Is prom business a worthless, labor-intensive chore or a promising path to tomorrow’s brides? Depends on whom you ask: Prom sales at nearly half of florists (47 percent) have increased in the last three years, according to an online survey of SAF retailers. The other half said prom revenue has remained about the same (30 percent) or decreased (22 percent) since 2008.

Florists who are, presumably, in the latter category called prom “a waste of time,” and “not a money maker.” Others pronounce the dances worthy of investment. “We do more [marketing] for proms than Easter,” commented one survey respondent. Another wrote, “We are big on prom. I think high school kids are fabulous and appreciate being marketed to.”

$\textbf{Benchmark}

$\textbf{CARE TO DANCE?}$

$\textbf{Changes in Prom Business Revenue Since 2008}$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue Change</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased 5% or less</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased 5% to 14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased 15% to 24%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased 25% or more</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remained about the same</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased 5% or less</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased 5% to 14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased 15% to 24%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased 25% or more</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\text{SOURCE: SAF Online Zoomerang Survey, January 2012 (349 responses, response rate = 9 percent)}.$

$\textbf{Sales Builder}

$\textbf{SNAP TO IT: PLAN FOR PROM}$

$\text{Planning for prom business should begin well before high school students decide who they want to take to the big dance.}$

Dan Fisher of Fitz Design, a prom accessory distributor and presenter at the 2011 AIFD symposium, “Imagine,” says florists can significantly increase their prom sales if they start going after it in February. Here are five steps to take this month toward higher prom sales in the spring:

- Find out prom dates for schools in your area, and who serves on the committees in charge.
- Contact administrators and prom committee members at each school and ask if you can sell on site.
- Make sample display boards and pricing grids.
- Set up corsage and boutonniere display showing jewelry and add-ons.
- Pick a date and organize a prom party for your store, or partner with another business on an event such as a fashion show.

Fisher makes scheduling prom-related tasks easy, with a “Checklist for a Successful Prom” spreadsheet, available on the Fitz website, www.creationsbyfitzdesign.com, under “marketing.”

$\text{Window shop.}$

Jessica McClintock, Betsey Johnson, BCBG Max Azria. A visit to these and other popular frock destinations — online or at the mall — will help you sound more in-the-know when talking to dance-bound students. Check out prices, too, as it’s a window into the flower budget. Fitz Design’s Dan Fisher says prom flowers should fetch 15 percent of what the dress costs. “If the local shops all carry expensive dresses, price your corsage and boutonniere options accordingly,” Fisher advises on www.creationsbyfitzdesign.com. “If everything is on clearance discount locally, be sure to have choices that are stylish and affordable.”

$\text{Sign up for dress stores’ email blasts.}$

Stay abreast of the messages your customers receive from chains such as David’s Bridal and Deb. It’s a great way to take advantage of their marketing expertise, maybe even copying some of their strategies, Fisher said. “They have access to multiple studies and marketing tools that most of us cannot afford,” he said in his blog. “Study the tools they are using.”

$\textbf{Business Booster}

$\textbf{PRACTICE SOME SMOOTH MOVES FOR A FULL DANCE CARD}$

$\text{Thigh-high skirts and stomach-bearing cutouts might not be part of your wardrobe, but both are among the many trends shown in prom fashion for 2012 — the very dresses for which you will be designing flowers. Make sure you can talk the latest fashions when the first prom customer arrives, by doing a little homework:}$

$\text{Window shop.}$

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