SAY ‘I DO,’ NO MATTER WHAT

> Over the past year many of us have heard news stories about a small number of wedding vendors who are refusing service to same-sex couples: photographers, bakers, even florists. Their reasoning? Same-sex marriages violate their religious beliefs.

Not long ago, I came into direct contact with a similar story when I received a call from a travel agent planning a same-sex wedding in New York City, where I’ve owned my business for 20 years. He needed flowers but was rebuffed by another florist, who refused the job after learning the couple was same-sex. The travel agent was not offended by the other florist; he simply wanted to know if I could help.

My answer? Absolutely.

And why wouldn’t I say yes? At a time when every vertical marketing segment is trying to take something away from the independent florist (box stores, overnight shippers, order-gatherers, supermarkets, etc.), florists can’t afford to pick and choose who they want to serve based on the morality or pseudo-morality of an issue.

Today, more than 37 states have passed legislation allowing these marriages to take place, and the Supreme Court could weigh in soon. No matter your personal beliefs, this shift is good for the wedding industry. After the Marriage Equality Act passed in New York in 2011, New York City became a mecca for same-sex weddings. Not only were local people tying the knot, but out-of-state and foreign couples were coming here for their ceremonies. Because my team and I were ready to serve these couples, we saw a significant spike in business — about a 15 percent increase in our wedding work in just one year. Since then, we have continued to work with same-sex couples and promote our services to them. I wouldn’t have it any other way.

Ours is a business that embraces love. We want people to fall for one another and to express their passions with flowers, scents, colors, artistry and design. When a memory is made with a single orchid or a single blossom of peony, do we ask or even care about the sexual makeup of the couple who will commemorate the moment? No! We just want that moment memorialized forever with that same flower year after year after year. Florists want people to fall in love with each other, and flowers are the bridge that creates that love.

In the end, I strongly believe that sensitivities of any kind — political, religious, etc. — have no place in a business environment. What is most important for all to know is that they are welcome at Starbright Floral Design, as we would be honored to help them celebrate their union regardless of persuasion, orientation or any other word that ends in ‘ion.’

Ours is a business that embraces love. Instead of making headlines for turning custom-ers away, let’s focus on love and the art-istry that we are so passionate for, and let’s be grateful that folks everywhere fall in love and want flowers to celebrate their most special moments in life. ¶

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