



FINANCIAL INFORMATION,  
EDUCATION AND CONTROL  
FOR THE RETAIL FLORIST

THE VALUE OF:  
Your Brand, p. 2  
Your Image, p. 4

# Floral Finance

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## QUICK TAKES

**Ideas You Can Put to Work Immediately**

### 1 Meeting Your Goals

If a to-do list is your only organizational strategy, you're letting the "urgent" drive your life.

Proper planning starts with the big picture—where you want to be at the end of the year. Then, you plan your activities in keeping with those goals, not in response to whatever is making the most noise.

Plan each day, but do it right. Keep moving toward your big goals.

### 2 Holiday Help

It's not too late to review your Mother's Day staffing needs. Start by looking at last year's sales records and estimating the daily volume you'll have this year. Then ask your part-time employees for commitments to add more hours. If that won't be enough, contact anyone else who has indicated an interest in working over the holiday.

### 3 Schedule Time Off

The last couple weeks of April and the first two in May are always super busy. Make sure you schedule some downtime after Mother's Day.

You can't perform at your best without rest and "re-creation." Put some time on the calendar this month just for you. You'll be more relaxed and more productive if you do.

## DETERMINATION



It's a great word. Right up there with "discipline."

Although some people prefer to live in a spontaneous, spur-of-the-moment, go-with-the-flow way,

determination and discipline are more often the bedrock of success.

My mother was a piano teacher right up into her 80s. She always said, "Learning to play the piano is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration."

Although I never learned to play the piano, I did learn the lesson. It has paid off many times over the years.

Winston Churchill is famous for the speech in which he rallied England by saying, "We shall never surrender."

Wherever you turn, you can find examples of how people with drive and commitment found more success than those with raw talent. It's working toward a goal, despite the obstacles which appear, that matters most.

Although many people facing roadblocks give up, winners figure out how to get around those challenges. For these individuals, it's almost as if roadblocks are a dare. The true winner accepts, meets and overcomes the challenges.

So, the next time you think it might be easier to quit, remember your ultimate goal. If it's worth achieving, it's worth the effort to keep going until you conquer the challenges and succeed.

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Editor  
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# SIGN LANG

## *Reap the Returns of Brand*

**W**hat do you think of when you see golden arches on the horizon? McDonald's, of course. Or maybe hamburgers and milk shakes if you're especially hungry.

How about the sign that spells out "FedEx"? Your mind probably wanders to overnight deliveries or, more recently, copies, custom printing and quick service.

McDonald's and FedEx have created images so strong that their signs alone bring those messages to mind.

Most florists will never be large enough to create such a strong, universally recognized image. However, with planning and effort, almost any business can build a memorable image in its local community.

The benefits of a solid brand? Customers will be familiar with your shop and feel comfortable. They will know what to expect. You will be whom they think about when floral needs arise or when a friend or colleague asks for a flower shop recommendation.

The bottom-line benefit of a solid brand is what it adds to the bottom line.

### THE MAIN IDEA

To communicate your shop's image, you must first determine what attributes you want to convey. Classy. Friendly. Personal. Professional. Homey. Big. Small. The choice is yours.

Identify the words that best describe who you are and what you want to become.

Then incorporate that feeling into a logo. Distinctive typestyles, a catchy slogan, and a fancy graphic or illustration can convey your desired look and feel.

For example, your logo could simply say "Jane's Flowers—Your Community Flower Shop" in a handwritten-style script. Such a treatment conveys a friendly, personal image.

### BRAND CONSISTENCY

Consistency is the foundation of a strong image. You must reinforce your message over and over.

Keep it simple. Don't confuse customers with multiple slogans and conflicting images. Settle on one message and drive it home.

**KEEP IT SIMPLE.**  
**Don't confuse customers**  
**with multiple slogans**  
**and conflicting images.**

Once you've settled on an image and a logo, use them throughout all your marketing and customer contacts.

Ideally, every printed item from your shop should reinforce your brand. Enclosure cards and envelopes, sales tickets, invoices and statements, mailing envelopes, return envelopes, statement stuffers, calendars, advertisements and fliers, mailing labels, business cards.

