

# FLOWERS AND Profits

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## STEP UP TO NEW HEIGHTS

# Grow Your Easter Sales



Are you waving the white flag when it comes to selling Easter flowers? As more retailers display potted plants and others sell flowers out of buckets on street corners, are you surrendering your share of Easter sales? Instead of abandoning your customers to others, win the battle by arming yourself with terrific product presentation and promotional campaigns.

Serious competition, like you face for Easter sales, is faced one of two ways: shop owners "up their game" by going on the offensive and winning customers with innovative products and marketing or they retreat and let their customers purchase plants and flowers elsewhere.

Which one is right for your shop? If you want to take the offensive, this article will give you some strategies. Making sure your customers know about the products you offer and that you are ready to serve them protects your turf. Just because flower sales aren't as robust as they once were for certain holidays such as Easter doesn't mean sales in your shop are destined to follow this trend.

How you present your products and the way you promote them can reverse the trend and keep your customers right where they belong.

### Battle of the Bulbs

Believe it or not, many shops still sell 200-300 lilies every Easter along with other traditional flowers, such as tulips, hydrangea, and daffodils. These shops compete with grocery stores that sell

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## Grow Your Easter Sales

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potted plants, big box stores that sell cymbidium corsages and lilies, and even “pop up” retailers that sweep in for two weeks and sell flowers from carts, stalls, and even buckets on street corners.

All of these new places to buy Easter flowers make it more important to pay attention to your packaging and presentation and to market to your customers early and often. The main reason your customers might buy Easter flowers from a competitor is convenience. They happen to be passing by or are inside one of the other sites and they make a snap decision to purchase Easter blooms. You can prevent impulse buys by sending your customers emails and postcards that tout your holiday offerings, noting that your flowers can be delivered and are guaranteed fresh.

Such early messages (begin sending emails and postcards a month before Easter) will attack on three fronts:

1. A seed will be planted in customers' minds that you have beautiful plants and flowers for Easter giving.
2. Customers will see that buying from you is convenient. They can call the shop, stop in, or order online.
3. Promoting the superiority and freshness of your products will resonate with customers who want the best value.

Your email salvos should continue every week and twice on Easter week. Include photographs of your top offerings. The message should not center on price, but on quality and convenience. In fact, there is no compelling reason to even put prices in your emails since you always have a price range in your shop so there is something beautiful for every budget.

### Luscious Looks

One major thing that you can do to elevate your products is to improve your presentation. Some retailers will offer lilies and other potted plants in black plastic containers, sometimes sporting a generic bow. Some simply wrap tissue paper around wet stems. You wouldn't think of allowing products to leave your shop in such condition.

Beautiful presentation will entice more sales and lure customers to your shop and

website. Fill the shop with beautiful blooms, some in upscale containers and others in brightly wrapped containers with seasonal bows. Everything that leaves the shop should bear the shop's logo and contact information.

Besides the traditional Easter flowers, give your customers something extra by thinking outside the box. Even though corsages aren't purchased as often as they used to be for Easter, you should offer them along with wristlets and other wearable flowers. Flower bedecked Easter bonnets, especially for children, are hard to resist. You could corner the market on them since most florists and other retailers don't provide this service. Offer the actual hats decorated with fresh flowers, permanent botanicals, or a combination or simply offer to decorate bonnets customers bring to your shop.

Hostess gifts are another product that is still popular during Easter. People going to dinner with family or friends will often want to bring along a bouquet or arrangement for the hostess.

### Eggstra Special Extras

Since Easter is a highly symbolic holiday, use the many icons to celebrate it. Include crosses and secular symbols, such as decorated eggs, chicks, bunnies, birds – all references to the Resurrection and signs of spring. If possible, buy chocolate bunnies and eggs from a local candy maker. Advertise

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**“Beautiful presentation will entice more sales and lure customers to your shop and website. Fill the shop with beautiful blooms, some in upscale containers and others in brightly wrapped containers with seasonal bows.”**

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that the candy is from a local company, creating the image that it is better than the treats bought at the variety store. Most consumers like to buy locally because it supports neighborhood merchants and the products are likely to be fresher. Customers who decorate their homes to reflect each season will be looking for products such

as spring wreaths, bunny figurines, spring-themed throw pillows, and floral scented candles and potpourri.

