Driving Productivity at Valentine’s Day

Paul Goodman, CPA, tackles Valentine’s Day productivity, both on the road and at the design bench.

“How much productivity can I expect from a designer at Valentine’s Day?”

> Valentine’s Day offers the greatest opportunity to maximize design productivity. That’s because the most popular arrangement sold is a dozen roses — simple container, no foam, minimal insertions compared to most arrangements.

Normal productivity from a designer is $105 to $120 per hour, or $840 to $960 per eight-hour day. That assumes your designer can produce four average arrangements per hour and only handles design. But, at Valentine’s Day, you can — and should — expect more.

How much more? Unfortunately, there is no one-answer-fits-all conclusion. Several variables affect just how much your designers can produce beyond their individual skill level. See how these apply to your situation to make a realistic goal for your shop:

### Daily Designer Productivity Targets

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<th>$105 - $120</th>
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<td>Normal / Non-holiday</td>
<td>$637 - $1,035</td>
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<td>Basic Rose Arrangement</td>
<td>$534 - $1,032</td>
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<td>Large Rose Arrangement</td>
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Differentiated Dozens. Although there are many variations, rose arrangements can basically be divided into a “basic dozen” and a “large, showy dozen.”

The basic arrangement uses 40- to 50-centimeter roses and does not have much filler material. These arrangements will retail between $49 and $69, depending on your market. The average designer can produce between 10 to 12 per hour. That means productivity will be somewhere between $490 (10 x $49) and $828 (12 x $69) per hour. That’s not bad compared to the standard $105 to $120 per hour.

But you can improve upon that by streamlining flower preparation (cleaning the foliage and thorns below the water line and counting stems). If you assign someone to prep and pre-count roses into batches of 12, the designer’s productivity can rise by another three arrangements per hour. This will yield $637 (13 x $49) to $1,035 (15 x $69) in hourly productivity.

The large, showy arrangement uses 60- to 70-centimeter roses and lots of filler in a larger vase. It generally retails somewhere between $89 and $129. Assuming the flowers are prepped ahead of time, your designer should be able to produce six to eight an hour. That translates to $534 (6 x $89) and $1,032 (8 x $129) per hour in productivity.

Designer Incentives/Motivation. With increased productivity on rose arrangements, your design labor costs will be one-fourth to one-eighth of non-holiday design labor. To ensure you achieve your goal, consider offering designers a bonus, such as 50 cents for each rose arrangement produced, or better yet, $1 for each arrangement produced over a base number. You might set the base as six arrangements per hour. A bonus system will encourage maximum productivity and promote good attitudes in spite of the frenzied pace and long hours.

“How many drivers should I plan for Valentine’s Day?”

> It’s a numbers game, with a little bit of semantics thrown in. The question really isn’t about drivers needed; it’s about determining your delivery hours.

First, start with your anticipated transactions for each day of the holiday starting with February 11. Next you need to know the percentages of orders delivered and orders picked up. Expect a higher percentage of pickups on Valentine’s Day compared to everyday sales. Florists consistently report an even split between pickups and deliveries. But be sure to check your records for the last several years (so you get weekend and weekday Valentine’s Day numbers) to make sure your estimate is on track for the Monday holiday.

With the number of daily deliveries estimated over a four-day period, you can determine the number of drivers needed. Generally, an experienced driver with a route to follow can make four deliveries per hour. That assumes the average driving distance for each delivery is five miles and the driver can average 30 miles per hour. Allow 10 minutes for drive time and another 5 minutes to get the delivery to the recipient and back to the van. If your delivery area is more condensed, drivers should be delivering at least five deliveries an hour.

Pick your realistic average number of deliveries per hour, divide that by the number of deliveries estimated per day and you’ll know how many hours of driver time you need. Note that by working the deliveries down to the number of hours needed, it’s easy to schedule drivers with varying availability. Some can work the entire day; others just a four-hour shift. That’s fine; You just need to fill the hours.

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SMOOTH OPERATOR

Nothing says romance like computer routing and insurance, right? Well, nothing can spell disaster quicker than ignoring little details like car insurance and driver routing on Valentine’s Day.

Computer delivery routing really shines at busy times. If you have this capability, use it. (See More Online for links to systems florists use.) If you don’t, make sure an experienced person is responsible for the routing. You must have non-owned vehicle insurance if any of your drivers use their own vehicles. It’s not expensive and absolutely required if you want to avoid potentially serious problems arising from an accident. Imagine if a driver using his own van rear-ends an elderly lady, who ends up with whiplash and a totaled car. Since the driver was doing your shop’s business, you’d be liable for any damages not covered by the driver’s own policy, potentially hundreds of thousands of dollars — not a risk you want to take.

- P.G.