Hands On
TIPS, TRENDS AND TACTICS FOR THE SAVVY RETAILER

FIRSTHAND ACCOUNT
GO POSTAL

Two months into 2016 and no doubt you’re connecting with customers on Facebook and Instagram — right? — and keeping them updated through blog posts and emails. But don’t forget that, sometimes, a little tangible reminder can go a long way in this very digital age.

That’s one lesson Julie Markert has drawn from her recent experience with “old fashioned” coupons and loyalty cards. About a year ago, Markert started using postcards purchased from the Society of American Florists to help promote Catherine’s Gardens in Oak Forest, Illinois. Using Microsoft Word, Markert personalizes the back side of each postcard, offering 15 percent off the next order (along with a code for orders placed online). Postcards are placed on every design that leaves the shop, meaning that, on average, about 350 people per week see the high-quality cards and tempting offer. Even better, those recipients often share the love with others.

“We have repeat customers [who] will send flowers to themselves just to have at home,” said Markert. “They’ll come in and order three months’ at a time. They give the extra coupons they have to their neighbors who see the pieces and like them. You can’t get any better than that.”

The return rate on the postcards is around 9 percent, and closer to 15 percent around the holidays, and for Markert those impressive numbers are proof that the cards are working. (The average rate of return on direct mail campaigns is generally 0.5 to 2 percent, according to JWM Business Services.)

“It’s about getting your name out in front of consumers as much as you can,” Markert said.

The shop also uses postcards as loyalty cards; for each five punches, a customer gets a discount on the next order. That program has proven to be especially popular among men who buy weekly or biweekly for a wife or girlfriend, Markert said.

While Markert and her team have an active presence on social media (and do plenty of email marketing), she said the physical cards, which customers see and touch, help her shop stand out in today’s high-tech world.

“There is so much electronic interaction that people crave the novelty of physical things,” she said. “It’s why receiving flowers is still so amazing to people. It’s a physical connection to something. The postcard is a physical connection to us along with the flowers.”

SAF members can buy postcards at safnow.org.

Bring This In And Receive
15%
Off Of your Floral Purchase.
To order online go to
www.catherinesgardens.com
and enter EXPIRE into the coupon
code. Your percentage wil be
taken off at the end.

CUE THE CARDS
Julie Markert of Catherine’s Gardens has experimented with postcards purchased from the Society of American Florists for about a year. “They’re sturdy and well made,” said Markert. “It’s also a steal of a deal,” at $7.95 for 100 postcards ($15.95/100 for non-SAF members).
Hands On

OPEN FOR HOLIDAY BUSINESS

> Ever get a last-minute call for an after-hours order and think: Why bother? You might want to think again. In the age of online reviews and spur-of-the-moment social media posts, going the extra mile for a customer can carry your shop far.

In Dover, New Hampshire, the staff at Garrison Hill Florists could have easily turned away an order they received on New Year’s Eve, just before closing time. Instead, they delivered an arrangement for a new customer to a local hospital.

Over the weekend, the customer posted a picture of the design to his Facebook page, tagging the flower shop, and encouraging friends and relatives to send additional designs, preferably from Garrison Hill, which he acknowledged had gone out of its way to get the order to the room. His sister had been diagnosed with terminal cancer, and he wanted to fill her room with flowers.

“Over the course of that day, we received 11 orders,” said owner Tom Massingham.

A few days later, those good feelings were amplified when the patient and her fiancé married in the hospital room, a bittersweet occasion that spurred an additional five designs, along with a bouquet and boutonniere.

“It gave us a good feeling to participate in the effort to cheer this person in her last days,” Massingham said.

HEART WARMER

When a customer tagged Garrison Hill Florists in his Facebook post, encouraging others to send designs to his terminally ill sister, the shop became part of a poignant moment.

VISUAL IMPACT

HOT AIR, HIGH TRAFFIC

> To attract customers’ attention, sometimes, you gotta go big. Really big.

At least, that’s the thinking at Arizona Family Florist in Phoenix, where a 25-foot red, white and blue eagle greeted customers during the run-up to Memorial Day last year and a giant green Godzilla (with an “I heart mom” sign) looked down on the business prior to Mother’s Day.

“You could see them both from quite a distance,” said Eileen Watters, director of marketing and public relations.

“The roof of our building is almost equal height to the busy, elevated freeway that goes right past our shop, so both inflatables were seen by literally hundreds of thousands of people. It created a lot of buzz and foot traffic in the store” and on the shop’s social media pages.

In fact, sales on Memorial Day weekend last year — usually the beginning of a relative slowdown — were up 17.5 percent, and Watters credits that spike, at least in part, to the big, quirky display.

BIGGER, BETTER

The Arizona Family Florist team rented supersized inflatables from a local vendor who cold called the shop one day. “It was not planned at all,” Marketing and PR Director Eileen Watters admitted, calling it a “crazy, spur-of-the-moment idea,” that’s generated business and kept people talking.

BENCHMARK

THE NEXT BIG HOLIDAY

> Women’s Day (March 8) is already a major holiday in some countries, but it’s still relatively new in the U.S. — despite an admirable push to build awareness, led by Floral Management’s 2014 Marketer of the Year Sun Valley Floral Group. Last year, about 43 percent of respondents to an SAF survey said they promoted the event. Among those respondents, social media (74 percent) was by far the most popular medium, followed by email (50 percent) and store signage (43 percent).

While the event isn’t likely to de-throne Valentine’s Day or Mother’s Day anytime soon (63 percent of respondents reported receiving fewer than 10 Women’s Day orders in 2015 and only 13 percent reported an increase in sales), some in the industry believe it has real potential: 34 percent of respondents said Women’s Day can definitely become a floral holiday in the U.S.; another 27 percent said they think it might become one.

Get ideas for promoting Women’s Day on p. 6, and read about Sun Valley’s award-winning campaign, at safnow.org/moreonline.

Did You Promote 2015 Women’s Day?

Yes 43%

No 57%

How Did You Promote Women’s Day?

74%: Social Media

50%: email

43%: Store signage

SOURCE: SAF’s Women’s Day 2015 Survey, emailed to all SAF member retailers. 7.8 percent response.