

Plan on a successful Mother's Day

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As much as we all look forward to spring and the potential profits brought to our bottom lines by the Mother's Day and Prom season, many florists dread the excruciatingly long hours, overtime payroll, fatigue and pressure that often come along with the package. Cheer up! This all-important holiday does not have to turn into the nightmare that some of us create. With just a bit of serious thought and some careful planning this year, Mother's Day can feel like a dream come true.

Let's take a look at past years. Think back a little, have you ever taken one or more of the phones off the hook? What about not doing any advertising? What about refused orders a day or two before the holiday? If these are things that you have done in the past, you may have been undermining your own profitability. When you take actions that limit the orders that should be flowing into your flower shop, you are sending your profits to the competition. Years ago, taking the phone off the hook for awhile was common practice because the only place to buy flowers was at your local florist. Those days are long gone folks. Between the Internet, 24 hour order takers and alternative flower sellers like grocery stores and wholesale clubs, the local florist has to be a better business person than ever before.

A successful business leader is all about the plan! The dictionary defines the word plan as a specific project or definite purpose: plans for the future. A plan identifies specific goals and sets clear plans for reaching that goal. And that's exactly the point that many floral retailers seem to miss. Without a goal there is no plan and without a plan everything runs amuck which inevitably leads to long unproductive hours, spending overages and waste.

Here are four easy steps to get you on your way to a successful and profitable Mother's Day!

Step one: Set a Goal

The first step a florist should take to create a holiday plan is to identify what their goal is going to be. Is the goal increased order volume, decreased man-hours or how about reaching a new target audience? The goal can be a single one or it can be several reasonable and obtainable things. But don't overdo it. Far too often, goals are not reached merely because of the unrealistic expectations behind them. Start small at first, especially if you are just starting out. The main purpose behind the goal is that there is something that is definable with a clear objective to get you going in the right direction.

An important goal for a lot of flower shops, especially during a down economy would be to reduce the overtime worked by owners and staff. This has two obvious benefits, reduced payroll and reduced fatigue and stress. The objectives would then be efficient product ordering and processing, accurate scheduling, and well organized designing.

Step two: Plan of Action

Once your goal(s) have been set, the next step is to figure out your specific actions you will take to reach your goals. For example your goal is to reduce overtime this holiday. Ask yourself when was the majority of overtime happening during past holidays. What area was experiencing the majority of overtime hours? The design staff, or maybe it was delivery. Did you experience any unexpected or unusual business during that time such as a funeral or wedding? Knowing these factors will better enable you to set your plan for the future into action.

The most efficient way to determine this is by having good records. If you didn't create a post holiday report last year, don't worry, all is not lost! You can still gather some important information; it will just take a little more digging. If you use a POS system, chances are there are records already created. Some of the key information you will be looking for is: what your

volume was in regards to incoming and outgoing wire orders, deliveries, walk in sales, gross sales, product ordered etc. You will use this information to help you make the decisions needed to achieve your goals.

Step three: Put the plan into action

It's not good enough to merely make a plan; you have to work the plan for you to see any results. One way to do this is to empower your staff by making them part of the process. Delegate responsibility to team leaders or managers to make sure everyone is staying on task. Have a quick meeting at the end of each day to make sure your moving in the right direction or if you need to make a change in direction. Most importantly keep your ultimate goal in mind and make decisions based on reaching that goal.

Step four: Keep detailed records

As mentioned above, having good records is a key to implementing your plan. If you go through the trouble of planning, why would you not keep records? Knowing what you did and how you did it from year to year will help you improve and it will give you the foundation on which to build a success holiday plan.

Knowing things like economic indicators, and community events, when you ordered flowers who much you ordered and who you ordered them from, who was on staff and what hours they worked, how many deliveries did you make and how long it took to make them are just a few of the crucial details that you should be recording for prosperity.

By analyzing previous year's records it allows you to make educated and accurate projections on how much hardgood inventory to pre-order making it easier to utilize quantity buying sale incentives. It will give you a good idea how many people you need and when you will need them so that you can schedule employees and contract workers when product is available and ready to be handled, which in turn will reduce wasted labor and unnecessary overtime. Nothing is more costly than a bunch of designers standing around waiting for product to arrive or wandering around searching for every scrap and loose blossom. A well-organized design plan will result in high profits and lower costs.

What planning is NOT

It is not scrambling at the last minute to order flowers, it is not leaving staff scheduling to the week before the holiday, it is not creating in store specials as you go or not at all. A good plan does not include your staff putting in 12 -hour days nor does it include you succumbing to the chaos that leads to making decisions on the fly and hoping that everything falls into place.

So let's recap what it's going to take to attack the upcoming Mother's Day holiday. If we want to have a stress free, (okay a minimal stress filled holiday) we vow to;

- Set Goals
- Determine a plan of action
- Put that plan into action
- Keep records

There is more than one way to plan for profitable holidays; these are just a few ideas to get the Business Tycoon in all of us motivated to take charge and turn their dreams of profits into reality!