
Fit Florist Training Tips

FIT FLORIST TRAINING TIPS Wholesalers and suppliers -- As an SAF member, you're welcome to share these tips with your retail customers via a company newsletter, web site, etc. Please include the following language if you do: (Excerpted from the December 2008 issue of Floral Management magazine, with permission of the Society of American Florists.)

Leave no container behind. Designers at Chalifour's Flowers are challenged to be miracle workers -- and they succeed by bringing dead containers back to life and killing waste. "Every shop has those containers -- you know, the ones that need some help -- and this forces designers to rescue them," says Judy Aboud, general manager at the Manchester, N.H., shop. Winners of the challenge get a pizza party (for groups), or gift certificates to spend in the shop. (Talk about a one-two punch: this saves money and generates sales.)

Close your greenhouse -- now, says Carmen Cosentino, AAF. He let go of what had become a giant, 3,000-square-foot glass keepsake at Cosentino Florist this past year. After years of Goodman telling him to lose the greenhouse, Cosentino says he "looked at my numbers" (\$6,000 a year in utilities, \$4,000 in upkeep and labor) and "looked at my ego and decided it was time" to close what had been a part of his family's Auburn, N.Y.-based business since it started selling tomato plants in 1934. "Mentally, it's been hard," he says. "But it's easier when I look at the savings." His advice to florists caught between nostalgia and the numbers? Go with the numbers.

Detail your dump. All florists have dump, but not all florists display their wasteful numbers for designers to see. They should, says Judy Aboud. At Chalifour's Flowers, the general manager posts the weekly dump percentage in the design room where "it hits home" and sets the bar for benchmarking. Knowing what the percentage of dump was for one month, Aboud can challenge the staff to reduce it by a certain percent and give them a tangible goal.

Pull the plug, lower your wattage. David Levine is writing a smaller check to his utility company each month for Central Square Florist -- thanks to his utility company. Since a new lighting installation, upgrades to two coolers and the addition of an energy-efficient cooler monitor, the shop in Cambridge, Mass., has lowered its bill by at least 10 percent. His local utility company paid 70 percent of the cost of the refrigeration upgrades and 70 percent of the lighting modifications as part of its own energy efficiency program. Even little tweaks add up. Manny Gonzales tinted some of the windows at Tiger Lily, saving the Charleston, S.C., flower shop \$100 a month in electricity bills this summer.

Knock out "pay per fee" items, such as 411 calls (which can cost up to \$2 each) and last number recall (or *69), says Ken Young, AAF, of Phoenix Flower Shops in Phoenix. Young has his staff use the phone book or online directories.

Forget the flat delivery fee. Charge for everything: strict time limit, a location on your delivery range border, having drivers dress up. Instead of turning away an order, say "yes" but have the customer pay for it. Tina Stoecker, AIFD, PFCI, of Designs of the Times in Melbourne, Fla., also charges for each package. -- Amanda Long, Managing Editor