Every item you might give a customer should support a consistent

# UAGE

## Recognition

image. Just like McDonald's. Their golden arches appear on every sign, box, bag, cup, package, lid and condiment packet the stores use.

If your shop is large enough, you might want to imprint wrapping paper, plastic wrap, tissue paper and delivery boxes with your logo. If you order a sufficient quantity, the prices can be very reasonable.

### IN-STORE SIGNAGE

The inside of the shop also presents numerous opportunities to reinforce your image. Price tags, signs and sale banners all should carry your logo.

Have poster board squares printed with your logo. You'll have ready-to-use, image-reinforcing signs whenever you need them.

### DELIVERY VEHICLES

Delivery vehicles can be one of your most cost-effective forms of advertising. Think about it. As your van is driven around the community, you can get thousands of advertising impressions—every day.

For that to happen, however, your van must stand out. A plain-Jane white van with some lettering or a couple of pictures of flowers won't make much of an impression.

The van's color should be bold enough to stand out. Think purple, yellow, lime green or even pink. Then, add your logo and some compelling graphics. You WILL be noticed. Guaranteed.

The small cost to paint a vehicle is well worth the expense. The van will turn out to be one of your least expensive and most-seen advertising tools.

### POINT OF CONTACT

Your logo and signs are usually the first points of customer contact. Decisions about such



important first impressions deserve careful consideration before you make your final choice.

Once you've settled on an image, leverage it. Use your logo

as often as possible in as many places as possible. Over time, your current clients and potential customers will get the message—loud and clear. ☺



## The Buying Experience

When you talk about image, your shop's exterior sign may be the first thing that comes to mind. However, inside signage also has a big effect on how customers see you.

Do you make it easy for customers to buy from you? Believe it or not, interior signage often can make—or break—a sale.

### At What Price?

The first thing a customer wants to know about an item is its price. The easier you make it for customers to find the price, the happier they will be.

Too many florists make checking prices difficult. Stems and arrangements in the cooler are not tagged. Customers must ask to find out what a given item costs.

Unfortunately, many customers don't want to ask. They will go elsewhere to avoid having to ask for a price. If it turns out an item is more expensive than they can afford, saying "no" would be too embarrassing.

Everything you sell should have its price clearly marked. The more easily customers can compare products and prices, the more you will sell.

### Sign Up for Signs

After you make the big decisions about your logo and outdoor signage, devote equal time and attention to your indoor pricing signs.

To reinforce your brand, pricing signs should include your logo. The signs also should be large enough for the price to be easily seen.

Some florists use disposable cards that they throw away with each price change. Others laminate the cards and use an erasable marker.

### Stem by Stem

Some florists list the prices of loose cut stems on a flower price board. While this is better than nothing, individual price signs on or near each product are even better.

With a pricing board, customers first must know the name of the flower. That's a problem. No one wants to admit they don't know the name of the product they are looking to buy.

Price boards make more sense in the design room. Designers do know the name of each stem. The price boards will help these creative professionals stay within your cost of goods sold (COGS) specifications.

Make things easy on your customers. Put a sign on each bucket showing the name and price of the product it contains. Post a similar price sign on or near each arrangement.

### More Than Words

Your shop's image is a function of many variables. The atmosphere outside and inside your shop, as well as the buying process itself, all work together so that customers come away with a feel for your operation. That "feel" is your image at an emotional level.

Make the buying experience both easy and positive. Give customers as much information as possible through a generous use of signs all around your shop.

# The Impact of Image

## *It Can Effect Your Bottom Line*

**W**hat's your opinion of rock and roll ... or classical symphonies? Of big cities ... or small towns? Of Democrats ... or Republicans?

It didn't take long to answer those questions, did it? Each option creates an instant impression in your mind. Whether good or bad, your opinion on the subject springs to life as soon as you hear each word.

Whether or not you listen to much music now, you probably have an opinion on what you like. The image etched in your mind—perhaps as far back as your teens—may still stand, even though today's music may be quite different than what you remember.

