

Content Strategy White Paper

Group 3: Evelyn Drake, Tanuj Kannan, Sabian Burke

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide Elena's Flowers/Bridal with a new content strategy that will help improve the customer experience, increase the business's brand recognition, and increase sales and user engagement. This report will begin with an analysis of the problem statement, which specifically breaks down the 3 primary goals of our content strategy proposal. We then present a literature review, which analyzes the content strategies of three local competitors—Segelin's Florist & Gifts, Cloud Florist, and 12th Street Florist. Next, we provide an overview of our proposed content strategy, followed by two highly specific implementation guides for her online storefront and social media presence. Finally, we conclude with a summary of our report and recommendations.

Problem Statement

Elena's Flowers/Bridal faces three primary challenges that our content strategy aims to address:

First, the business **struggles to effectively communicate essential information** such as its address, operating hours, and contact details. These details are critical for potential customers, as they are often some of the first things customers consider when choosing between florists. If this information is not easily accessible on the website, customers may quickly leave the page and take their business to a customer. Ensuring that this information is prominently displayed can prevent the loss of potential sales, improve the overall user experience, and prevent customer frustration.

Second, the online storefront does **not provide sufficient functionality to allow customers to efficiently browse and order products**. With such an extensive catalog of floral arrangements, the lack of advanced filtering and search options can cause frustration for customers looking for specific items. By strengthening the site's layout, navigation, and filtering tools, the storefront can help customers access a wide range of options while also enabling them to quickly locate exactly what they are looking for.

Finally, Elena's Flowers/Bridal must **differentiate itself from competitors**, giving customers compelling reasons to choose the business. Many competitors offer similar key services, making it difficult for a new customer to identify what sets Elena's business apart. Highlighting unique value propositions, like exclusive promotions, personalized services, or loyalty rewards, can capture attention and make the website stand out in a competitive market.

Literature Review

In this section, we aim to analyze the content strategies of three local competitors—Segelin's Florist & Gifts, Cloud Florist, and 12th Street Florist. This analysis provides valuable insights into the ways in which Elena's competitors address the issues we initially identified (communicating vital business information, facilitating product browsing and purchasing, and convincing customers of their unique value propositions). Through this comparison, we have identified various strengths and weaknesses to offer improvements to Elena's content strategy

that will give her a competitive edge.

Analysis of Segelin's Florist & Gifts

Segelin's Florist & Gifts emphasizes accessibility by presenting business information such as their address, phone number, and links to social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. While they offer an "About Us" page and frequently answered questions, vital information like business hours is not displayed prominently on the homepage, potentially inconveniencing and frustrating users.

Their product browsing experience is streamlined with categories for a variety of occasions (e.g. Birthdays, Get Well, New Baby, etc.). Customers can further refine their search by price range, flower type, or color, which makes it easier to locate specific products. Additionally, they prominently display a variety of seasonal offerings with inviting "Buy Now" buttons.

To differentiate themselves from their competitors, Segelin's emphasizes their local, personalized services. For instance, they highlight their hand-delivered arrangements as a superior alternative to larger competitors who deliver flowers in a box ("they will have to be unpacked, trimmed, and arranged by your recipient"). They also use the slogan "We are your local florist—fresh flower delivery in Cleveland" to further emphasize this to customers. They offer flower delivery to make it easier for customers to choose their business, as they do not need to physically pick up the flowers in person. They offer unique consultations and wedding planning services to increase their credibility and customer engagement. Additionally, they include an email address field to allow customers to get special offers sent to their inbox.

Analysis of Cloud Florist

Cloud Florist effectively communicates business information by displaying their hours, days open, location, and accepted card payment types at the bottom of their website, while their phone number and address are conveniently located in the top right-hand corner. The prominently displays the words "Style. Grace. Sophistication." in bold to suggest their core values.

To facilitate product browsing and purchasing, the website includes a list of special offers such as a deal of the day and weekly specials at the bottom of the page, along with an email signup for weekly promo codes. At the top of the page, customers can find a list of occasions to help guide their floral purchases, and the "More" section offers additional categories like best sellers, gift baskets, and gift items to emphasize that the business provides more than just flowers.

To distinguish itself from competitors, they offer a feature to translate the page into a variety of languages, including Spanish. They highlight their staff's commitment to working with customers of various budgets in the "About" section to ensure personalized and high-quality service at a wide range of prices

Analysis of 12th Street Florist

12th Street Florist communicates key business information by including details such as location, store hours, and general customer support resources at the bottom of the homepage. While this information is available, placing it at the top of the page could improve accessibility.

