday

Let the SUNflower Shine.

- Tweet: Let the SUNFLOWER shine. #celebratesummer 7

Congratulations on your GERBERa baby!

- Tweet: Congratulations on your GERBERa baby! #sayitwithflowers

Let there be PEONIES on Earth, and Let it begin with me.

- Tweet: Let there be PEONIES on Earth. #happyearthday

Daisy Daisy, Give me Your Answer DO! Propose with Flowers!

- Tweet: Daisy, Daisy, Give me Your Answer, DO! #popthequestionwithflowers

Tulips or not Tulips, That is the Question.

- Tweet: Oh Romeo, Yes, Tulips are Better than One. #valentine'sday

MUM’s the word..... surprise your favorite person with Flowers.

- Tweet: MUM's the Word. #flowersjustbecause

You’ll see the world through ROSE colored glasses with this bouquet.

- Tweet: See the world through ROSE colored glasses. #flowerpickmeup

Sample Hashtags:

If you are already using Twitter, you are familiar with hashtags – which we have featured in the above sample Tweets. The # symbol – called a hashtag – is used to mark keywords or topics in a Tweet. It was created organically by Twitter users as a way to categorize messages.



People use the # symbol before a relevant keyword or phrase, with no spaces. Clicking on a hashtagged word in any message shows you all the other Tweets marked with that keyword. It's a great way to get people interested in a particular topic or make a Tweet more compelling by featuring a hashtagged word. Use hashtags, however, only on Tweets relevant to the topic. Searching under specific hashtags is also a great way to see who in your community is also actively talking about the topic. You can engage customers, partners and media contacts this way.

It's important not to over-tag a single Tweet. Twitter recommends using no more than 2 hashtags per Tweet.

Samples to consider using:

#flowersrock	#buylocal	#whatflowersarebest
#fallflowers	#flowertrends	#weddingdesign
#flowers	#flowergifts	#bouquetsandmore
#supportlocalflorists	#flowerdesign	#localflowers
#whatsblooming	#flowersformom	#flowergram
#bestblooms	#flowersformainsqueeze	#weddings
#blooms	#flowersforguys	#yourcity (e.g. #miami)
#bouquets		

For more information, including how to sign up for Twitter, see:
<https://support.twitter.com/articles/215585>.

Say it with Pictures

As with most social media channels, photos enhance any post, and the links also improve your search engine optimization as well. As the flower industry boasts some of the most beautiful, compelling and inherently natural pictures of any industry, showcasing new buds and arrangements daily will entice more fans and followers and, ideally, encourage in-store traffic. Infusing humor into pictures is also a good way to generate “likes” and build social media traction and presence.



There are a few networks that cater almost exclusively to picture posts, including Pinterest and Instagram. Here are links to help answer questions about the platforms and information on how to get started:

<http://about.pinterest.com/basics/>
<http://help.instagram.com>

Tips for Pinterest (2-3 hours to begin, maintain weekly/monthly)

Creating a pin board will take you 1-2 hours to start, and to keep current, you should consider updating on a weekly, or at least monthly basis. The best reason to use Pinterest? It has more than 70 million users, is one of the top five social media outlets and the fourth largest topic? [Wedding flowers. Want to know more about Pinterest and how it compares?](#) So this invaluable resource skews heavily toward female buyers and is the perfect match for a wedding flower shop.

To get started, do your homework. Begin by -- the obvious signing up -- and then do your homework. Take a look at the boards that receive a large number of “repins,” or images that other users connect with and decide to repost them. This is a key measurement. Spend an hour and see what others are doing. Have you noticed the Pinterest icon on your competitors’ websites?

Ready to start your own boards?

Begin by pulling your photos into folders or “collections” so when you build your first board you will have already made a plan for your set-up. This should take you approximately an hour. As you build your photo collections, remember, it is total inspiration. Consider the seasonal and trend colors. As you create your groupings, remember, you bring flower expertise, many other trend boards, but you know the trend flowers. As you build each “pin board” think of it like an individual look board. Don’t just think flowers, consider repining some of your favorite examples into your board.



