Upgrade Update: Floral Accounting Systems

The fourth in a series of updates to florist software programs

ORDER AND DELIVERY CONFIRMATION RANK AS favorites among FAS users that Floral Management editors talked to for this month's column. And they're not the only ones singing e-mail confirmation praises. Their customers – especially corporate ones — are too. But, automatic e-mail confirmation isn't the only feature that keeps FAS users' businesses and bottom lines intact. "Smooth" order entry, customer history, inventory control and "professional-looking" marketing materials are some of the other perks FAS users say they put to use everyday to help their profitability.

Customer Can't Get Enough Confirmation

When orders go out from Carroll Wood Florist in Tampa, Fla., drivers enter invoice numbers and an e-mail is automatically sent to customers, notifying their order has left the shop. "It's my choice to do it when the orders leave for delivery," says Larry Montesayno, shop owner, who has used FAS since 1990 and likes having that option. "If a driver leaves around 2 p.m. and the customer expects (his order) to be delivered by 3, and then we send a confirmation at 4:30, what good is to say it was delivered two hours ago?"

Delivery isn't the only thing FAS florists are confirming to enhance their customer service: Both Montesayno and Brennen Rigler of Albuquerque Florist Inc. in Albuquerque, N.M., say corporate customers appreciate e-mail order confirmations. "(Our corporate customers) can forward the order confirmation to whoever's in charge of paying the bill," Rigler says. "Some corporate customers will even have me send the e-mail directly to accounts payable."

Plus, offering e-mail confirmation gives users the chance to rack up customers' e-mail addresses for e-mail marketing programs, which Montesayno was preparing to launch at press time.

A Plethora of Postcards

Rigler, an FAS user for seven years, sends out about 150 direct-mail postcards weekly, thanks to FAS's "easy" direct-mail system. His birthday and anniversary reminders have a 15 to 20 percent return rate, Rigler says. Elaine Ousley of Elaine's Florist in Houston has gotten a "good response"

POS Comparison

For a chart comparing POS system upgrades, click on the Info to Go logo on SAF's member Web site, **www.safnow.org,** or get it via Fast Fax by calling (888) 723-2000 and requesting document # 651.

Know Your Shop

Not every FAS feature is for every shop, say users Floral Management editors talked to for this month's column. Both Brennen Rigler of Albuquerque Florist Inc. in Albuquerque, N.M., and Elaine Ousley of Elaine's Florist in Houston don't use FAS's mapping and routing system. "I have experienced drivers who route themselves," Rigler says. Ousley says it's easier for her shop to manually direct drivers. "If I was a larger shop, with 40 or more (rather than just 18) deliveries going out, I'd take advantage (of the feature)," she says.

— C.K.

from postcards she sends to new recipients (pulled from her database) that iterate how Elaine's Florist can help customers with all their floral needs. "If I want to send birthday reminder cards, I just type in a code and select 'send birthday reminders' for the months of May and June, and the system will automatically pull up every birthday order we've done during those months in the past," she says. Ousley also uses postcards to communicate with four area networking groups that are saved in her database under a specific mail code.

Time-Saving Features

FAS users we talked to say having customers' histories at their fingertips makes a big difference in making the sale. Every customer file shows the average sale and previous orders. "We're not offering something lower than their average sale," Rigler says, who runs weekly reports on his database to see which customers are buying and which have dropped off. "If they haven't been buying, I can give them a call and a nudge," he says.

Ousley, who used to hand write her cards and invoices before getting FAS in April 1999, says the system saves her a lot of time. "Payroll doesn't even take me five minutes, it's so fast," she says. Another time-saving device Ousley uses: inventory control. Employees input product and prices daily, and designers input items they use so Ousley always know what's in her cooler.

Montesayno also likes that the FAS system is equipped to mark preferred florists for wire-out orders. "Every employee at a screen can transmit an out-of-town order and see preferred shops and shops we don't want to use in the (particular) region," he says.

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