To facilitate product browsing and purchasing, the website features links at the top of the page that direct customers to specific product packages, event-specific information, and a link to their resources. Some of these links contain dropdown menus for filtering specific information. This simple and structured layout enhances the user experience.

To stand out from competitors, the homepage includes a link to “Subscription Packages,” which allows customers to receive regular flower deliveries at a discounted price, which benefits both the customer and the business through consistent engagement over an extended period of time. Hovering over the “Weddings & Events” link displays an option to book a consultation with the company, providing expert input and further incentivizing customers to choose 12th Street Florist.

Comparing and Contrasting Communication Strategies

With respect to product filtering, Elena’s Florist/Bridal offers a more comprehensive filtering functionality than Cloud Florist, Segelin’s Flowers & Gifts, and 12th Street Florist, whose systems are simpler and less effective for potential customers. For the initial call to action, Elena’s Florist/Bridal, Cloud Florist, and 12th Street Florist prominently display a “Shop Now” button on their websites. However, only Segelin’s Florist & Gifts, Cloud Florist, and Elena’s Florist/Bridal include an introductory mission statement, with varying effectiveness. Segelin’s provides a straightforward and informative message: “We are your local florist—fresh flower delivery in Cleveland,” while Cloud Florist’s “Style. Grace. Sophistication.” is less effective and less informative. Elena’s is more inviting, but not necessarily as specific or personal: “Have the best of the season delivered to your door.” In terms of visual appeal, Elena’s Florist/Bridal, Segelin’s Florist & Gifts, and 12th Street Florist all feature aesthetically pleasing, high-contrast color schemes, whereas Cloud Florist’s orange and black design is less visually appealing and occasionally hard to read.

When it comes to communication of business information, Cloud Florist stands out from its competitors by placing its phone number, address, and hours in a fixed banner at the bottom of the page. Because this banner is fixed and moves along with the user, this information is readily accessible whenever a customer needs it. In contrast, the other storefronts list this information only at the bottom of their pages, which can make it harder for customers to find. For product organization and layout, all four storefronts contain an “Occasions” dropdown menu with a wide variety of specific occasions and flower types, alongside separate main menu items for more common occasions like “Weddings,” “Sympathy,” and “Birthdays.” This dual system, which offers access to a long list of specific occasions while immediately presenting users with the most common options, balances the needs of customers seeking common items while providing the option to browse more specific categories.

Recommended Content Strategy

NOTE: In preparation for Thanksgiving, Elena has made some changes to her website after we completed this assignment. However, the majority of the content is the same.

Overarching message and story

Elena attempts to convey the idea that while her business is small, it has over 30 years of industry experience. However, this information is buried in the “About Us” section at the very

bottom of the page, making it easy for customers to miss. Without this context, the website feels somewhat impersonal and generic, as it does not significantly differ from her competitors' online storefronts. The "About Us" section ends with the powerful tagline "Say it with flowers!", which could immediately grab attention if presented at the top of the page. We suggest keeping the current tagline, "Have the best of the season delivered to your door," but making it less prominent and elevating "Say it with flowers!" instead. Additionally, the site could emphasize her Ukrainian heritage and present the business's longevity (30+ years) as a success story. By making her personal story the primary focus of her branding, Elena can distinguish her business from competitors and create a more emotional connection with her customers.

Specific tone of voice and visual identity

Currently, Elena's website conveys a professional and neutral tone. However, adopting a more personal, warm, and inviting tone would better align with her overarching message. For instance, deemphasizing or replacing the impersonal tagline "Have the best of the season delivered to your door" with "Say it with flowers!" would encourage customers to express their emotions while supporting her small business. This is also an effective slogan because it encourages customers to think about their loved ones, tying in their emotions for them with Elena's business. To further enhance the welcoming atmosphere, she could adjust the site's visual identity by replacing the white background with a warmer color, such as a shade of pink that matches her logo. These changes in tone and visual identity would highlight her personal story, making her storefront feel more thoughtful and unique.

Specific strategies to more effectively communicate with customers

Elena has an online presence across various platforms, including her website, a Facebook page, Google Maps, Instagram, and Zola (a wedding planning service). While these platforms are valuable, her online storefront gives her the most control over her customer experience, so our recommendations primarily focus on enhancing it. Adding a field for customers to provide their email and/or phone number in exchange for promotions, exclusive offers, or discounts could help build customer loyalty and engagement. This would allow Elena to use text messaging and email marketing services to remind customers about her business and encourage repeat purchases. To further engage with customers, Elena could also use her social media platforms more actively. She could post blogs about flower care tips, host Q&A sessions to address customer inquiries, and offer giveaways to attract more followers. These strategies would not only enhance her brand's visibility but also establish her as a trusted resource for flower-related information.