There are plenty of good examples of businesses that use Pinterest as a successful marketing tool. If you have not done so already, be sure to convert your business Pinterest page, to a business account so that you can take full advantage of the provided benefits such as the analytics and adding pin it buttons to your website’s images. <http://business.pinterest.com/en>

- Post pictures of your own work in your blog and be sure to pin them to appropriate boards.
- Include pictures from other companies, not just your own.
- Be sure to include detailed descriptions of each pin so that your pictures can be found when searching.
- When pinning, be sure to give appropriate credit to vendors.
- Create one board that helps sell your arrangements for sale on your website.
 - Pin the picture
 - In the description use the \$ sign in front of the price, which indicates that your users can purchase that particular item.
- Follow your followers to know what trends are interesting to them. Use this information to create new boards and perhaps test out new design ideas.

Instagram:

- Inspire visually & in real time
- Requires less maintenance and time than Pinterest. Just minutes a day.
- Utilize relevant/popular/trending hashtags so that others may find your posts who do not currently follow you.
- Mix it up by posting short 15 second videos.
- Show behind-the-scenes type of shots.

- Use this platform to show off the personalities of your staff and yourself.
- Again, follow your followers and respond to posts that your company is tagged in.
- Connect to your Twitter or Facebook account.
- Curate content via Instagram by embedding images into your blog.

Say it with Video

In addition to pictures, videos are well received in the social media space. By promoting videos via Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, retailers have an opportunity to bring their practice to life. With iPhones, iPads and other smart devices in almost everyone's hands today, it's easy enough to film a professional quality video without a production crew.

Video Tips & Resources

It's important to keep in mind that YouTube is filled with videos of people arranging flowers. So just because you can film everything doesn't mean you should. In order for your videos to stand out, keep the following in mind:

- Pick a quiet time of day, preferably before or after opening, to cut down on background noise and ensure you have no interruptions.
- Ensure there are no fans, music, humidifiers or any other "silent" noisemakers playing near you while filming.
- Plan your shoot in advance by mapping out where you will stand, and move to, what main points you'll cover and what materials you'll need.
- You don't need to overdo it! Pick one new flower, or one new arrangement, or one lesson to film. Starting out stick to under a minute – short, snappy and keeping people's attention. The better you get you can work up to longer footage, if warranted. Think of the popularity of Vine, the new micro video companion to Twitter. Short is good!
- Good quality doesn't mean expensive equipment. Just be sure to use a tripod whenever possible and consider investing in a microphone for the best sound.

What to Film?

Stumped on what to feature? Here are some initial ideas to consider:

- Attending a local event, farmers market or conference? Take some short video to give people the feel of the event and then get them excited about possibly attending.
- Unloading a new delivery? Take a quick video clip to show the abundance and freshness of the latest arrivals.
- Have a tip for arranging or keeping flowers longer? Prepare a short lesson and illustrate it in a clip.
- Did anyone interesting stop by your flower shop? Ask them if they'd mind being your video customer of the day – you can ask them who they are buying flowers for on film!
- Do your customers have frequently asked questions? Answer them in video format.

Production Resources

If you are not doing live video, there are also several free or inexpensive online services that you can use to produce professional quality videos or animated videos for use in social and traditional media. And if

you have the time, animated voice to text videos can be quite amusing. We recommend investigating the following platforms:

Animoto

Animoto creates videos from still photos. You can use as many or as few as you want and pick background music to change the tempo of the photo flow. Here is a sample:

<http://animoto.com/play/A3blnL3ERWijR0SR1JA33A>

Text to Voice Animation

GoAnimate, iClone, Muvizu or PowToon. Following is a sample of a text to voice animation:

http://www.oddcast.com/home/demos/tts/tts_example.php

Here is a good example of a video that features daily in-store activity set to music.

<http://thefleuriste.com/about/>

Incorporating humor into your videos is also a great way to capture your audience's attention and increase your social media fan base. The below example is a terrific take on store operations – bringing to life the store's personality and product in a funny way. While this particular example is quite an elaborate parody, it shows the breadth of creativity and fun that retailers can have with products and staff.

