How I Turn Eight-Year-Olds into Loyal Customers

Bradley Beck, AAF
National Sales Manager (Director of Yes!), DESIGN MASTER color tool, Inc.
Boulder, Colo.

Years in Business: 16 at Design Master; 30-plus in the floral industry

Team Size: Beck oversees an outside sales force of six independent representatives and two customer service experts in Boulder.

What He Did: Beck has been closely involved with successful initiatives to get floral industry members and consumers of all ages more excited about flowers, including Wholesale Florist & Floral Supplier Association’s Growing Up With Flowers, branding and student recruitment for the Ornamental Horticulture concentration at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, and the launch of the Wholesale Florist & Florist Supplier Association’s Floral Distribution Conference.

Motivating Factor: “Professionally, I’m most passionate about two things,” Beck said, “how our industry enhances people’s lives with flowers and the colorful personalities who make our industry unique.”

Takeaway Tips: Think about the future — and the next generation of flower buyers. Connect with local schools for educational programs and you’ll reach students … not to mention their parents and teachers and the school’s administrative professionals.

How I Increased My Media Exposure by 400 Percent

Shirley Lyons, AAF, PFCI
Owner, Dandelions Flowers & Gifts
Eugene, Ore.

Years in Business: 39

No. of Employees: 9 full-time, 10 part-time (plus additional help at holidays)

What She Did: In the past year alone, Dandelions and Lyons have been in the Eugene Register Guard, ABC, NBC and CBS local affiliates and Eugene Chamber of Commerce publications. Overall, her media exposure is up 400 percent in 10 years (from about three instances a year to 14-plus annually) and in five years she’s seen a 20 percent increase in sales.

Best Hits: In honor of Father’s Day 2011, CNN.com included Lyons and her dad, Carl Husbands, in a touching tribute to business owners and their fathers. “It was very spur of the moment,” Lyons said. “I was on a trip but needed to find a picture for CNN in about 10 minutes. The only one I could find on my computer was dad and I in our grubbies raking leaves. I loved that the story paid tribute to my dad, who has always been an inspiration. He is still going strong at 88!”

Takeaway Tips: Be prepared for last-minute calls and available for tight-deadline stories. Feeling tongue-tied in an interview? Start your next sentence with “Flowers make people happy … “

How I Know There’s Still Hope for the Wholesale Segment

Ben Powell
Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer, Mayesh Wholesale Florist Inc.
Miami (Company headquarters in Los Angeles)

Years in the Industry: 20

Team Size: Mayesh has 17 physical locations, 20 profit centers and 300 full-time employees.

What He Did: After graduating from business school, Powell was a corporate strategy consultant in Boston and then took a job, in 1994, as president of HOSA International. He joined florist chain rollup Gerald Stevens in 1999 as senior vice president, followed by an entrepreneurial venture, American Blooms, which he sold in 2005. He joined Mayesh, the first and only wholesale florist of which he’s been a part, in 2005. As COO and CFO, he’s a member of the senior management team that’s overseen the acquisition of five wholesale businesses and the opening of three additional facilities.

Results: The company’s annual growth rate is 12 percent to 15 percent.

Takeaway Tips: Join up. The health of any one business depends on the health of the overall industry — so, as you grow, give back and become part of industry organizations and events. “I was attracted by Mayesh because of the quality of its management, its dynamic approach to growth and its commitment to industry leadership,” Powell said.
How I Made It with Queen Elizabeth

Ian Prosser, AAF, AIFD, CFD, NDSF, PFCI
Owner, Botanica International Design and Décor Studio and Ian Prosser Productions
Tampa, Fla.

Years in Business: 40-plus years
No. of Employees: 11
Weddings Per Year: About 125

What He Did: Leveraging his prodigious design skill — in June 2014 he was named the International Floriculture Expo’s Iron Designer — Prosser has cultivated a list of dedicated wedding and event clients with deep, deep pockets. More than that, he’s put his business sense to work, transitioning from a traditional, full-service shop to a studio, adding rental and lighting services and, most recently, restructuring his business to separate the high-end from the super-high end affairs, a move that empowered the next generation at his business and gave Prosser more time to focus on what he does best: bringing the mega wow.

Results: Today the average wedding budget for Botanica customers is about $15,000; the average for clients working with Ian through his Ian Prosser Productions is $25,000-plus. Prosser’s high-profile clients include Grace Ormonde, Tom Cruise, Kirstie Alley and Queen Elizabeth.


How I Became a Brand Queen

Cheryl Denham
President and CEO, Arizona Family Florist
Mesa, Ariz.

Years in Business: Nine
No. of Employees: 40 full-time, 7 part-time, 180-plus seasonal

What She Did: In 2012, Arizona Family Florist snagged Floral Management magazine’s 2012 Marketer of the Year honors for successfully launching its LUX Wedding brand. Today, the business, which also owns and operates 1-800-Flowers Phoenix, is getting even bigger, with new brands launching this month: Arizona Flower Market, Phoenix Plant Pros and Fantastic Fruit and 1-800 flowers Fruit Bouquets.

Results: In less than a decade, the company has grown to $6.4 million gross sales in 2013.

Best Hits: Arizona Family Florist recently completed a 23,000-square-foot expansion to accommodate its Arizona Flower Market, the state’s first and only wholesale flower market. In doing so, they’ve positioned themselves to capture more customers who are tired of the mass-market experience but still after the convenience of one-stop shopping.

Takeaway Tips: Before you branch out, ask yourself: Is a new brand really necessary? Depending on your goals, you may be able to “fine-tune your existing brand,” Denham said. “Don’t under estimate the amount of resources and work it takes to make a new brand successful.” Carefully consider the costs, time and team you’ll need to get the results you’re after.

Losing Can Be a Winning Proposition

BJ Dyer, AAF, AIFD
Owner, Bouquets
Denver, Colo.

Years in Business: 27
No. of Employees: 15

What He Did: Dyer and partner Guenther Vogt, who died in December 2013, aggressively, strategically and cheerfully courted local venues, event planners and nonprofits, and even hosted social media workshops to help their clients succeed online — efforts that won them Floral Management Marketer of the Year honors efforts twice. (They’re the only business to hold that honor.) During the last several years, they also opened – and eventually closed – three branch stores; their single flagship location is more profitable today than all four locations combined, and sales, at $1 million, continue to grow.

Results: Bouquets is Denver’s go-to source for event décor among high-end social, civic and philanthropic events attended by hundreds. Local clients include the Denver Center for the Performing Arts, the Denver Health Foundation, Volunteers of America, the Children’s Hospital Foundation, Peyton Manning’s PeyBack Foundation, and the University of Denver College of Law, among many others. The Knot, Wedding Wire, Bon Appétit and 280 magazines have awarded the business top honors, and Bouquets is a five-time ICON Award winner for excellence in service in the events industry.

Takeaway Tips: Stay focused. Be fearless. “We strive to be the best at one thing in our market,” Dyer said. “We resist expansion into a broader business model that would make us an ‘everything to every customer’ type business. We believe in the saying attributed to Confucius: ‘One who chases two rabbits catches none.’"