Changes to employee rules

Of course, the ability to implement these changes depends on who is maintaining Elena's online storefront. If she employs a dedicated web developer or contracts a freelancer, she should share this strategy with them, as they possess the technical expertise required. If Elena is managing the website herself, she likely uses tools to streamline the process and should be able to implement these changes. However, these updates will demand significant time and effort. To prioritize this work, she may need to delegate some of these responsibilities to her employees or assign someone else to oversee her company's operations temporarily. Additionally, maintaining an active social media presence is a time-intensive task, especially alongside a small business, so she might consider delegating it to an employee or hiring a dedicated social media manager.

Implementation Guides

To identify the areas most in need of improvement, we have ranked various aspects of Elena's online storefront in comparison to those of other floral retailers. These categories are scored on a subjective 1 through 5 scale, and the rationale for each ranking is listed above in the Literature Review section.

	Filtering Functionality	Shop Now Button	Mission Statement	Appealing Color Scheme	Accessible Contact Information	Products Organized by Event	Unique Offerings
Elena's Florist/ Bridal	5	5	3	4	2	5	2
12th Street Florist	3	5	3	5	2	5	4
Segelin's Florist and Gifts	2	2	4	3	3	5	5
Cloud Florist	1	3	2	2	4	5	4

From this comparison, it is obvious that the major areas of improvement for Elena's Florist/Bridal are effectively communicating business/contact information (address, hours, location, etc.), providing a clear mission statement that represents the business and what it provides, and emphasizing unique offerings to convince customers to choose their business over their competitors. We present two implementation guides, one for her website and one for her social media presence, to address these issues:

Implementation Guide 1 - Website

Unclear communication of vital business information (*hours, address, contact information, etc.*)

Move this information to the top of the page or include a bottom footer with this information that follows the view regardless of where the user is on the page.

Unclear communication of mission statement

Clearly emphasize the fact that their arrangements are fresh, local, and arranged by hand.

Lack of unique offerings in comparison to competitors

Create a field for the customer's email/phone number where they receive special promotions and advertisements about her newest products and a rewards program incentivizing customers to continue making purchases from her business.

Generic tagline (*currently just "Have the best of the season delivered to your door"*)

Immediately present the customer with the tagline she ends the small About Us section with: "Say it with flowers!"

Neutral tone and visual identity

Make the visual style more warm and inviting by replacing the white background with a warmer color or a shade of pink to more closely match her logo.

Implementation Guide 2 - Social Media

Low engagement

Elena can share tips about how to make your flowers last longer, DIY flower arrangements, and tips on how to pick the perfect flowers based on the occasion.

Low user interaction

Run a giveaway in which people would repost, follow and maybe tag friends under the post, which can bring more awareness to her business.

Use polls and Q&A's to ask her followers questions like "What's your favorite flower?" or "What would you like to see more of?"

Inconsistent posting schedule

Create a posting calendar to post consistently, including a mix of product highlights, educational content, and promotions

Focus on major holidays and themes, like Mother's day, Valentine's day, and Christmas

Conclusion

Overall, we believe that Elena's Flowers/Bridal can benefit greatly from our suggestions. Our content strategy will help her communicate vital information about her business more effectively to customers, making it easier for new customers to find everything they need to do business with her. By making information such as her business hours, address, contact information, etc. more accessible to customers by highlighting it on her storefront, customers will be able to easily find this information without getting lost and frustrated, which might cause them to switch to a competitor with a more informative website. Her website's strong filtering strategy will enable customers to navigate her large selection of products, one of her largest assets, and find exactly what they're looking for. Changes to her website's top navigation bar will make it easier for customers to search for products by occasion, and her catalog's filtering functionalities are already very good (better than all of her competitors), giving her an edge. Offering unique opportunities to customers, such as deals, discounts, exclusive offers, and giveaways, will incentivize customers to choose her business over her competitors. Emphasizing her unique message and story will make her business seem more appealing and inviting to customers, who will be happy to know that their contributions are supporting a small business. Including her tagline "Say it with flowers!" also incentivizes customers by reminding them of their loved ones. Making the color scheme warmer and more inviting makes her storefront more visually appealing and contributes to her business's overall tone. Finally, an increased social media presence might be a large time commitment, but social media is an incredibly effective way to reach new customers and engage with existing ones, improving her online presence and outreach.

References

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