

2018 FLORAL BUSINESS TRENDS

Be Relevant with Reimagination & Reinvention

BY DEBRA PRINZING

In planning our January issue, *Florists' Review* publisher Travis Rigby asked me to write a piece covering business trends. Together, we brainstormed that a reader survey could give us a sense of the "state of the industry" and included suggestions from columnist Alison Ellis to round out the 20-question poll.

The time readers and subscribers invested in responding to the survey gave us a snapshot of the current status of today's business climate for florists and designers. While this is by no means true statistical report, we are intrigued by the direction many indicate their businesses are taking, whether it's in retail or independent-studio floristry. After combing through hundreds of pages of responses to the survey, it's safe to say that our readers are generally optimistic and that's how we feel at *Florists' Review*, as well.

Everyone is facing change, certainly, but as you review the infographics and read anecdotal comments shared by respondents, you'll find that change doesn't seem ominous. Rather, it seems optimistic. And progressive-thinking creatives aren't shrinking from change.

Here's a recap of the recent **Floral Business Trends Survey**. We hope it's an illuminating guide as you plan and project for the coming year.

SOCIAL MEDIA IS THE NEW NORMAL

"I used Instagram for my business in 2017."

"Instagram positively impacted my business and will continue to do so in 2018."

"The amount of time I invest in managing my Instagram account is worth it."

Here's what readers say:

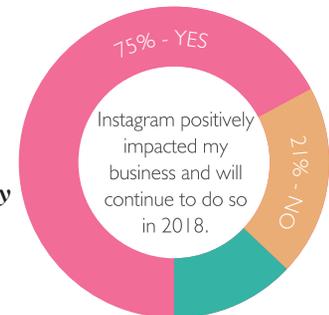
"I post nearly daily. My reason? It's a touchstone and reminder to my Instagram followers that I am 'here' and ready for their business!" -- **Maura Whalen, Casablanca Flora**, Seattle, Wash.

"I'm using Instagram as 'awareness' marketing for my new floral design education and consulting business. I recognize that Instagram will be my main tool for marketing my business." -- **Paul Jaras, Paul Jaras Floral Design**, Kamloops, BC (Canada)

"We began utilizing Instagram immensely in 2016 and we have since rebranded. Once we turned to a new look, we've seen our Instagram and Facebook pages getting more likes and more responses. Since we started using Instagram, we have made sales from pictures we've posted and gotten many new customers!" -- **Haley Sayre, Sequoia Floral International**, Santa Rosa, Calif.

"Our use of Instagram was sporadic at best. It seems to make no difference on our everyday occasions business. Instagram is somewhat like Pinterest these days. We get calls from young buyers interested in certain designs, but not in the price tag that comes with it." -- **Amra Kolasinac, Scent & Violet**, Houston, Texas.

"I looked at all the social platforms and decided to focus more on Pinterest. When I meet a bride for her wedding consultation, she doesn't bring me pictures from Facebook, Instagram or blogs. She brings in or pulls up Pinterest. I don't have the time or staff to keep up with all the platforms, so this is why I focus on just one." -- **Sheri Mahr, Sheri's Flowers**, Fallbrook, Calif.



WEBSITES AND BLOGS ARE RELEVANT AND SHOULD NOT BE NEGLECTED

*"I have a blog for my business."
"I'm happy with my current website."*

Here's what readers say:

"I blog two or more times per month. Blogging keeps the SEO for our website up to date, shows off recent weddings and offers tips, tricks and helpful information to our readers. We have received lots of positive feedback from our website." -- **Stef Russo, Russo Fabulous**, Marshfield, Mass.

"After a long, long absence, I am returning to blogging. This is an absolute necessity and there is no way around it!" -- **Holly Chapple, Holly Chapple Floral Design**, Lucketts, Va.

"My blog is the backbone of my marketing. It's much harder to get my business in front of clients on Facebook and Instagram because of their algorithms and pay-to-play aspects. My blog is one of the only places that I own 100%." -- **Michelle Edgemont, Michelle Edgemont Design**, Brooklyn, N.Y.

