

Hands On

TIPS, TRENDS AND TACTICS FOR THE SAVVY RETAILER

FIRST HAND ACCOUNT

FLORIST-EVENT PLANNER PARTNERSHIP BUILDS BUSINESS AND 'LIKES'



DYNAMIC DUO Pauleen Vacca (right), a former employee of Wendy Rockcastle, of Rockcastle Florist, now runs her own event and graphic design firm, but she still helps the florist manage its brand image and increase its social media presence; in addition to manning the shop's scheduled Facebook updates, Vacca set up Rockcastle's Pinterest, Instagram and Twitter accounts.

> To promote her shop's bridal brand and build a bigger social media audience among the newly engaged, Wendy Rockcastle, owner of Rockcastle Florist in Rochester and Canandaigua, N.Y., launched a contest with two things known to make brides swoon: Pinterest —and the chance to win free stuff.

Called "Pin it to Win It," the contest, which ended Jan. 27, encouraged women to create a "dream wedding board" with at least 50 pins conveying their ideal day, be it photos of flowers, attire, invitations, décor or food. (To kick start the creative process, the flower shop linked to its own Pinterest boards.) The prize: a complimentary floral consultation and bouquet (or equivalent design), a two-hour planning consultation with Pauleenanne Design (an event and graphic design company founded by former Rockcastle Florist employee, Pauleen Vacca) and a bridal emergency kit for unanticipated "uh-oh moments."

To enter, brides had to "like" the Rockcastle Florist and Pauleenanne Design Facebook pages and then share a link to their board with a brief description about what inspired them.

When Rockcastle announced the decision on her shop's Facebook page, she received 22 "likes" and eight comments, including the following from the winner: "Omg, omg, omg, thank you, thank you! I'm so excited!"

Rockcastle and Vacca have a history of collaborating on social media together — and plans to keep up the partnership. Vacca, 24, worked for Rockcastle for a little less than a year after she graduated from college with degrees in graphic design and communications. Once Vacca left to start her company, Rockcastle and her husband quickly decided to keep up the professional relationship; today, Vacca's company coordinates the florist's scheduled social media posts and creates graphic design elements for print and web promotions, including emails. They've also worked together to promote both businesses at local events and Vacca helped Rockcastle score a PR gig many florists would welcome: the opportunity to be a regular, "expert blogger" for the local newspaper.

Rockcastle said working with Vacca has freed up her schedule, allowing her to re-allocate the 10 to 20 hours per week she would otherwise have devoted to social media and related tasks to other jobs around the business. "Before Pauleen came along, I was handling all of our social media, and we were kind of limping along," Rockcastle said. "Because she's so young, it's hard for me not to treat her like my daughter - but I'm learning so much from her." 🌸

— Katie Hendrick and Mary Westbrook

BLAST OFF

> The info at SAF's One-Day Profit Blast in Baltimore on Jan. 26 was too good not to share — that's why we've turned over the pages of Hands On this month to Bill Schaffer, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, and Kristine Kratt, AIFD, PFCI, of Schaffer Designs in Philadelphia, trend-hunting gurus who kicked off the Profit Blast educational sessions. Read on for some of their top tips.



IN A PICKLE PERK UP YOUR WORDS

Problem: Team members who under-sell to customers
Solution: Build a better vocab

Pretty? Nice? Sweet? Gag me, said Kratt and Schaffer. If your team uses boring, generic language to describe your work, your customers will expect boring, generic (ahem, inexpensive) designs. "Vocabulary is key," Kratt said. "If a bride intended 'stunning' but you only offer 'pretty,' she may settle for (a lower-priced option) because that is all she thinks she can have... Or, she may go elsewhere to find her 'stunning' bouquet."



The fix: Create a list of alternative words and phrases. Introduce them to your staff — better yet, engage them in the brainstorming process. Keep the

reference handy, and watch your sales skyrocket. "'Beautiful, lush seasonal stems arranged in a vase' has much more verbal power than 'a nice mixed arrangement,'" Kratt said. "Enhanced vocabulary shows you offer something special and are willing to create something unique."

AROUND THE WEB SPRING CLEANING

> Schaffer and Kratt would like all florists to repeat after them: Less is so much more on website menus. The pair cringe when they see sites cluttered with hundreds of choices. Instead of loading up your site with every photo available to you, build a "controlled online menu," Schaffer said. "Think in terms of collections." Schaffer and Kratt recommend the streamlined style of Ovando Floral and Event Design in New York, which "has a boutique-style brand, limited but powerful selections, and an incredible visual impact." Check it out at ovandonyfloraldesign.com.

VISUAL IMPACT POP YOUR COLORS



GOTTA STOP Florists who want to stop traffic, and stay on trend, can copy the bold colors of the the "Confetti" trend in window displays and visual merchandising.

> Of the trend palettes Schaffer and Kratt outlined for 2014, the sharp and bright "Confetti" vignette (think: Pantone's 2014 Color of the Year Radiant Orchid paired with poppy red, dandelion yellow and bold, darling patterns) is the best choice for large, front-of-the-store window displays this spring.

"If your storefront is a quick drive-by on a busy thoroughfare, using bright displays with bold color-blocking will let you stand out," Kratt said. "For stores with good walk-in traffic, the repetition of bold colors and shapes in a window makes walking into your business feel modern and invigorating." (Read up on other color trends in the January issue of *Floral Management* at safnow.org.)



LIMITED RUN Ovandonyfloraldesign.com. features four collections, along with sections for plants and orchids, luxury gifts (pictured) and in-store classes. Each section has no more than 10 items.