Spring begins this month, so make sure your shop bursts with blooms. Create “Spring Is Here” designs and feature them in the shop and on your website. Send emails and postcards to customers with photos of these designs and of blooming plants.

Offer spring specials, such as a buy one plant and get another for half-price. Email churches to remind them that the best lilies and other Easter flowers are at your shop.

### Other Promo Options

Besides email and postcard campaigns, Easter is a good time to check with local newspapers, television, and radio stations to see if they are planning any promotions your shop could take part in, such as giveaways and drawings.

If there is a “package promotion,” then your shop could be one of several businesses donating something for the drawing.

Your website can be a destination for people who want to enter the drawing, which will give you exposure for the cost of the product featured in the drawing. Be sure that your shop's name will be mentioned on air. The more frequently your shop's name is aired, the more valuable the promotion will be for you.

Of course, you could have a drawing all by yourself, but you won't be bringing in new customers. A newspaper, radio, or television tie-in will expose your shop to consumers who don't already buy from you.

### Claim Your Customers

Easter is a beautiful time of year and that's what your customers will be looking for – beauty. Use the competition from other retailers to light a fire in you. Don't assume that all of your customers will buy plants and flowers from bargain outlets.

Promote the high quality of your products and service because that's why most people have chosen your shop. They appreciate the convenience of ordering by phone or through your website and they are confident that whatever they order will be guaranteed fresh and long-lasting.

Spring is a time of revitalization and renewal. Revitalize your spring holiday profit by renewing your relationship with your customers through well-timed marketing and promotions. 💰



## Mother's Day "Take-outs"

**Many Mother's Day shoppers wait until Friday or Saturday to find a gift for dear, old mom. Knowing this, designers fly into overdrive and fill the cooler with fresh flower arrangements. No matter how many are in the cooler, chances are you will sell them all because they are ready to go. But how many other gifts could you have sold if you simply had them ready to carry out the door?**

**F**lower arrangements are popular choices with consumers during Mother's Day, but they certainly aren't the only floral gifts your customers will be interested in. The key to having over-the-top Mother's Day sales is to display a wide assortment of cash-and-carry items or "take-outs."

Create a display of cash-and-carry items for Mother's Day and use signs to direct customers to it. Be sure it is completely stocked for Mother's Day weekend because it is sure to be popular with customers who are looking for something aside from arranged flowers. Signs should be clear that this display is gift central for Mother's Day.

### Grab and Go Flowers

When it comes to perennial bestsellers, it's hard to beat cut flower bouquets.

According to studies done by the Society of American Florists (SAF), loose flower bouquets were the top sellers throughout the year. They certainly are mainstays in grocery store floral departments and in convenience stores. The difference between those and your cut flowers, of course,

is huge and most consumers understand that florists have better conditioned flowers.

In addition to longevity, fresh flowers from florists are more attractively packaged, so be sure yours bears the stamp of your professional touch. Pre-wrapped bouquets should be encased in colorful tissue paper, ribbon, and include gift cards. You might even set a few gift cards out and allow customers to choose the one they want for a more personalized gift. You can gather the flowers into two or three styles and price

points for quick sales and have others loose in buckets for customers who want to create their own bouquets.

Be sure to have one pre-wrapped bouquet priced at \$15 or less for the younger customers who are buying gifts for mom with their own money.

Have a selection of vases in different price tiers near the pre-wrapped bouquets for those who want to include one as part of their gift.

### Gifts Plus Flowers

Combine gift products with flowers or plants and you will be offering extra

special gifts that other retailers can't. Whether your inventory includes music boxes, jewelry, photo frames, or candles and candle holders, flowers are a good accompaniment. Small bouquets or corsages can be added to any gift.

Use flowers as a gift-with-purchase for items costing

more than a set amount. For example, you could give a small cut flower bouquet or pre-made corsage with any purchase costing at least \$65. Such an offer could boost your average Mother's Day sale because people who are spending \$50 or \$55 will spend a little more for the gift-with-purchase simply because they see the value in the additional amount. It's profitable for you because you decide what flowers to use in the bouquets and corsages, thus controlling your cost so that you're making more profit with the gift-with-purchase sales.



