On the first day of Christmas my florist gave to me ... a 20 percent discount on my favorite candle! The melody may sound off, but a Christmas-themed promotion at Broadway Floral Home and Garden in Portland, Ore., has customers clicking, purchasing and making an extra stop at the store during one of the florist’s busiest seasons.

Five years ago Doug Fick and his team started their “24 Days of Christmas” promo, and the initiative is going stronger than ever. Here’s how it works: On the first day of December, Fick uploads an advent calendar-style graphic online, with interactive buttons on Dec. 1 to Dec. 24. When customers click on a date, the day’s special is revealed. Customers can’t click ahead, and while they can click on past dates, those promos show up as “expired” and create an immediate “Oh darn, I missed it!” reaction.

The time constraint creates a sense of urgency and excitement — that critical “call to action,” Fick said — and that’s important to his overarching goal of increasing in-store business during the homestretch of the year, which accounts for about 18 percent of total sales. The promos themselves are critical to the success of the effort, and Fick has found that gift items work best (candles, accessories, jewelry, etc.) discounted by at least 20 percent (“10 percent really isn’t worth a customer’s time to stop in,” he said). Buy one or two items, and get one free deals also are popular selections.

The appeal of the program from Fick’s perspective is two-fold: He’s able to promote his many non-floral offerings to customers and get shoppers into his store. (This year, some daily promos will be redeemable online, but in the past almost all of them have been good for in-store purchase only.) It’s also a flexible effort; Fick generally plans the promos in 10-day batches and can adjust them to better reflect what he wants to push as the end of the year draws closer.

“It’s hard to say definitively that any particular item drove sales that day,” Fick said, “but I know people are coming in, and it resonates with our key demographic,” which is women 18 years old and up. Some of his less tech-savvy customers even call in daily to find out what the featured deal will be. This year, Fick and his team also will be adding a teaser-element to the annual special, with a week’s worth of sneak peeks to customers on the store’s mailing list — all the better to build excitement and put that twinkle in holiday shoppers’ eyes. 🎄
SOCIAL MEDIA
‘NEW’ HOLIDAY RAISES THE BAR

Thanks to some fast thinking, and even faster tweeting, last fall the team at Starbright Floral Design in New York City created a “new” floral event: “Pass the Bar Day.”

On a Tuesday morning in late October, an eagle-eyed staff member noticed that the first six Internet orders of the day were congratulatory gifts for newly minted lawyers. Senior Partner Nic Faitos promptly took to Twitter with a simple (and thoroughly tagged) message that read in part, “Congrats to all the new #lawyers in #NewYorkState for #passingthebar!”

By day’s end, the shop had received a total of 20 bar-related orders, with an average price of $100, a welcome spike that far surpassed the results for other lackluster fall events (we’re looking at you, Boss’s Day). “I plan on doing a major marketing campaign the day before the next set of scheduled results comes out,” in early 2015, Faitos said.

TECH TIP
BAD WEATHER. GOOD COMMUNICATION.

If plummeting temps are making you sweat — remember the downed power lines and messy roads of last winter? — it may be time to update your internal communication protocols to ensure you can reach all of your staff members during a weather emergency.

Eric Levy of Hillcrest Gardens in Paramus, N.J., said florists may be overlooking a free and powerful tool built into many email providers: texts, or short message service (SMS), blasts. When bad weather strikes, florists can send out SMS blasts to all employees telling them about any changes to shop hours.

Unlike time-consuming phone calls or emails, which can end up in spam folders or go unchecked by employees who don’t have access to their accounts on-the-go, texts are a reliable way to stay in touch with your staff, particularly your younger folks, said SAF CIO Renato Sogueco.

One catch: To use SMS, you need to match the user and carrier. Sogueco suggests the following free resource to do just that: freecarrierlookup.com.

BEST PRACTICES
BANISH ‘NO PROBLEM’

If your team thinks that “no problem” and “sure thing” are perfectly acceptable responses to a customer who says “thank you,” guess again. Public opinion firm Rasmussen Reports indicates that three-quarters of Americans feel the country has shown a general decline in manners, and topping the list of annoying behavior is the disappearance of once common courtesies, including “you’re welcome” and “thank you.” The trend cuts across ages but younger employees may be particularly guilty — and unaware of the teeth-gnashing their easy-breezy responses cause your customers.

The Solution: Train your staff to substitute “no problem” and its ilk with “you’re welcome,” “my pleasure” or even “I’m so glad we could help!” And, make sure you model the behavior you want to see. That means saying “thank you” every time you ask for the floral foam or scissors across a crowded design table.

LAWYER LOVE An impromptu marketing push targeted at new lawyers helped Nic Faitos score 20 additional orders on an otherwise ordinary Tuesday.

CART BEAUTIFUL Lauren Anderson and Rachel Bridgwood gussied up a vintage cart with galvanized pails to create a “flower market” feel and an appealing, versatile display.