<http://youtu.be/0qDYeh9yy14>

Get Organized

In an effort to streamline your daily posts and manage a more consistent social media presence across multiple channels, consider using a social media dashboard such as Hootsuite or SocialSprout. These platforms provide an all-in-one interface to allow seamless management of sites from one central location. Following are a few of the more popular dashboards and their pricing (where applicable).

Hootsuite

This dashboard supports Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+ Pages, Tumblr, WordPress, and others, so it's a good option for those who manage multiple social media profiles. The basic plan is free and allows you to manage up to five social media profiles. The Pro version has more bells and whistles and includes up to 50 social media accounts and the ability to allow team members to post to various platforms (without giving them your id/password).

<https://hootsuite.com>

Postling

This dashboard supports Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, WordPress and LinkedIn. Trying it will cost you \$1.00. After that, it's \$10.00 per month. Postling lets you preschedule posts and also aggregates all comments so you can review and respond to them in one easy-to-access list.

<https://postling.com>

SproutSocial

This platform supports Google+, LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter and provides easy-to-read analytics in chart format that allow you to see what content is exciting your audience. After a 30-day free trial, the platform costs \$39.00 per month.

<http://sproutsocial.com>

Tweetdeck

Ideal for those focused primarily on Twitter. With Tweetdeck, you can monitor and manage multiple accounts, arrange your feeds to focus on the most important content, and preschedule tweets.

<http://tweetdeck.com>

Broadcast Media

Objective: Elevate awareness and exposure of your store, special events and community engagements with on air spots focused on the artistry, functionality and psychology of flowers.

Outcome: Increase and broaden your customer base.

Overview: In addition to an active social media conversation, building awareness of and interest in your retail outlet through broadcast media channels is valuable. It's often difficult, however, to pique the interest of television and radio stations because they are inundated with requests.

As a result, below are a few "pitch" ideas we recommend you try with your local stations. Outreach should be directed to the station's Assignment Booker, followed by a phone call to make sure they received it. As a general rule, 3 attempts to connect are sufficient before moving on to another outlet or opportunity.

Broadcast Pitch Ideas:

Transforming Your House on a Budget

Dear Assignment Booker,

Does your house need a pick me up, but a new coat of paint or furniture just isn't in the budget just now? One easy and inexpensive fix that can transform your home is to turn to floral designs to brighten rooms, create dazzling visual centerpieces and add pops of color.

Would you be interested in having our in-house designer stop for a segment on how simple floral arrangements can transform your house? Name, brief bio, can provide lively and entertaining tips on the following:

- How to leverage outdoor flowers
- Innovative designs that go beyond traditional bouquets
- Tips for arranging at home and making flowers last; and
- Best flowers to really make a home smell amazing

Best,

xyz Store Owner/Operator

Support Local Businesses

Dear Assignment Booker,

Renewed consumer commitment to all things local seems to be dominating the headlines these days with farmers markets, community bike shares and more taking off in many areas. The floral industry, however, is an often overlooked part of that mix. After years of increased use of 1-800 delivery services, the local florist is fighting back. Many consumers don't realize that while same-day orders placed with the online floral behemoths may be filled at a local florist, that retailer only receives X percent of the sale – barely enough to cover the cost of filling the order. Truly “buying local” makes a big difference. Would you be interested in featuring NAME, FLORIST on your show to discuss how “buying local” includes the local corner florist?

Best,

xyz Store Owner/Operator

Sample Community Events Calendar Show

Dear Assignment Booker,

We'd be delighted to come on your show to discuss our participation in the upcoming NAME LOCAL CHARITY EVENT taking place next weekend.

As the region's oldest family owned florist, ABC Florist is committed to supporting this community and has recently pledged to donate XXX to the charity. Name, Owner, would be happy to talk about the event and how you can help get involved.

Best,

xyz Store Owner/Operator

Sample Local Morning Show Pitches

Dear Assignment Booker,

Looking for the perfect hostess gift?