You may have lived in a small town once. It was pleasant, peaceful and friendly. So you may think most small towns are the same.

And what about the Democrats and Republicans? Everybody has an opinion about politicos, often based upon limited experience with a few candidates, a few campaigns and a few officeholders.

### **YOUR SHOP**

What do you think would happen if we asked people in your community about your flower shop?

Everyone who has had personal contact with your shop would have an opinion. So would many who have only heard of your business. Somehow, they have developed a mental image of what your shop is like. And that image determines whether they will do business with you in the future.

If image is that important, one lesson is immediately clear: You must do everything in your power to build and keep your shop's image strong and positive.

At the same time, you must be financially prudent. You can't spend money you don't have on a broad-based image campaign.

### **KNOW WHAT YOU WANT**

It seems obvious. To build the right image for your shop, you first must know the kind of image you want.

Do you want to emphasize a certain type of design? What level of service do you want to provide? What about

price points—do you want to sell at the upper end, the lower end or somewhere in between?

As you work through these and other questions, you will begin to see the image that you want for your shop. That image will dictate the messages to communicate to the public.

The next task is to evaluate the public's current image of your shop. Is that image the one you want to project? If you don't know what people think about your shop, ask them. There are several ways to do that.

### **Surveys**

Include a customer survey in your next batch of invoices or statements. For a broader perspective, distribute surveys during deliveries, through a neighborhood mailer or by posting a poll on social media.

Ask specific questions that will reveal people's impressions of how your products, designs, service level and prices compare with those of other shops.

To increase the response rate (and honesty), make the survey anonymous. If you are using mail, pay for the business-

reply postage. You'll spend a little on postage. But the information you gain will be worth it. You'll get a clear picture of your image in the marketplace.

### **Mystery Shoppers**

If your marketing budget is really tight, consider using mystery shoppers.

Ask a handful of friends and associates to check out your shop a few times over a period of months when you are not there and then report back with their experiences.

Provide the mystery shoppers with detailed instructions on what you hope to learn. Have them make different types of purchases, ask a variety of questions and register a complaint or two. All just to see how your staff responds.

### **Talk**

An even less expensive option is to talk to customers and local people about your shop. See what they know and what they think about your business.

### **BE CONSISTENT**

As you concentrate on building—or rebuilding—your shop's image, think of a big bunch of building blocks.

No single block is sufficient by itself to create a building. Even when enough blocks are used, one out-of-place block can throw off the entire structure.

**You must do everything in your power to build and keep your shop's image strong and positive. At the same time, you must be financially prudent.**

And yet, if you put enough blocks together in the right way, you can build anything you want.

Here are 10 crucial building blocks for your shop's image. Make sure all 10 are working in the same direction.

#### **1. Shop Name**

What's in a name? Plenty, when you're trying to build a business.

If you're just starting out, this one is easy. You can choose a name that symbolizes the image you want to project.

The bigger problem is when you purchase an existing shop or want to

change your shop's focus. The current name may not mesh with your new goals.

Your shop's name shouldn't be considered off limits for change if it conflicts with your desired image. The owners of "Bunches of Blossoms," for example, might want to reconsider that name if they are trying to refocus on upscale clientele with sophisticated designs.

In fact, in some cases, changing the name can be a crucial part of your strategy. With a new name for a new focus, you'll be able to reinforce the message behind the moniker.

A name change will cost some money. New signage. New letterhead. New statements and invoices. To reduce costs, time the transition so that it comes when you need to reorder office supplies.

Depending on your state's laws and the way in which your business is organized, you also may have to jump through some legal hoops.

## 2. Shop Logo

Same basic concerns here. Make sure the shop's logo is consistent with your desired image. A sharp, clean design for a shop doing modern designs. A rich, old-world look if the emphasis is on classic styles. A casual, carefree one if cash-and-carry is your focus.

A student enrolled in a graphic design class at a local college might be a good creative resource. Students are usually more interested in experience than money. You could get a first-class look for an economy price.

