FIRST HAND ACCOUNT
MIX UP THE CLASSROOM

Loyal customers who sought out Helen Olivia Flowers’ popular series of design classes and workshops season after season may have been a little worried last fall, when the longtime shop in Alexandria, Va., changed ownership. Would the new owners do away with the much-loved classes?

Turns out they didn't need to fret: Far from stopping the series, Rachel and Charles Gang have kept up their offerings, and introduced a few twists of their own that take the class concept far beyond centerpieces and wreaths. This summer, for instance, the shop hosted its first workshop/book club with a group who had just finished reading Vanessa Diffenbaugh’s “The Language of Flowers.” (The book club included shop designer Melinda Hunter, who organized the event.) The Gangs have also continued some of the shop’s more popular offerings, including mini “pop-up workshops”— more focused and less expensive one-off workshops that run between $35 and $40; a recent pop-up was “Perfectly Pave.”

In addition to public workshops, the shop also hosts private events, including, recently, a birthday party for an eight-year-old.

Most private classes are $95 for two hours, with a six-student minimum. Participants get one-on-one time with their instructor and two take-home arrangements. “The classes help to get our name out there,” and also fill a general void Rachel knew of from her previous professional life in the event-planning world — a lack of novice or beginner floral design classes. Plus, the series situates the shop well within the community-minded spirit of Old Town Alexandria. “We have a really small town feel here, and the workshops generate a great following.”

One thing that is different: the schedule. The previous owners generally published a year’s worth of class dates at once. The Gangs take a more flexible approach, planning and publicizing the classes in three-month sequences — for a total of 24 to 48 a year, or two to four public workshops each month. Rachel said the change has reduced the number of cancellations. Even customers with the best of intentions just “can’t plan that far out,” she said.
**Social Media**

**Get In With LinkedIn**

Warning: If you have a half-complete LinkedIn profile with one of those generic gray ghost profiles, you’re breaking the first rule of the site — and losing out on opportunities to connect with other professionals who could help your business.

That's the advice from Nicole Williams, career expert for LinkedIn, who detailed a list of LinkedIn Mistakes earlier this summer for the “Marketplace” radio show. Been meaning to polish your profile, but can’t find the time? Here are three fixes you can implement today to better use the site:

1. **Ditch the mug shot or the bad photo (or lack of one).** You don’t have to use a staid-looking headshot, and your picture should reflect your professional image, but unless you’re a vet, leave out Fido and unless you’re a cowboy, lose the Stetson.

2. **Customize connection requests.** Unless you want your email to go unread, personalize and contextualize the message. (“Sue, it was great talking with you about your wedding planning business today at Starbucks!”)

3. **Share info.** People who share information via LinkedIn are 10 times more likely to be noticed on the site. Focus on sharing news stories, inspirational quotes or celebrating the accomplishments of your team or community partners. (Looking for fodder? Check out SAF research studies on the benefits of flowers at safnow.org)

**Happening Apps**

**New Tools to Make Pics Dreamier**

> Flat light? Distracting backgrounds? User-error with the camera? Don’t worry — your photos may still be ready for primetime on one of the most popular social media sites. With a host of new photo editing resources, Instagram is making it easier for users to post dreamy, perfect-looking pics to the popular site. The company recently unveiled updates to its photo tools that will allow users to customize a picture’s brightness, contrast, highlights, shadows and other imaging characteristics, with a much greater degree of control. The updated Instagram app provides almost a dozen fine-grained lighting and color adjustments, all accessible through an intuitive interface (click, swipe, done — no photo skills required). The updates also let users scale back on popular filters, to a fraction of the effect, for a more customized user experience.

**Three’s Company**

At A Daisy A Day, Laura Gibson redesigns three prominent windows weekly to highlight a (left to right) casual, formal and seasonal look.

**Visual Impact**

**One Main Display, Three Ways**

> Since relocating to a storefront with three prominent windows, Laura Gibson, who dreams up displays for A Daisy A Day in Jackson, Miss., has been working to consistently show off a formal, casual and seasonal look to passersby. The trick? Making the looks distinct, but complementary: “We always incorporate silk flowers so that we remind our customers that we are a flower shop,” and gift shop, she said. “I like to separate our silk flowers by type and color for more impact. A vase of all white orchids can be so impressive, but if those same orchids are stuck in a container with other flowers they get lost and can look messy.”

Gibson is constantly tweaking the shop’s displays but the three main windows get a total overhaul monthly. “We want to keep them fresh and new so that we entice new and old customers to come in and shop.”

Read more about A Daisy A Day in this month’s cover story, p. 22

**Hit the Links**

The LinkedIn profile of SAF member BJ Dyer, AAF, AIFD, of Bouquets in Denver is an example of a rich, fully utilized page, with a professional picture, endorsements, relevant experience and more.

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**Color Shift**

We cropped the image, applied the “Mayfair” filter and increased brightness and color saturation to the original photo (left) for an Instagram-worthy pic (right).