Instead of a bottle of wine, this time why not consider a unique arrangement. Flowers can send messages that mean a lot more than friendship and love. Would you consider having our local in house expert appear on your show to talk about the latest trends in flowers, including:

- New floral varieties available this Fall/season
- Which flowers are appropriate for a variety of events – dinner party, graduation, new job, I'm sorry and more

Dear Assignment Booker,

Want to extend the life of your fresh cut flowers? The beauty of fresh cut flowers should last as long as possible.

Would you consider having our local in house expert appear on your show to talk about tips for keeping fresh cut flowers fresh and blooming, such as:

- Hydrangea's last longer when cut on an angle and placed in hot water for 30 seconds before placing in a container with room temperature water
- Add a penny or bleach to water to keep flowers healthier longer

Print Media

Objective: Increase awareness of your operations by publishing timely and relevant updates on store operations, special events, anniversaries, new hires, acquisitions and more.

Outcome: Inform, cultivate and extend customer base, build customer loyalty and improve SEO performance.

Overview: Exposure of your store's successes, news and activities in your local paper is a critical component of any communications effort. In addition to building and buttressing awareness among current and prospective customers, publishing press releases via websites and wires services also works to enhance your store's search engine rankings – allowing you better organic results when customers are searching for local florist and flower options on Google and other search engines.

Reach out to your local newspaper about running print advertisements. They typically have someone on staff who can design an AD for you. Or reach out to a local graphic design company that can design an AD for you that can be used in multiple outlets.

Topics that warrant a press release include (but are not limited to):

- A new hire
- A new purchase/acquisition
- A new partnership/sponsorship
- A new high profile event client (as appropriate)
- Economic impact trends
- Anniversaries and other milestones

Below is a sample press release for you to model for any number of important store activities and milestones.

Sample Press Release:

Headline: 16 Font (Lead News Summarized); Example:

ABC Florist Announces Fiftieth Anniversary In-Store Celebration Week

(Other News Options Include: ABC Florist Owner to Launch Monthly ABC News Segment OR ABC Flowers Establishes Partnership with XYZ Charity)

Subhead: 12 Font, Italics includes additional, most important details of announcement (in case people don't read further); Example:

Exclusive varieties, one week only deals and in-store classes offered as part of celebration

Washington, DC. (your city), September 21, 2013 – ABC Florist, the oldest family owned florist operating in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, today announced the launch of their 50th Anniversary Celebration festivities. To honor their love of flowers and their lifelong home in the Washington area, ABC is devoting the week to giving back to the community and to their customers with a series of special events, deals and new partnerships.

“Obviously, we feel there’s no better way to say ‘thank you’ or ‘we couldn’t have done it without you’ than by saying it with flowers; so that’s just what we plan to do all week,” said OWNER, RETAIL NAME.

“We love what we do, and we love the city that’s supported us the past 50 years. As a result, we want to take this chance to honor both with some fun events, deals, special partnerships and some surprises as well.”

Celebration activities include:

- Five days of deals on bouquets to go
- Charity Support – One charity will be picked each day for a donation
- Daily flower arranging classes
- Special guests
- Partnerships

For more information on activities, please visit www.abcfloirist.com

About ABC Flowers (tailor as necessary) ABC Flowers is Washington’s oldest family owned florist, supporting the area’s floral needs since 1967. ABC Florist has three locations in Tenleytown, Columbia Heights and Georgetown and is an active supporter of Children’s National Hospital. They can be found online at www.abcfloirist.com on facebook and twitter @abcflowers.13

Opinion Editorials

Objective: Raise awareness of your perspective on a particular issue of significance to your business, the community or the industry as a whole.

Outcome: Position yourself as a leader in the floral industry, and as an essential part of the local/regional/national economic paradigm.

Overview: An opinion piece – or op-ed – focuses on a particular issue of importance to your business or the broader community and is an excellent way to position you as a thought leader and influencer among key audiences.