Baskets are good Mother's Day gifts and it's easy to add flowers or a plant to the baskets that are already part of your regular inventory. Add something sentimental to each basket, such as a heartshaped balloon, plush animal, or small jewelry box to make it more attractive as a Mother's Day gift.

### Plants and Topiaries

Blooming plants usually rank second in Mother's Day purchases followed by indoor plants. Have baskets that include several bedding plants, seed packets, and a few gardening hand tools, add a pretty bow and a gift card and you will have a sure-fire cash-and-carry favorite.

You can even place a few pots of herbs in a basket along with a colorful apron and potholders for a mom who loves to cook with fresh herbs.

Topiaries are good novelty items. Heart-shaped ivy topiaries are perfect for Mother's Day. Provide signs that point out that they are easy to care for and will flourish and grow with minimal care. Look for a wholesaler who has several sizes of topiaries so that you can have one in every pricing tier.

### Forever Flowers

Although fresh flowers will be the biggest sellers, don't forget that some consumers will choose a beautiful permanent arrangement if you have them on display.

Roses in simple vases, ivy plants, and spring flowers arranged in a grapevine wreath are examples of permanent botanical items that are perfect for "grab-and-go" Mother's Day shoppers.

This Mother's Day weekend, don't just worry about keeping your cooler full. Keep your shelves full of great gifts, too. 💰

**NOTE:** For an updated and current list of Zoom presentations and Teleflora in-person Academy classes visit the Teleflora Industry Relations Facebook page.



# Interactive Displays

**Flowers evoke emotions in people, which is why your shop should offer customers emotional experiences. How do you do this? Well, for starters, you can pull those buckets of flowers out of the cooler and put them where customers can touch, smell, and truly appreciate them. When customers develop an emotional attachment to products, they purchase more -- and they purchase more often.**

A pyramid of glass vases is certainly eye-catching, but it doesn't belong in the middle of your showroom. In a display window, it would be great, but this kind of display says, “Keep Away and Don't Touch!” Displays within your shop should say, “Interact With Me.” Interactive displays, those that invite the customer to touch, smell, examine, and experience, can increase your sales up to 25 percent.

Try this experiment and see if it doesn't increase your sales almost immediately: train yourself and your staff to place merchandise in customers' hands as often as possible. Whenever people are interested in merchandise, pick it up and put it in their hands. Retail studies have shown that customers will buy items they hold or touch more than half of the time. The ability to handle merchandise gives hard evidence of quality and value. If a simple act such as this can increase your sales, just imagine what additional interactive intervention can do!

But instead of imagining, why not make it a reality? You can transform your shop into a place where customers feel engaged by selling the emotion of flowers and their complementary products. Engaged customers are less concerned about price and are less likely to shop elsewhere. The key to engaging them is to tap into their emotions, making them feel that they get added value in your shop that they simply can't find elsewhere.

## Exploit Fresh Cuts

Fresh-cut flowers sell better than practically anything else does in most flower shops. No surprise here. Data collected by the American Floral Endowment found that 77 percent of sales for Mother's Day were fresh-cut flower bouquets. To sell even more and give customers what they are obviously looking for, break out



the buckets. In other words, remove the buckets of fresh flowers from refrigeration units and display the flowers in your showroom.

Since most shops are air-conditioned, hydrated flowers won't wilt when removed from the fridge. Set up a table or other generous space and place the flowers in vases, dividing them into varieties or color schemes. Direct customers to this area and encourage them to “pick their own” bouquet. You will see four encouraging signs with this method:

1. Creative customers will delight in being their own floral designer.
2. Less creative customers will turn to you for advice and this will more firmly set you in their minds as “their florist.”
3. Customers will usually select 25 percent more flowers for their bouquets than you would have chosen.
4. Customers who have a set price to begin with will usually exceed that price by \$5, \$10, or \$15.

By just making it easier for customers to interact with fresh flowers, you can boost your profits. Plus, you'll be turning your shop into a “user friendly” place where customers like to come

because they feel they can't get this atmosphere anywhere else. If you don't have adequate space in your shop for this kind of presentation, make sure that your refrigerator is totally accessible and customer friendly.

### **Give Them More Choices**

You can expand on the fresh-cut flower display by including several choices of vase fillers. Choose things that beg to be touched, such as smooth river rocks, multi-colored beads, colorful marbles, clear glass marbles, shells, and sand.