## 3. Phone

Every time one of your employees fields or makes a call, the person on the other end of the line picks up a strong signal about your shop.

Your staff should be friendly, courteous and helpful. Always. They also should be knowledgeable about your shop's specialties, capabilities and goals.

## 4. Written Communication

When you send out letters, direct mail or any other written communication, there is no room for error. No detail is too small to make an impact. See the box

## Guidelines for Written Communication

- **Fonts.** Do they reflect or fight with your desired image?
- **Paper.** Does the paper's weight and finish fit with your name and logo?
- **Proofreading.** A poorly written brochure or an ad with typos won't impress customers.
- **Tone and Message.** Are you consistent with the image you are seeking to project?
- **Professionalism.** Make sure your communications look professional. For example, do your statements look business-like, or are you just sending copies of ledger cards?

above for tips on how to effectively communicate your image on paper.

## 5. Windows & Displays

It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. If you have an exterior display window, what kind of picture are you painting?

You may decorate your windows with actual products. Or use a thematic approach to connect with passersby on an emotional level. Either way, make the products and/or themes you choose match what your business is all about.

If the window suggests one kind of shop and passersby encounter a different reality inside the door, you'll have two problems. First, the people who expect one kind of shop and encounter another quickly will be turned off. Second, the people you really do want to reach may never set foot inside. They aren't seeking the kind of shop the window seems to suggest.

## 6. Interior

Once customers are inside the shop, the goal is the same.

Everything should be designed to support your preferred image. The store layout. Your product selections. Interior signage.

A shop catering to upscale patrons, for example, shouldn't pack the sales floor with lots of merchandise. No matter the quality of the products, a jam-packed sales floor doesn't shout elegance to walk-in customers. It shouts economy.

And regardless of your image vision, always keep your shop clean and orderly. You don't want customers to be distracted by clutter.

## 7. Personnel

People matter. A shop that promotes high service levels has to provide those levels without exception.

Hire carefully. And train your employees just as carefully. Not only in the skills of a floral professional but also in how they can help build the image you are seeking.

## 8. Uniforms

Do your employees wear uniforms—smocks, monogrammed golf shirts, a certain color of pants? Even simple uniforms will make your personnel stand out.



## 9. Vehicles

A delivery van is more than a vehicle. When that van drives down the street, it is your ambassador to the community.

Is your van clean? Are your logo, address, and telephone number correct and clearly visible? Are your drivers courteous, well dressed and well informed?



## 10. Service

The last image-builder may be the most important of all. Make sure your products and services measure up to the image you are so carefully trying to nurture.

Paying attention to all of the other variables may get you started. However, unless your performance matches the promises you make, all of those promises will soon disappear like a light spring breeze.

• • •

In the end, the reality behind an image is what determines your success. But if you don't send the right signals in the first place, you may never get the chance to prove yourself. ☺



**H**ow can you keep your business firmly on course but still be flexible enough to respond to unusual or unexpected customer requests? Are strategic plans and exceptional customer service like oil and water? Or is there a way to mesh the two?

Marshall Field built a thriving retail business on this slogan:

*Serve the customers. Find out what they want, and then work hard to deliver it better than anyone else.*

A strong customer focus is as central to the operation of a successful flower shop as it was to Marshall Field's. You must give your customers what they want. Stake out a niche that suits your expertise and your market.

At the same time, to succeed in this increasingly competitive industry, you can't continually change directions. You need to create and then stick with a winning strategy. Diligently serve the customer. Faithfully follow your strategy. The challenge is that sometimes these two principles conflict with each other.

Suppose you open your shop at 8:00 a.m. and close at 5:00 p.m. A full nine hours for customers to browse, inquire or place their orders, yet not so much time that you can't handle the work. Now suppose a valued customer begins urging you to stay open until 6:00 p.m. so he or she—and presumably other commuters—can stop by on the way home from work.

Or perhaps another customer pushes you to do more modern designs. That's not the style in which your expertise

shines. And it may not be the style to which your other customers are particularly inclined.

What do you do when someone wants something that may conflict with the plans you have for the shop?