"We rebranded two years ago and the (web design) company we went with made it very difficult to change photos and text on the background so it quickly became outdated, which was frustrating. We are currently working on our site again with a better company." -- **Moira Thompson & Natalie Pinney, Whim Events**, Boston, Mass.



RETAIL VS. STUDIO SHIFTS VARY BY MARKET

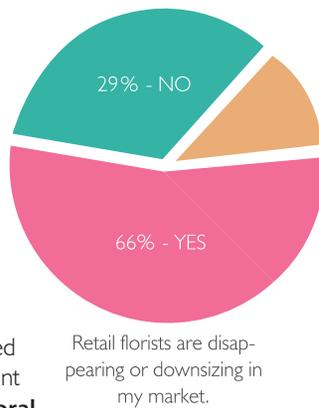
"Retail florists are disappearing or downsizing in my market."

"The number of studio florists is growing in my market."

Here's what readers say:

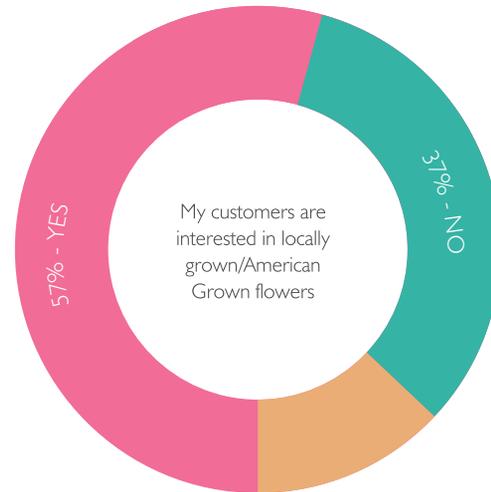
"Yes, I am one of them. I'm converting to studio and specialty only as of January 2018." -- **Lori Himes, Abloom, Ltd. Flowers and Events**, Walkersville, Md.

"I feel in the last three to five years the retail florist decline has finally stabilized. I am not seeing the closing of long-time established shops in Oregon as was so common in recent years." -- **Diane Berry, Bloomin' Crazy Floral**, Astoria, Ore.



LOCAL AND "SLOW" MOVING TO MAINSTREAM

*"There are more farmer-florists in my market than ever before."
"My customers are interested in locally-grown flowers."
"I am changing the way I do business to put more emphasis on local flowers."*



Here's what readers say:

"I recently did a survey of my own with current customers, and (my use of local flowers) was the #1 thing people listed that they liked about my business." -- **Tonya Berge, Berge's Blooms**, Puyallup, Wash.

"I want to support local anything for economic, social and environmental reasons. In addition, the supply chain nightmares we've experienced this year have shown me how we need to develop more of a diverse domestic market to help get us through these problems." -- **Rhae Adams, Found in Nature**, Raytown, Mo.

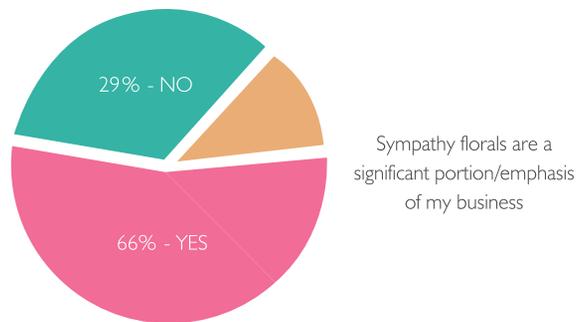
"I only do weddings and special events. We live in the Midwest and 'local grown' does not work within all our four seasons. Plus, brides are savvier as to what's desired due to Pinterest- and they WANT WHAT THEY WANT. They will pay a higher price to get what they want, even with shipping factored in." -- **Linda Batker, Accent Floral Design LLC**, Indianapolis, Ind.

"We've always tried to use local greenhouses. We bought flowers for weddings this year from local small farms and it worked out great!" -- **Kelly Rickert, Tilted Tulip Florist**, Coldwater, Mich.

"I feel the studio and event designers are capturing the local and slow flowers market more effectively. Yet, I have always had a heavy local product influence and have been working with the same grower for 20 years. It has definitely influenced my work and style." -- **Arthur Williams, AIFD, Babylon Floral Design**, Denver, Colo.

