

ahead of the curve

Belvedere Flowers combines technology with a personal touch to attract and keep customers in suburban Philadelphia.

BY KELSEY E. SMITH



With “tweets” on Twitter, “fan” fare on Facebook, a variety of YouTube videos, and choosing just the right words for blog entries and e-mail blasts, **ADAM POMERANTZ** admits that staying ahead of the technological curve can be overwhelming in the midst of his everyday responsibilities as owner and manager of **BELVEDERE FLOWERS** in Havertown, Pa., a northwest Philadelphia suburb of approximately 37,000 people. But he also points out that the floral industry—in particular, the way consumers buy flowers—has changed dramatically in the more than 50 years since his grandfather opened the business, and keeping up to date with technology is vital for reaching today’s customers.

a true family business

One of Mr. Pomerantz’s goals for Belvedere Flowers is to offer customers a personal family feel, whether they are among the 25 percent who visit in person or the 75 percent who find the shop via its Web site, www.belvedereflowers.com, and then place orders online or by phone. The phone is always answered by either Mr. Pomerantz or his mother, **EILEEN**, who still works in the shop daily and is shown on the Web site holding “Mom’s Mixed Bunch.” (Mr. Pomerantz’s father, **JACK**, is semiretired and helps out during busy holiday times.)

Large family photos line the wall behind the sales counter, and many of the weekly specials and other arrangements on the business’s Web site are named after Mr. Pomerantz’s 6-year-old son, **MAX**, and 15-year-old niece, **CARLY**, who are frequent visitors to the shop and already have demonstrated their own creative design abili-



(ABOVE) Six-year-old Max, son of owner Adam Pomerantz, demonstrates an early flair for selling flowers.

(LEFT) Billed on Belvedere Flowers’ Web site as “the perfect choice” for customers who are “looking for something different than the traditional style rose design,” the “Tangerine Twist” arrangement features one dozen ‘Tropical Amazon’ roses in a rectangular vase with coordinating design stones, aluminum wire and a faux butterfly. The composition retails for \$70.

Belvedere Flowers

OWNER: Adam Pomerantz

NUMBER OF SHOPS: 1

LOCATION: Havertown, Pa.

ESTABLISHED: 1955

BUSINESS SIZE: more than 1,500 square feet (60 percent display area; 40 percent workroom/coolers)

CLIENTELE: all incomes

AVERAGE FLORAL SALE: \$60

AVERAGE WEDDING: \$2,000

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 5
(3 full time; 2 part time)

WEB SITE: www.belvedereflowers.com

Enlarged photos showing members of the Pomerantz family with flowers add a personal touch to the walls near the front sales counter and office area.



ties. At press time in December, the home page of Belvedere Flowers' Web site featured a video of Max decorating a boxwood tree—described on the site as a Belvedere Flowers best-seller for more than 30 years and “the perfect gift for those who don't have space for a big Christmas tree.”

viewer affirmation

Mr. Pomerantz says the videos offer a more personal spin to the business's marketing, and creating them is simple. With his pocket-sized Flip Video camcorder, he can begin recording within seconds, and he can upload videos to his computer quickly with the camera's built-in USB port and software.

Videos especially have been a boon for Belvedere Flowers' wedding business. Although Mr. Pomerantz shares that the company did not used to go after the wedding market as much, he decided last year that nuptial events would be a good way to balance his shop's core everyday sales, which dropped approximately 15 percent to 20 percent due to the recession. In March 2009, he began videotaping all wedding work, and a “Watch our Wedding Videos!” button on www.belvedereflowers.com has proved an effective marketing tool in attracting brides, who spend an average of \$2,000 on their wedding flowers at Belvedere Flowers. The shop's wedding business increased approximately 40 percent in 2009, with an average of one wedding each weekend.

“The videos give brides a great perspective that they wouldn't get by looking at pictures,” Mr. Pomerantz says. “A lot of brides call or e-mail and say they love the videos, and if they haven't seen the videos but give me an idea of what they're looking for, I can e-mail them a link. It helps us book a lot more jobs because people are seeing what we can do.”

The business also showcases the wedding videos as well as others on its YouTube video channel at www.youtube.com/user/BelvedereFlowers. At press time, the 108 videos Mr. Pomerantz had uploaded to the site had been viewed more than 23,000 times collectively.

correspondence made e-easy

Mr. Pomerantz sends periodic e-mail blasts to approximately 2,000 customers using **iCONTACT**. Some of the e-mails announce a new product or a special for the week, and some include a coupon—often \$5 off or 10 percent to 20 percent off—with a promotional code customers can enter on the Web site.