Display each filler in its own bin or container, making it easy for customers to touch them and decide which ones they want. This is a great add-on for cut flower arrangements. Charge \$1 or \$2, depending on the expense you incur, for two or three inches of filler.

Now turn your attention to what to put the filler into. Every customer won't want the same vase, so this gives you another opportunity to offer choice. Line up several clear glass vases of different sizes and shapes and three price levels, clearly labeled. Let your customers choose the one they want. Employ the "hands on" approach by encouraging them to hold the vases so they can experience the quality.

This interactive display is far more interesting for customers than the usual method: you ask customers how much they want to spend and what colors they want in their fresh-cut bouquets, and then select the flowers for them to meet the stated price. In this case, the customer takes no "ownership" of the selections, other than paying for the final product.

Interactive displays engage customers, allowing them more choice, and a chance to change their minds. Once they see the array of flowers, they could very well select a different color scheme altogether and choose more flowers than they originally had in mind. Given choices and variety, customers will invariably elect value over price.

### **User Friendly Displays**

To encourage more interaction with your customers, make sure your other shop merchandise is easy to access. Most of your display tables and shelves should be 30-to-33-inches high and well lighted. Certain merchandise should be lower, especially products that attract "the shorter crowd" — children.

Move plush animals to lower shelves that children can reach. The "hands on" method works with them, too. When they hold something, they will often not want to let it go.

Textured items, such as baskets, pillows, and throws should be displayed so that they can be touched and held. If pillows and throws are in plastic sleeves, open two or three and display them so that customers can feel the fabric and hold them up to check the sizes.

Look around your shop for other opportunities to display items so that customers will be tempted and even encouraged to touch them, rub them, and hold them.

### **The Power of Fragrance**

How many times a day do customers remark as they enter your shop, "Oh, this place smells wonderful"? If you don't hear

that at least two or three times a day, then you're missing a golden opportunity to engage your customers more fully.

Flower shops should smell like flowers. Having your fresh-cut flowers on display instead of sealed away in the cooler will help to release their fragrance and have your customers breathing deeply and appreciatively when they walk in.

It would be great to burn candles, releasing their perfume into the air, but this comes with a fire hazard and is usually not possible. Unless you have a secure place to burn a candle — where no one can reach it and nothing can fall on it or touch the flame — then it isn't advisable to light one in the shop. Also, they are easy to forget and can be left burning after you close the shop, which is extremely dangerous.

You can release the same fragrance, however, by using simmering potpourri in an electric burner. You could also place a few drops of scented oil onto lamp bulbs. As the light bulbs warm, the fragrance is released.

Use a different fragrance each week, posting the name of it and its various forms (potpourri, incense, oil, candles, sachets)

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**“Almost all unplanned buying is a result of touching, hearing, smelling, or tasting something, which is why merchandising in your shop is so much more powerful than on the Internet, through catalogues, or on the phone. Life is an interactive, sensory experience.”**


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in a display near the cash register for impulse sales. Your goal in choosing fragrances to spotlight is to find those that aren't too pervasive. You don't want to overwhelm customers with scent, but you do want something that will give them a "wow" reaction when they enter the shop.

The ability to associate scents with places, experiences, and emotions can work to your advantage. Fragrance can add that extra dimension and make a more positive first and lasting impression.

### **Interactive Impulse Buying**

Almost all unplanned buying is a result of touching, hearing, smelling, or tasting something, which is why merchandising in your shop is so much more powerful than on the Internet, through catalogues, or on the phone. Life is an interactive, sensory experience. Customers are impulse driven and emotion is a motivating stimulus to buy.

When you understand that products fulfill needs, but experiences fulfill desires, you will be able to engage customers through displays that promote sales even as they tap into emotions. 



## Expect the Unexpected

Have you ever wondered how you would handle the aftermath of a disaster, such as a fire or flood? A little bit of preparation will go a long way if the unexpected should happen.

Where do you start? Consider these points when devising your plan:

❑ Where are you most vulnerable? Is it more likely that your shop could be damaged by an earthquake or a flood? Think through the steps of the aftermath. Would people be unable to travel to work? Or would you just lose electrical power?

Prioritize your critical functions, such as refrigeration, communication, and vehicles.

