When Marty and Jane Loppnow send holiday greetings to customers, they follow basic rules: keep it simple, don’t make a sales pitch and have a little fun.

After years of wishing customers a happy holiday season with run-of-the-mill emails and in-person greetings, the Loppnows decided to inject a bit more personality in their 2012 communication, with a slightly silly e-card that went out to about 3,500 Waukesha Floral and Greenhouse customers. In the clip, embedded into an email and posted directly to YouTube, staff members’ headshots were superimposed on the bodies of animated, dancing elves. At press time, the 2012 card had been viewed on the shop’s YouTube channel about 300 times; the Loppnows plan to send a similar card this year.

“We received a nice response from it,” Jane said. “We wanted to send something (around the end of the year) that was purely holiday wishes.”

Jane said the idea to try something new came from the Loppnows’ longtime collaboration with Image Makers Advertising, a local ad agency. After they agency visited the shop to take headshots of employees, they suggested the lighthearted card and then the ad team took it from there. (The agency created the animation in-house but websites such as ElfYourself.com, sponsored by Office Max, provide a similar, if less customized template.)

The card fits into a larger social media and advertising strategy at the business, located in Waukesha, Wis. Image Makers also produces the shop’s TV commercials, and in recent years they’ve also carved out time on production days to film a handful of YouTube videos.

The YouTube clips have an informal, conversational feel, with Marty, the shop spokesman, providing information on topics such as caring for hanging baskets, choosing interior plants that promote better air quality and tending to poinsettias.

“We choose the topics based on what customers have asked us about the most, and also what our Facebook and blog followers are most interested in seeing and hearing about,” Jane said. In the past, they’ve also pulled video ideas from comments posted to existing videos.

To make the most of their ad agency — and the group’s high-def cameras and technical prowess — the Loppnows usually film four to five videos at a time and then share them, through email blasts, Facebook or directly on YouTube, throughout the year. “The YouTube videos help validate that we are the professionals our customers should turn to,” Jane said, adding that the clips also improve SEO. Among the most popular videos to date: orchid care and information on bridal flowers — and the fun-filled holiday greeting. 🎄