A particularly effective January promotion was an e-mail that urged customers to buy roses at today's prices and have them delivered on Valentine's Day. “It's a great way to get cash flow in January, when there's not much going on,” Mr. Pomerantz relates.

For more personal correspondence, such as anniversary and birthday reminders, the florist uses the e-mail marketing capabilities of the **FLORISTWARE** point-of-sale (POS) system. “[The system] does everything,” Mr. Pomerantz relates. “Every day, we can click on a button, and it will tell us who we need to send a reminder to or might want to give a sales call to who hasn't ordered in a while. The reminders are especially great for out-of-state customers because if someone did a search online and placed an order with us for their family member in my town, they might not necessarily save our business name in their favorite places. So the next year, when I hit them with an e-mail, it helps us get their business before they might use somebody else.”

Mr. Pomerantz says that sending reminders six or seven days before the occasion seems to be most effective in capturing orders.

**BUZZ INTO
SPRING
★ SHOP AT ★
WWW.
HAVERTOWN
FLOWERS.
COM**

(LEFT) Belvedere Flowers uses its outdoor sign to direct passers-by to its Web site. Although the official Web domain is www.belvedereflowers.com, owner Adam Pomerantz says the shop uses its alias for the sign because it is easier for locals to remember and spell the town name than "Belvedere."

(RIGHT) The close-knit Pomerantz family, from top left, includes Eileen and Jack; their son and third-generation Belvedere Flowers owner Adam with his wife, Carrie; and, in front, Adam and Carrie's 6-year-old son, Max, and 15-year-old niece, Carly.



Delivery confirmation is another FloristWare POS system feature Belvedere Flowers uses. Mr. Pomerantz shares that in addition to being a convenient feature for customers, it also helps the business build its e-mail list. "At the end of our orders, we say 'Let me get your e-mail address, and we'll send you a receipt,'" he shares. "In addition to the receipt, I then send a marketing e-mail, and they have a choice to unsubscribe at that point."

becoming social

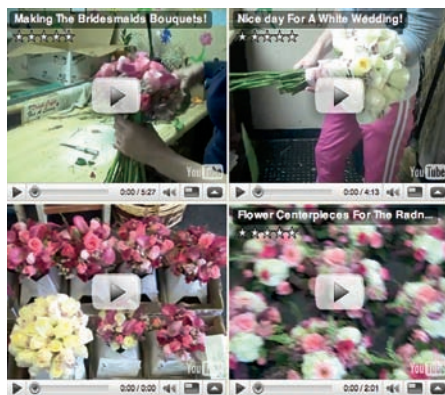
After consulting with his fellow florists on FLOWERCHAT.COM, Mr. Pomerantz introduced Belvedere Flowers to the world of social media marketing about a year ago. While he favors Facebook as a more visual marketing option, he says the business has gained a few new customers via Twitter as well. Combined with the videos, the e-mails and a blog he began in August 2008, these social networking sites offer customers 'round-the-clock exposure to Belvedere Flowers. At press time, the tech-savvy business had 180 Facebook fans and 215 followers on Twitter.

finding the right words

Mr. Pomerantz shares that in order to have an effective business blog, entries should entice customers but also be useful to them. "You don't want to always be selling," he explains. "It's best to balance things like new product announcements with information about flowers in general."

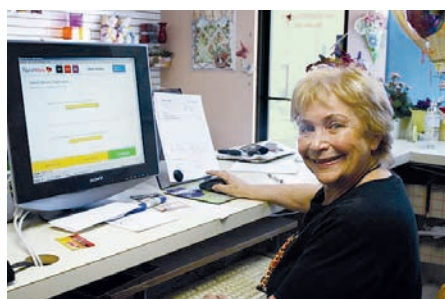
In addition, Mr. Pomerantz says he strategically plans his blogs to include key words that come up in search engines. "When I blog about doing a wedding, I use the venue name and the town and the word 'flowers.' That way, if anyone does a search for 'wedding flowers at the Heritage Ballroom,' for example, my blog would come up." ■

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(ABOVE) The home page of www.belvedereflowers.com regularly includes a video showcasing the business's design work. Other features include design specials as well as links to customer testimonials, wedding videos, the shop's blog and its Twitter and Facebook pages.

(LEFT) A "Watch Our Wedding Videos!" button on the Web site leads viewers to videos of Belvedere Flowers' wedding work. Each wedding is labeled with key words, including the name of the venue and the town, to optimize its placement in search engines.



(BOTTOM LEFT) Eileen Pomerantz uses the FloristWare POS system, which includes many features that help the business connect with its customers.