Often times newspaper editorial pages – especially in smaller markets – are eager for new angles and perspectives. Below is one approach to consider, designed to educate consumers about the unique challenges facing the retail floral industry while, at the same time, reinforcing its critical and special role in the local economy and community. Op-eds generally run around 650 - 750 words, and are sent to the editorial page or op-ed page editor of the paper. If printed, it should be featured on the store’s website and pushed out via all relevant social media channels (likely as a link).

While this is likely not a piece you will use verbatim, important elements to consider and highlighted below for directional purposes include:

- **Timely Lead:** Using a data point or reference a recent event to draw in the reader and put the piece into a current and relevant context.
- **Key Attributes:** Incorporate key competitive differentiators and industry attributes, including:
 - Artistry
 - Superior customer service
 - Quality product

- Transparent pricing
- **Store and/or Industry Data:** Feature hard data to support arguments or concepts. Primary or readily found secondary economy/industry data is excellent.
- **Conclude with Main Message:** The main objective of the below piece is to make the case for why the local retail florist is a better option than the chains. A strong concluding message, with a personal connection, will work to reinforce a particular point – in this case, that local retail florists are the best choice – and, ideally, educate and change behavior.

Sample Op-ed

Demise of the Retail Florist? Not on My Watch

A story on CNBC recently highlighted what it dubbed the “demise” of the small floral vendor. Several contributing factors – from a weak economy to the rise of massive online floral sites – were cited. While it’s true the retail florist has seen its share of challenges, I for one do not believe it is all doom and gloom.

For starters, flowers play a unique role in our society. The acts of giving and receiving flowers are as familiar to our culture as popping champagne on New Year’s Eve or breaking bread with friends and family on holidays. Flowers make people feel happy and special. According to the Society of American Florists, 92 percent of people perceive flowers as a gift that brings pure joy, and 86 percent of people think that people who give flowers are thoughtful and sophisticated.

Furthermore, no one does a better job of selecting and arranging flowers than a local florist. We know what’s in season, what the personality of our customers demand, and we stay on top of design trends to ensure every stem and bouquet is exceptional. We have deep relationships with our wholesalers who bring us only the best product at the most competitive prices, as well as cutting edge tools and techniques to ensure our flowers are the freshest around.

So with all of these benefits going for it, why has the industry experienced a 37 percent decrease in retail floral shops over the past 11 years?

Unfortunately, the recent economic recession was tough for many small business owners to withstand. This was the case for many industries, not just the floral industry. For those who successfully endured the rough economic environment, however, the rise of online floral behemoths did set many in the flower industry on their heels. In many ways, however, retail florists are to blame for a sluggish response to this new competition. While increased competition is a challenge, it should not be considered – or blamed – as a permanent threat.

While I can’t foresee a time when the brick-and-mortar retail florist becomes obsolete, I do think we could do a better job of educating our consumers about how the online business works and impacts us. Even though many same day online orders do get filled at local retail outlets, the retail florist are only paid a certain percentage of that order’s value, once commissions are assumed by the sending broker. That leaves the retail florist with only about 68 percent of the value of the product we are obligated to fill – not a great model for business. Therefore, making it easier for consumers to find their local retail florist instead of going straight to the mega online channels would be a smart way to compete in this growing space.

We also take great pride and should more readily tout the fact that retail florists are the only business that offers same day delivery, locally and across the country at frequently significantly lower rates than one can find at FedEx, UPS, and USPS for “next day” or “2nd day” delivery. A recent 36 roses for \$36

promotion for one of the mega online chains revealed that – once all the delivery and hidden “convenience” fees were included – \$36 quickly became closer to \$80. Superior service and transparent pricing are the cornerstones of any retail florist’s business.

My store (insert store name) has been in business for (x) years. We have invested in (high quality talent) and (have built relationships with our customers through social media and in-store events and seminars). Getting it right – with great attention to detail and outstanding service – will ensure customers continue to choose their local retail florist for every purchase. Whether it’s a first corsage, wedding arrangement or birthday bouquet, I personally look forward to exceeding my customers’ expectations as a local business owner, community member and flower enthusiast for years to come.