❑ What do you have in place now that will help you weather a disaster? Adequate business insurance will give you much needed cash to put stopgaps in place. A strong relationship with a wholesaler will be important to keep product available.

A friendly relationship with another florist in the area could give you a temporary location from which to stage your deliveries.

❑ How will you communicate with your customers? Will you even have their addresses? Be sure to maintain a backup of your database and other critical data and store it in another location, such as a safety deposit box or with an out-of-town relative. Email will be one of the most efficient ways to communicate, but you must have your database. It's imperative that you have your customers' telephone numbers stored in a safe place.

❑ If you have to close your facility, determine if you will pay your employees during this time or ask them to use vacation days. However you decide to handle payroll, let your employees know before anything happens so they won't be caught off guard. While you're at it, think about cross-training someone who can manage the shop in case you are incapacitated.

❑ Once you think through the issues, record the procedures that should be followed. A written manual will be a treasure in the hectic times that follow a disaster. These actions will give you more control in whatever destiny lies ahead.

## Terrarium Workshops

Terrariums brighten up interiors in both homes and offices, and they make great gifts. Putting them together is a unique and satisfying outlet for creativity. No wonder terrarium workshops have become a popular group activity for private parties, company team-building functions, and even charity fundraisers.

If you decide to jump on this trend, here are some things to keep in mind:

- Workshops can be in-person or virtual.
- Kits could be assembled by employees during slower times, adding to your shop's productivity and efficiency.
- Terrariums may be either closed or open.
- For closed terrariums, containers can be either glass or plastic as long as they are clear.
- Mosses, sea glass, crystals, and seashells can add support, texture, and color.

Dwarf-sized, slow-growing ferns, succulents, and air plants work well in terrariums and offer ease of maintenance. Here are some additional plant suggestions:

- |                          |                                     |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Maidenhair Vine        | • Violets                           |
| • Fittonia (Nerve Plant) | • Calathea Makoyana (Peacock Plant) |
| • Asparagus Fern         | • Echeveria                         |
| • English Ivy            | • Peperomia                         |
| • Venus Flytrap          | • Tillandsia Air Plant              |

### EFFICIENCY TIP

#### Avoid "One or Two of" Flowers

Keep a close eye on the cooler and what flowers your designers are choosing. Encourage them to "think by the bunch" to use up the flowers or leave enough stems in the cooler for a bouquet or another design.

Customers will rarely buy the last flower or two in a bucket, even if they like the flowers. Designers don't like to use a one-of flower in a design. So, what happens is that those orphaned flowers are thrown out.

When you spot one or two lonely flowers in the cooler, point them out to your design team. Encourage their use by highlighting the issue. Bad habits aren't changed until they are noticed.

## Every Team Needs a Leader

Not every shop owner is a born leader. Nor does every one have to be. Learning a few key skills will make it easier to lead your team. If asserting yourself isn't in your nature, you can have an uphill battle managing change with your team.

Recognize that there are instances when you must take charge and orchestrate change. If not you, then whom? You are responsible for the security of your business for you, your family, and the shop's employees. Sometimes, the needs of the shop overrule the needs of the individuals who work there. Those situations call for a leader to make tough choices and implement change. Use a system to make the process easier for you.

1. *Set the stage.* When you need to be assertive, choose a specific place and time to deliver your message or instructions. This allows you to change into your "assertive role" and alerts your employees to take your comments seriously. Catching them "on the fly" or when they're distracted by other work increases the chance of being misunderstood or not being taken seriously. Ask them to join you in an office or other quiet place.

If the information is detailed, ask everyone to take notes – a further clue to them that this is important information.

2. *Use direct language.* One of the most common mistakes made by managers is using "we" or "us" instead of "I" or "you". "We should probably start on those wedding bouquets Tuesday," is a suggestion, not a directive. "Start on those bouquets first thing Tuesday morning," is an instruction that can't be misconstrued. "Let's try to work overtime Thursday to make sure we're all set for the Smith wedding," sounds hopeful but carries no real expectations. If you want an employee to work overtime, then you should say something more direct, such as, "I need you to work overtime Thursday night on the Smith wedding." Be mindful of using specific instructions. "That order is a rush job," could be too vague. "That order has to be done by noon," leaves no room for doubt.