A three-step technique will help you strike the right balance between exceptional customer service and a focused strategic plan.

#### 1. EVALUATE

Not every single suggestion from every single customer is right for your shop. If a requested product or service would steer your focus off course, it's probably not something you should pursue. Same thing if the idea just isn't practical.

Your first step, therefore, is to evaluate each request carefully. Before you say yes, take a step back. Ask yourself these questions:

- Is the requested product or service an isolated preference or a broad-based need shared by many of your customers?
- Would the initiative be aimed squarely at your target market or some other group?
- Can you do it without additional resources?

- Where is the requesting party's interest level—high, low or somewhere in between?

#### 2. DECIDE

The answers gleaned during the evaluation process will guide your decisions.

If, for example, stay-at-home parents in fairly close proximity to the shop are your target market, staying open late probably isn't a winning idea. Your shop simply isn't targeting the office commuters on the way home from work. The extra effort and expense the additional hours would require just wouldn't pay off.

Other requests will signal directions you ought to take. You may find a broad and deeply felt need among exactly the group of customers you are pursuing. In those cases, go ahead. Dive in. The idea will support your long-term plans. You should respond, and respond quickly.

**To succeed in this increasingly competitive industry, you can't continually change directions. You need to create and then stick with a winning strategy.**

#### 3. IMPLEMENT

You've completed your evaluation of a new idea. You've decided it would be right for the customers and right for the shop.

The only thing left to do is to do it. Just don't go too far. The most common mistake? Forgetting that people will pay for the things they find valuable.

You don't have to respond to special requests or deliver special services free of charge. In fact, people's willingness to pay is a good indicator of how much they really want something. If they won't pay for it, how valuable can it be?

Always consider the bottom line before you pursue a new idea. If it doesn't mesh with your long-term objectives, be willing to turn away politely. If it's an idea whose time has come, give the customers what they want—and don't be afraid to charge for it. ☺

# 10 MYTHS ABOUT DEBT

**T**en common credit myths keep us in debt, according to the Institute of Consumer Financial Education.

"Our perceptions determine our practice, our belief results in our behavior and our attitudes result in our actions," the Institute says. "The way we view our finances determines the way we spend and pay bills."

Here are the 10 myths.

## 1. CREDIT CARDS ARE MONEY.

Both cash and credit can buy things. But buying with credit creates debt; each credit card transaction is like taking out a loan at the bank.



## 2. IF THEY LET ME BUY IT, I CAN AFFORD IT.

Easy credit determines what we can buy. But real money determines what we can afford.

## 3. THEY WOULDN'T GIVE ME CREDIT UNLESS THEY WERE SURE I COULD REPAY IT.

This is the most common credit myth credit counselors hear. It is not true. For example, credit card companies give credit to 18-year-olds, knowing their parents will pay the bills, if necessary, to preserve their kids' credit scores.

You can't trust a salesman to tell you what you can afford. Bankruptcies and foreclosures prove that many lenders guess wrong.

## 4. I CAN AFFORD IT IF I CAN MAKE THE MINIMUM PAYMENT.

Consider this scenario. You thought you bought a Honda Accord for \$24,000. You really paid \$48,000 because you bought it on the seven-year plan instead of the three-year plan. Too many consumers focus on "no money down" and a low monthly payment—not the total cost of the loan.

## 5. I DON'T NEED A SAVINGS ACCOUNT IF I HAVE CREDIT CARDS.

Paying for emergencies with credit often creates another crisis down the road.

## 6. DEBT IS OKAY AS LONG AS THE INTEREST IS TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

It is better to be debt free than to gain a tax deduction for a percentage of the debt.

## 7. I DON'T HAVE WANTS, JUST NEEDS.

Needs are things you cannot live without. Wants are the things we think will bring us happiness, but they usually bring us debt.

## 8. I CAN USE MY HOUSE'S EQUITY TO PAY CREDIT CARD DEBT.

This is a very bad idea, unless you change your habits. Many people borrow against their home equity to pay credit card debt but then go out and run up new credit card debt. And then repeat the cycle.