THE NICHE OF SYMPATHY FLORALS

“Sympathy florals are a significant portion/emphasis of my business.”
“Funeral homes are expanding their offerings to include floral services in my marketplace.”



Here's what readers say:

“Recently, funeral homes have partnered with FTD and hence the business has diminished quite a bit. We still get some funeral orders from our existing clients.” -- **Pratima Gohill, Ivy Leaf Designs**, North York, ON (Canada)

“Traditional floral pieces for funeral services were only about 3 percent of our sales last year to date. However, in our market, floral arrangements going to the family home accounts for 20 percent of sales. Most funeral directors are now back to recommending local florists to the families.” -- **Jim Turley, Turley's Florist**, Nanaimo, BC (Canada)

“Funeral flowers are more personal with mementos of the deceased incorporated in the florals. Often, instead of funerals, they are called a ‘Celebration of Life.’ The flowers tend to be brighter and more festive.” -- **Helen Halloran, Concord Flower Shop**, Concord, Mass.

“I've noticed a lot of funeral homes have partnered with order-gatherer websites, which leads to a landing page on their site.” -- **Nicole Palazzo, City Line Florist**, Trumbull, Conn.

“I'm concerned that the now prolific ‘in lieu of flowers’ attitude has crept into the everyday mindset. People have been convinced that sympathy flowers are not a wise use of their dollars. With that idea firmly planted, spending for flowers for other occasions is now questioned, too. Additionally, people today are more inclined to spend money on themselves rather than sending a spontaneous gift to someone else. The change has been very gradual, but I believe it has been happening.” -- **Thomas Massingham, Garrison Hill Florists, Inc.**, Dover, N.H.

WEDDINGS ARE A DRIVING FORCE

“Wedding florals are a significant portion/emphasis of my business.”
“Event planners are expanding their offerings to include into floral services in my marketplace.”
“Wedding florists are expanding to offer event planning services in my marketplace.”

Here's what readers say:



“I see social media driving DIY florals, which in turn is driving studio-based operations who compete in our marketplace. This DIY trend has created players in the wedding market who choose to charge far less than others providing service. The trend to lower cost and low-cost wedding pricing has made it difficult to maintain profit margins necessary for some wedding flower providers. Average wedding flower prices seem to be getting lower all the time.” -- **Paul Jaras, Paul Jaras Floral Design**, Kamloops, BC (Canada)

“I am seeing more and more event planners say they are floral designers and floral stylists.” -- **Patricia Clevenger, Floras by Patricia**, Menifee, Calif.

“I see more venues with their own event planner offering or including decor.” -- **Melissa Whiteley, Ambiance Flowers for all Occasions**, Mandeville, La.

“We have in our plans to include event and party planning into our business for 2018.” -- **Roxanne Bohman, Flowers! by Roxanne**, Moscow, Idaho.

“I'm seeing more full-time planners partnering with rental companies than florists moving into full-service event planning.” -- **Kelly Bishop, Buds & Blooms by KMB Designs**, El Centro, Calif.

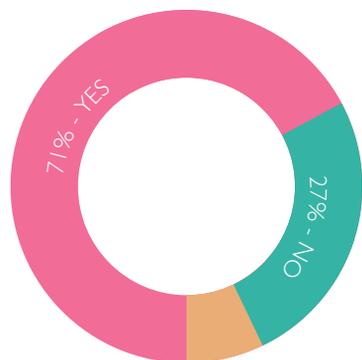
“I've seen a number of wedding florists in my area branch into planning, rentals and even invitations.” -- **Rue Brown, Geraniums Red, Delphiniums Blue**, Belmont, Mass.

“There's a HUGE Ethnic Weddings and Events market that's growing stronger. Since many ethnic groups are in the top income bracket, there is more disposable income that is being spent on important lifetime events such as weddings, the scale of which is much larger than an average Western wedding.” -- **Smita Mohindra, Ethnic Essence Inc.**, Anaheim, Calif.