(Bob Smith) is the owner of (xyz flowers), a family owned-business since 19xx (insert brief personal bio). If you can’t find him in the store, find him at www.xyzflowers.com.

E-Mail and Direct Mail

Objective: Keep customers apprised of products, promotions and special events.

Outcome: Keep your store top-of-mind with existing customers and build a network of new customers.

Overview: If you already have an e-mail and direct mail customer database, we encourage you to leverage content used on your social media platforms and with the press in these communications. While you may already alert customers via e-mail and direct mail, these vehicles are a terrific way to alert customers to:

- Daily flower features and specials
- In-store seminars and activities
- Community activity and events

While your social media networks will function primarily as relationship building platforms, e-mail can be leveraged for more direct marketing and sales efforts. You should, however, including live links to all relevant social media networks within e-mails.

Charitable Tie-Ins

Objective: Build awareness and increase brand recognition and impact.

Outcome: Enhance buying experiences and strengthen connections to and relationships with customers and the community.

Overview: A good way to build awareness is to partner with a local charity or cause. Even if the charity isn’t connected to flowers directly, identifying and “owning” a worthwhile cause will help add legs to any

marketing or communications efforts. In addition, it's a great and relatively easy way to establish and maintain goodwill with consumers, enhancing the overall flower purchasing experience.

Each market will have its own unique set of causes to explore. For instance, coastal markets may have water clean up efforts. Some areas may have a strong focus on animal rescue. We recommend choosing whatever cause you feel you – as a business – can feel good about supporting and promoting.

A well-rounded effort might include:

- Using existing social media channels to communicate with followers about XYZ Charity events, activities, etc.
- Including XYZ Charity logo and website information on direct and e-mail correspondence.
- Collaborating with a local radio station to produce a PSA for XYZ Charity's event (e.g. retailer is the "trusted source" and voice of the PSA).
- Feature photos and videos from XYZ Charity events and activities on the store website, and provide regular updates on XYZ Charity's progress (e.g. XYZ Charity has saved it's 1,000 animal today...tweet them a congratulations!)
- Link to XYZ Charity's website, and ask them to provide a link to the retailer's site as well.
- Retweet, Like and Repost XYZ Charity communications.

Tying in with a charity or community cause gives you, as a retailer, one more reason to connect with consumers and strengthen those relationships. It also gives you fresh, new content to push out via social media and traditional communications channels.

As primarily an occasion-based industry, reminding consumers that you are there for when they DO need to buy flowers can be enhanced with these types of non-occasion communications.

There is also the added opportunity for co-authorship. For instance, if the charity is having a major push for support during a particular time in which you will play a role, co-bylining an op-ed focusing on the importance of their work combined with your support as a trusted business could be a compelling and newsworthy combination. Likewise, pitching broadcast and print reporters about activities you are doing together increases its appeal and likelihood of exposure.

Many retailers have had success in supporting national programs within their local communities. Two good programs to consider getting involved in if you haven't already include:

Flowers for Kids, an in-school curriculum program: <http://www.flowersforkids.org/index.htm>

Memorial Day Flowers Foundation: http://www.memorialdayflowers.org/public_html/17

Guerrilla Marketing Considerations

In addition to the above marketing and communications ideas and tools, we suggest consideration of a few guerrilla marketing ideas that may fit into your store's annual budget and activity calendar.

Collateral Materials

Produce and distribute bumper stickers or magnets to customers in store and/or at community events that feature fun flower sayings, such as:

- "Fish for dinner? Pair it with the right bouquet. abcflowers.com"

- “Gotta get a Lily? – Find them in bloom at abcflowers.com”
- “Snapped at your mom? Make it right. abcflowers.com”
- “What’s blooming? Find out at abcflowers.com”
- “Need a pick-me-up? Check us out. abcflowers.com”

Flower Trucks

For those retailers with the financial or existing fleet means, consider creating a Flower Truck modeled after the popular urban food trucks or familiar ice cream trucks. The benefits include:

- Branding – huge on-truck design opportunities
- Mobile – flowers can be anywhere at anytime
- Social media opportunities galore, such as:
 - Location tweets (e.g. #abcmobile at palisades famers market today!); these are very popular with the food trucks and take on a viral life of their own
 - Dedicated Facebook page and blog content
 - Perfect Instagram and Pinterest material

Pop Up Shops

Traditional pop up shops can be expensive to produce but consider a twist on this cool concept. Team up to launch special pop-up shopping experiences either in your retail storefront or at another business. Look for businesses that are not competitors, but still have a similar target market. Host a pop-up shop at your place of business to increase foot traffic or work with a business to host your company at their storefront. Either way it can be done, excitement and a novel shopping experience can be created producing positive buzz worthy of your social community to share. For example, a retailer in Cleveland, Urban Orchid, hosted a food pop up in their retail space for lunch. Here are more details: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/246068878913039/>

Holidays and Events/Special Dates

January 2014

1 New Year’s Day
4 Trivia Day
5 National Bird Day
6 Feast of the Epiphany/Three Kings Day
10 Houseplant Appreciation Day
20 Martin Luther King Day
25 Opposite Day
31 Chinese New Years

February 2014

National Weddings Month
2 Groundhog’s Day
2 Super Bowl Sunday
12 Lincoln’s Birthday
14 Valentine’s Day

15 Singles Awareness Day
17 President’s Day
17 Random Acts of Kindness Day
22 Washington’s Birthday

March 2014

2 Oscar Night
4 Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday)
5 Ash Wednesday
8 International Women’s Day
15 Ides of March
15 Purim begins at sundown
17 St. Patrick’s Day
20 Spring Equinox
20 International Earth Day
29 National Mom and Pop Business Owners Day

April 2014

Keep America Beautiful Month
1 April Fool's Day
4 National Walk to Work Day
13 Palm Sunday
14 Passover begins at Sundown
18 Good Friday
20 Easter Sunday
21 Patriot's Day
22 Earth Day (U.S.)
23 Administrative Professionals Day
24 Take Your Daughter to Work Day
25 Arbor Day

May 2014

1 May Day
5 Cinco de Mayo
6 National Teacher's Day
8 VE Day, WW II
11 Mother's Day
16 National Bike to Work Day
17 Armed Forces Day
24 Victoria Day (Canada)
26 Memorial Day

June 2014

Rose Month
6 D Day, WWII
14 Flag Day
15 Father's Day
19 Juneteenth Day
21 Summer Solstice
29 Ramadan begins

July 2014

1 Canada Day
2 I Forgot Day
4 Independence Day
22 Hammock Day
23-28 World Youth Day(s)

August 2014

Family Fun Month
Romance Awareness Month
3 Friendship Day
3 International Forgiveness Day
3 Sisters Day

12 Middle Child's Day
21 Senior Citizens Day
25 Kiss and Make Up day
27 Just Because Day

September 2014

1 Labor Day
2 VJ Day, WWII
7 Grandparent's Day
11 911 Remembrance Day
17 Constitution Day
21 International Peace Day (UN)
23 Autumnal Equinox
24 Rosh Hashanah begins at sundown
26 Native American Day
28 National Good Neighbor Day

October 2014

1 International Day for the Elderly
3 Yom Kippur
5 Do Something Nice Day
5 Oktoberfest
8 Sukkot begins at sundown
13 Columbus Day
13 Thanksgiving Day
16 Boss's Day
18 Sweetest Day
25 Make a Difference Day
31 Halloween

November 2014

1 All Saint's Day
1 Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead)
3 All Soul's Day
4 Election Day
11 Veteran's Day
13 Sadie Hawkins Day
20 Great American Smokeout
20 Universal Children's Day
27 Thanksgiving Day
30 Advent begins

December 2014

7 Pearl Harbor Day
12 Poinsettia Day
16 Chanukah begins (lasts 8 days)
21 Winter Solstice
25 Christmas



26 Boxing Day
26 Kwanzaa
27 National Fruitcake Day
31 New Year's Eve

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