

WEBSAAVY

Let Your Story Be Told



How e-mail gives florists control in their communications with customers

BY WILLIAM CARLSON

Florists have an advantage when using e-mail marketing because they have so much to offer in the way of useful information, interesting storylines and valuable incentives. Florists can use this advantage by introducing themselves to new people, converting one-time visitors into buyers, or solidifying existing ongoing relationships.

Florists can easily implement interesting, proactive communications to educate, entice, and stay “top of mind” with their existing customers and those brand-new leads sent daily by wire service and broker orders.

An automated e-mail “newsletter” series can offer portions of a florist’s hottest tips and tricks to every customer for every situation. Just remember to keep communications informative. Customers must see value in these communications and not a constant barrage of sales pitches. Otherwise, they will “opt out” (a required feature in e-mails that provides the recipient the option of discontinuing their participation in an e-mail campaign). If done right, e-mail is the perfect way to turn an occasional buyer into a valuable client.

Within e-mail broadcasts, a florist can strategically write a soft sales offer and send it out as a preferred customer promo, special sales notification or new service announcement. These letters can be revised throughout the year, and repeated from holiday to holiday or season to season.

Because e-mail marketing is direct and target specific, florists can split their messages into groups to fine-tune messages and get control unlike any other medium of communication.

Florists can quickly and spontaneously let customers know when there are unique and unusual (highly perishable, we’ve-got-to-sell-them-right-now) products that become ones that “Customers just can’t live without!”

E-mail is the perfect medium for a florist to develop a relationship with a new prospect, create a community of loyal repeat customers, differentiate their business from the competition, and support or enhance their identity or store brand. An effective e-mail campaign can align with specific landing pages on the florist’s Web site with private offers, special sales and time-sensitive services.

In any other marketing and advertising medium, once the ad has run or the newsletter or brochure printed – it’s over. With an e-mail marketing campaign, a florist can test the results and take as many “do-overs” as needed to get the right combination for success.

A florist can send an e-mail newsletter, announcement, invitation, or special offer to a small group and test for results (number of responses, sales). Every component of the message (from line, subject line, greeting, body, close, and signature file) can be tweaked and refined. That process allows the very best message to be rolled out to all contacts! Never before has a florist had so much control in their communication with clients and prospects.

E-mail is a very cost effective way to devise and implement a marketing plan that fits a florist’s specific needs. Adding e-mail to an already existing plan allows the florist to spend less time, money and resources on other efforts like direct mail, media advertising, coupons, statement stuffers and brochures. In fact, a florist can test ideas through e-mail and apply the most effective messages to other advertising mediums.

A florist can use their own e-mail software, a third party’s mailing system software, or they can contract an e-mail service. Learning “rules of thumb” about structuring an e-mail will ensure the reader opens, reads, and responds to it. The CAN-SPAM Act sets LEGAL standards so a florist’s e-mail campaigns won’t be seen as SPAM by the recipients.

All florists should be gathering e-mail addresses of their clients, customers and prospects. The best lists are those of your customers who already value your services. For florists who want to learn more about using e-mail marketing, tips for designing your own campaign can be found at www.FlowerPR.com – just click the MFA icon.

Here’s to your blooming success! ✿

William Carlson is the president of Flower PR, a Web site development and services company. He has more than 14 years of industry experience through floriculture associations.