LIFELONG LEARNING: GROWTH OF EDUCATION & TRAINING

“Have you invested in any hands-on training or design workshops for you or your employees in the past two years?”

“Do you offer floral classes to the public as part of your business?”



Have you invested in any hands-on training or design workshops for you or your employees in the past two years?

Here's what readers say:

“Wreath-making seems to be taking off. I was one of the few quietly making wreaths a few years ago. Now, it seems as though everyone is doing it and offering classes for such.” -- **Maura Whalen, Casablanca Floral**, Seattle, Wash.

“I attended ‘Intrigue Teaches’ in 2016 for the financial process end of the business and will attend an Intrigue design course in 2018. I am currently enrolled in a copywriting class for creative small business owners.” -- **Karen Roa, Aleen Floral Design**, Williamsburg, Va.

“We work with Tim Huckabee at Floral Strategies for sales training. I also offer my employees the opportunity to take one class at the New York Botanical Garden a year. From time to time, I send my head designer to design workshops as they come up. We are planning on sending him to the NE Floral Expo in 2018.” -- **Nancy White, The Flower Bar**, Larchmont, N.Y.

“I teach at local wineries and we call it ‘Sips & Stems.’ It’s a fun night out more than teaching intense design and principles.” -- **Chandra Christenson, Simplified Celebrations**, Richland, Wash.

READERS’ CRYSTAL BALL

At the close of our survey, we asked the open-ended question, “Do you see any trends in the floral industry not covered above?” Here is a partial list of the great insights offered by our readers. Perhaps one or more of these ideas will spark your creativity and business planning!

“I think out-of-the-box florals, those I consider fueled by genius artists such as Susan McLeary of Passionflower and others, will continue to enter the mainstream, including floral jewelry and floral tattoos. At least that’s my hope!” -- **Erin Shackelford, Camas Designs**, Friday Harbor, Wash.

“Boutique and mixed-market shops have a better chance of survival. I run a small boutique floral shop and handmade home decor store. We feature 15 local artists and try to keep it as local as possible. I do the same with my florals.” -- **Jenny Carr, Haven Creek Flowers & Finds**, Rockford, Mich.

“Metallics and metals are trending right now. You can see this in design, in home decor, on other non-floral industries. We have implemented metallics into our product lines and designs.” -- **Betsy Riera-Gomez, Passion Growers**, Vista, Calif.

“We’re pursuing collaborations with bloggers and influencers. In order for the local floral community to expand into the mainstream, we in the floral industry need to influence lifestyle personalities (on Instagram or blogs) beyond just weddings. We need to educate and influence the everyday flower purchaser, which means working with lifestyle influencers.” -- **Tammy Myers, First & Bloom**, Issaquah, Wash.

“Food and flowers together is hot. Two in our market have opened a flower and beer store and a flower and food store.” -- **Morgan Moylan, West Queen Studio**, Hillsborough, N.C.

“Brides appear to be putting less emphasis on floral decor and more emphasis on garlands and greens in hopes of saving money.” -- **Orie Raphael, Flowers by Orie**, Woodland Hills, Calif.

“*Florists’ Review* has done a great covering trends. One thing to add: Diversifying our skills is a must for florist survival. The more we know and do, the more value we have beyond fresh flowers. I just netted (more income) re-doing outdoor pots, fluffing the interior and exterior for a client. Daily fresh flowers were slow, and this job kicked in. Nice to have my client’s trust a few times a year!” -- **Joe Guggia, JP Designs Floral**, Santa Maria, Calif.

“I’m seeing more meaningful and mindful decor and a growing interest in repurposing flowers after the wedding or event, such as giving to elder care or other places.” -- **Emily Herzig, Emily Herzig Floral Studio**, Littleton, N.H.

“I’ve teamed up with a local winery to offer seasonal classes, such as a spring centerpiece at Easter or wreath-making classes. It’s a great form of publicity and it gives attendees a greater appreciation for our craft!” -- **Jamie Taylor, J. Starr’s Flower Barn**, Preston, Md.

“I think the next big trend will be a combination of the natural look with a constructed European aspect.” -- **Arthur Williams, AIFD, Babylon Floral Design**, Denver, Colo. ■