3. *Confirm your message.* Follow up your instructions with confirmation from the employee. You can ask him or her to repeat what you said or you can give instructions to a group and ask each person to say what his or her role is in the group task. In some cases, a written memo should be used to clarify or reinforce your message.

4. *Follow up mid-stream.* This is one of the most neglected steps by managers. It is crucial to check to ensure that your employees are executing the process correctly. This step is a triple win. It will save you frustration, help employees win, and meet your customers' expectations. Don't micro-manage – let the employee have enough freedom to do it his or her way – but do control the outcome. Acknowledge that if you don't correct improper behavior, your silence reinforces to your staff that it is acceptable.

As a business owner it's up to you to keep the work flowing and your employees on schedule. For best results, communicate as clearly as possible what your needs are and always check to be sure they are carried out appropriately before the task is completed.

*Dan McManus*

Flowers and Profits publisher Dan McManus gives the inside scoop – lessons he's learned from working with some of the smartest florists in America.

## dollars & scents

### Get to Know Your Customers



The more you know about your customers, the more you both profit from the relationship. Ask your customers through surveys and one-on-one conversations these seven questions to get to know them better:

1. Where do they live and work?
2. What do they like most about your shop, products, and services?
3. What are their shopping priorities (convenience, price, selection, etc.)?
4. What are the significant dates for which they want to be reminded?
5. What day and time of day do they usually shop?
6. Do they have family and friends living near the shop?
7. What is their preferred means of communication (email, telephone, mail)?

Boil down the answers to the five most important characteristics that they share and you will have a picture of your average customer. This will help you identify their wants and needs more effectively.



### Best Practice Advice

Want to increase your productivity and improve your COGS? Have monthly shop specials – three to five designs that your sales team pitches to your customers – just like a waiter in a fine restaurant discusses the "chef's specials" with you. You can create multiples, buy fresh stock more efficiently, have very little waste, and market your signature style. It's a win-win for everyone!

### “ WISH I'D SAID THAT! ”

“Forget past mistakes. Forget failures. Forget everything except what you're going to do now and do it.”

- William Durant



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FLOWERS AND  
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## Online Marketing

Tips, tricks, and strategies to make it easier for your shop to become visible to online shoppers.

### **I heard that getting my shop's online directory listings is important. What is the best way to do this?**

Use the Teleflora sponsored program by Yext. There are hundreds of directories that have your shop info on them and the more consistent your listing is, the more Google is likely to show your shop when consumers search for a florist on the Internet. These directories range from well-known ones such as Google and Yelp, but also include many companies that compile business information of which you've never heard. Updating hundreds of records manually is a task you don't want to undertake. Make better use of your time by employing the automated service Teleflora provides. Contact your Teleflora rep to get signed up.

### **How important is it to post to Google about my business?**

It is crucial to post often if you want to be well-ranked by Google. There are a variety of online activities that Google considers when it decides which business is going to be placed in the map pack area of a search. The single most important factor is how active you are on your Google Business Profile (GBP). In fact, it makes up more than a third of the how Google decides to feature a shop. In comparison, social media activity made up less than one percent of the formula and is no longer considered important in Google rankings.

For best results, post photographs to your GBP page about two times per week. The posts you make on GBP are not aimed at consumers (when was the last time you

looked at the postings on a retailer's GBP?). The postings are for Google to see, so they do not always have to be flowers. Any activity in the shop qualifies, as does a local event that you can help promote. The regular postings are more important than the content of the posts.

### **I get called or emailed almost every day by someone selling online advertising. Am I missing out by not taking their calls?**

No. You can safely limit your interaction to companies that specialize in marketing for flower shops. There are hundreds of firms that do not understand the unique needs of a retail florist that use telemarketers and/or spam. They often represent that they are from Google (because they sell Google ads but do not actually work for Google). Sometimes they claim to have found discrepancies in your online listing or your website performance. The emails are typically "mail merge" programs that add in your domain name, and maybe a screen capture and your domain address. The issue they point out is the same one that is included in emails to the thousands of businesses on their bulk email list. With all the things needing attention in your shop, these are calls that are safe to avoid. 💰

*Send your questions to  
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Dan McManus is the founder of TeamFloral, the largest online marketing firm for florists.



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