

## STOP THE ONESIES AND TWOSIES

**Our retailer customers often make small orders at the last minute. While we appreciate the business, is there any way to get them to order sooner?**

DOUG LIEDTKE | PRESIDENT | J & E WHOLESALE | AMARILLO, TEXAS

I'm excited to see my first inquiry from the wholesale side of the industry. Doug poses a great challenge, and I have some insight to both sides of the flower-buying process that should prove helpful. First, let me take a step back to about four years ago when I began doing wholesale training (based on the principles that I have been sharing in this column). While at wholesalers, I regularly saw the pattern Doug mentioned — shops ordering just one bunch of flowers to fill a specific order and/or making repeated small orders over the week instead of one big one. Sound familiar?

### Design Must Drive Sales

What I tell retailers: Have design drive the sales process, not the other way around. It's a simple, powerful and profitable way to run a flower shop, yet I rarely see it happen. Instead of asking about flowers and selling specifics, sell colors and palettes. This way, you are offering a generic palette based on what you have in stock as opposed to asking, "What's your mom's favorite flower?" Murphy's law dictates that the answer to that question is a flower that you don't have, hence the need to call your wholesaler (with fingers crossed) to order that one bunch of purple iris at a premium, with extra tacked on for delivery, further reducing your profits. Customer requests for items not in stock are inevitable, but you can minimize them (and their profit-eroding consequences) by taking stock of your cooler each morning and selling through your inventory. Say, "I recommend a beautiful medium arrange-

ment of our best garden flowers in rich autumn colors." Did you promise or solicit specifics? No! Did you paint a wonderful picture for the customer as to how the design will look? Yes!

### Plan Ahead

Do you order vases four at a time? Or floral foam by the piece? Of course not. That would be silly, time-consuming, inefficient and costly. You order non-perishable items in bulk to save money, with the understanding that they will be used in your shop. Start to think that way about ordering flowers, too. Take advantage of wholesalers' standing orders and farm-direct programs — they're designed to save you money by placing a bigger order (in advance) for the core flowers and foliage you regularly use. Instead of ordering the same few bunches of flowers at a higher price two or three times a week, you can order them once, save some money and be more profitable. Let design drive sales and you'll have less leftover inventory, too. 🌿



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our industry. Tim and his staff have been traveling the globe since 1997 to educate florists of all sizes to engage customers in bold new ways while learning how these successful shops operate on all levels. [tim@floralstrategies.com](mailto:tim@floralstrategies.com)

**Got a sales or service challenge?** Tell Tim about it, and he'll tackle it in an upcoming column. Email [tim@floralstrategies.com](mailto:tim@floralstrategies.com), or call him, (800) 983-6184.



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