Eventually, all of their home equity is used up. Instead of building credit card debt, they should have worked to pay off their home mortgage for retirement.

## 9. I PAY MY BILLS ON TIME, SO I MUST BE FINANCIALLY HEALTHY.

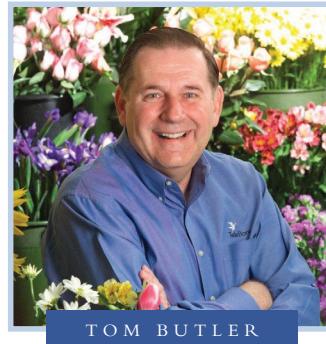
Credit creates the illusion that we are swimming in money. Really, we are clinging to the side of the credit lifeboat.

## 10. HAVING GOOD CREDIT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO ME.

Good credit can help us get good loan terms when we need to borrow—for example, to buy a house. But it also can lure us into unnecessary debt. The fact that you *can* borrow on good terms doesn't mean you *should* borrow. Most debt is not good, regardless of the terms.

## Call for Nominations

2018 Tom Butler  
Floral Retailer of the Year



TOM BUTLER

In 2015, Teleflora established the Tom Butler "Floral Retailer of the Year" Award to honor Tom Butler, Teleflora's past Chairman. Tom led Teleflora in its mission to serve as a trusted business partner, friend and innovator to independent retail florists across the U.S. and Canada.

The honorary award recognizes a retail florist and Teleflora member who best embodies

Tom's legacy. In addition to running a first-class retail operation, award winners show the highest level of commitment and service to their local community, are dedicated ambassadors to the floral industry, and provide leadership and guidance to fellow florists.

*Sound like someone you know?*  
Nominate a retail florist today at  
[www.myteleflora.com/nominate](http://www.myteleflora.com/nominate)

*Nominations are due by June 30, 2018.  
The winner will be announced at  
SAF's Annual Convention in September.*

# I N Q U I R I E S & A N S W E R S **LETTERS**

## ENSURING THE BEST PRODUCT

*"What's the best way to make sure I am getting the highest quality product?"*

### Do your buying in person.

With all of the emphasis on the internet these days, it's easy to forget the importance of eye-to-eye contact with suppliers whenever possible. To know you are getting the best product available, you have to visit your wholesaler and see what's there. Different products will stand out each week, and the only way to tell what's best today is to go look.

Wholesalers get deliveries from their suppliers on a regular basis. By visiting your wholesaler frequently, you will quickly learn their buying schedules. You'll know when new arrivals first hit the sales cooler. You can time your visits accordingly.

In addition, each visit will build your relationship with the wholesaler. A good relationship can lead to other benefits and better service. Don't shortchange yourself. Visit your wholesaler often.

## TOO MANY SALES

*"Is there an appropriate way to limit sales during a holiday?"*

*"We have more business than we can handle."*

### None that won't hurt you.

You're not the first florist to ask this question. In fact, some florists do more than ask. They actively attempt to limit their sales during a busy holiday.

They'll take their phones off the hook, limit or eliminate their advertising, or raise prices to discourage customers. These efforts may work too well—not only limiting holiday sales but also discouraging customers from using the shops' services at other times.

Back when local retail florists were the only source of flowers, you might be able to get away with that lack of customer focus. Today, however, customers have many options for buying flowers.

Don't try to limit holiday sales. Make your holiday services so strong that customers will want to come back to you when they have other flower needs.

If you are struggling to handle holiday volume, spend more time preparing and planning for the season. Go for all the business you can get. That's the key to growth.

## NORMS

### SMARTPHONE USERS



**220 Million**

This is the number of smartphone users in the United States in 2017. That's 68% of the people in the country—up from only 40% in 2012.

Why so much growth? People are moving from desktop and laptop computers toward greater smartphone use. With hundreds of thousands of smartphone apps, you can read the latest novel, listen to music, browse the Internet or purchase merchandise on your phone.

As a florist, you must make sure your website is compatible with mobile devices so customers can access your site and order your flowers on their smartphones.

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