
Media Refresher Heads off Negative Coverage

When a reporter from the SouthtownStar newspaper in Chicago contacted David Mitchell, AAF, of Mitchell's Flowers in Orland Park, Ill., for a story about holiday business — and the small businesses those holidays sales help support, Mitchell prepared for tough questions with a quick pep talk from SAF.

Jenny Scala, SAF's director of consumer marketing, provided Mitchell with talking points and sent him a list of relevant studies to reference during the interview. Scala also mentioned how Mitchell could stay positive without sounding like his head was in the sand regarding the economy. For example, she advised framing the issue like this: "In a tough economy, product quality, personal attention and a satisfaction guarantee become very important. We are proud to carry the best quality flowers and provide outstanding service that keep our customers coming back." For more talking points, [click here](#).

The headline of the Dec. 22 article was "Mitchell's Flowers sees downsizing this season," but the story was peppered with encouraging facts. Mitchell made sure to point out that during the Depression, people would send flowers because it was an affordable gift. (His family's business survived the economic woes of the 1930s and '40s.) He also emphasized his overall number of orders hasn't decreased.

Mitchell says a wintry December and the economy did lower sales by about 5 percent, but he's positive his positive approach will attract customers for Valentine's Day.

"I was quoted as saying that many customers are still buying, but maybe are cutting back on the size of their individual gifts," Mitchell says. "We are trying to keep our lower-end (shorter) roses close to our year-round price and are promoting floral gifts at many price points."

Mitchell can't say for sure if any sales came in directly from the article but is confident about its overall impact.

"I know it was seen," he says. "And, I was portrayed as someone knowledgeable about flowers and our industry."

Try this:

- Be positive. Follow Mitchell's lead when a reporter calls and play up a florist's unique ability to work with customers to create arrangements to match their price points. "Right now, I want to be (their) 'gift consultant' and help them make good decisions about how they express their feelings," Mitchell says. "Obviously, I feel that their money is best spent sending flowers, but I can help them craft their gift to get the most effect for the dollars spent."

- Get your talking points by contacting SAF or going [here](#).

