CRUCIAL TO THE EFFORT IS A SHARED GOOGLE CALENDAR, A FREE RESOURCE THAT ALLOWS THE TEAM MEMBERS TO STAY ON TARGET AND ON THE SAME PAGE, AND A THIRD-PARTY EMAIL SYSTEM (CONSTANT CONTACT) THAT MAKES TRACKING AND PLANNING EASY TO MANAGE IN-HOUSE. (OR “IN-HOUSE-ISH,” AS SOME MEMBERS OF DENABURG’S TEAM ROUTINELY WORK OFF-SITE.)

The team approach has helped the shop train itself to “touch” customers more consistently — and spot potential gaps in their efforts. For instance, while they’ve long sent reminder emails to customers who have patronized the shop for a specific birthday or special event, they realized they were missing another opportunity to remind all customers of the shop’s services for all upcoming milestones. Now, at the end of every month, they send a dedicated email asking customers (in the subject line), “Is there a birthday coming up for someone special you care about?”

“Those emails are generating some of the best open rates we’ve seen,” Denaburg said. In fact, recent open rates for birthday emails are about 18 percent, compared to 14 percent for Mother’s Day emails and 16 percent for Administrative Professionals’ themed notes; the 18 percent figure is slightly above the retail industry average, according to Constant Contact.

Another team-driven idea: a new-customer welcome email, sent out thanking customers every week, for their business and offering them an incentive (usually 20 percent off) to come back in. Overall, since implementing the more organized system, York has seen customers become more engaged, as the opt-out rate “dropped dramatically.” (It’s currently less than half of 1 percent.)

“We started haltingly in the beginning and missed some of the deadlines we set for ourselves,” Denaburg admitted, “but we’re doing a lot better now.”

Dissatisfied with low click rates and the shop’s scattershot approach to emailing customers, Ken Denaburg, president of York Flowers, challenged his team to come up with a more ambitious (and consistent) email marketing campaign. The goal: Send two to three distinct emails to the Washington, D.C.- and Annapolis, Maryland–based shop’s database of 5,000 customers every single week. Each email would have a clear purpose (sometimes to inform and educate, other times to plug a promotion, event or upcoming holiday special) and real tracking information, to help assess overall ROI on a regular basis.

To turn the goal into a reality, Denaburg assigned new roles to team members, leveraging skills that had previously been under-used in email campaigns, including graphic design and project management. At regular meetings, the team of about seven employees meets to brainstorm and create ideas for upcoming emails and review past efforts. During those planning sessions, Denaburg makes a point to include input from staff who don’t wear a traditional “marketing hat,” such as designers.

“As we plan the emails, we ask for everyone’s perspective, and it’s nice to have additional sets of eyes,” said Denaburg.