

# Local Florist, Online World: Survival vs Success



**Being a local florist isn't all hearts and flowers.**

You are a local florist in an [increasingly online world](#). And it's tough to the point where the phrases "increasingly online world" and "increasingly hostile world" are probably interchangeable.

## **Art & Expertise**

The pressing issue for most local florists is that the online world is extremely complex, since it has little to do with your art or your expertise.

Also, it seems to insist on diminishing returns for your business (think Wire Services -- more on *them* later).

Since keeping busy while seeing low returns for your hard work is more about survival than success, this blog will demonstrate how to turn that same work into increased sales, which will in turn lead to generously increased profits for your business.



**Your business is about success, not struggling to stay afloat.**

Is that too much to aim at in an increasingly competitive and complex market? And why are the creators of this blog so keen to help the local florist, anyway? Let's find out.

## **1. "There is nothing so stable as change"**

The quote from Bob Dylan seems apt, given the great man's ability to adapt, survive and succeed throughout the years.

Also, his friend Alan Ginsberg invented the whole "[Flower Power](#)" thing, which probably helped sales quite a lot back in the day. But change itself comes in many shapes and sizes.



## **The artist gets down to business**

Setting up a business is about setting yourself up for a series of falls, or fails, if you prefer.

Call these changes learning curves, growing pains, or experiences; either way, they are unavoidable in the early days, but lead, ultimately, to expertise.

You adapt, survive, and become an expert local florist. Success. Phew! Well done!

## **Then the whole game changes**

Suddenly your business is about nothing if it's not about your online presence, your site, search engine optimization, rankings, ranking factors, AdWords, [Google Rank Brain](#) (who?!), and a million other things that probably sound like something out of a bad science fiction movie.



Staying with the pop culture theme above, many local florists go online and see other local florists thriving, making them feel like some crooner in the mid-1950's watching Elvis shake his pelvis for the first time; or a teen-idol in the early 60's watching the Beatles touchdown at Kennedy Airport to scenes of hysteria.

**Suddenly it's a new game and they are on the outside, looking in, with no idea how to play.**



## Let's look at some numbers:

According to the [Society of American Florists](#) (ASF), one or two traditional retail florists close up shop for the last time each week.

The [Florist's Review](#) reported the disturbing claim, along with these big picture figures:

- **1993 - 25,000 traditional florists**
- **2001 - 14,000 traditional florists**
- **2016 - under 10,000 traditional florists**

## 2. Wire Services - Your small place in their big picture

In the midst of all this, florists were worried. Understandably so. Then came the good old wire services. On time, online, and ready to do business with local florists. Now all you had to do to play is [agree to the terms](#), accept hard work with low returns, and dismiss the feeling that the tables had been dramatically turned.

So, sign the dotted line and settle into survival mode. How hard is that?





### **Art, options, and the bottom line**

Or maybe not. Think it through. The wire services keep you busy, as long as you keep paying those monthly fees and hidden charges, accepting the low percentages and doing things their way.

**But, hey, you're not joining the increasing number of florists calling it a day and shutting up shop.**



Your dream is a little wilted, but it isn't over.

Alternatively, you may not enjoy knowing that something once promoted as a service for the local florist now seems to be in charge, with you left feeling like an order-filler for people who actually tell you how to set prices, or don't share customer contact information, or keep the bigger part of the pie, or... well...

You can probably roll out the list yourself.

### **3. Setting up your stall for success**

With change comes new opportunities. But for whom? As the changes described above took place, certain businesses realized they had local florists over the proverbial barrel. And they couldn't, or didn't, resist taking advantage of that fact.



## **But that's not all that happened**

Ten or so years ago, a struggling computer genius called Joe Vega had a dilemma. He had a newborn baby, a big money offer from a powerful company that had spotted his fierce talent, and a dream of owning his own business. Something had to go.





### **Don't worry, he kept the baby**

Joe was so confident in his abilities that he turned down the big money offer and continued to struggle for his dream.

Not only that, he was confident enough to tell clients he didn't want any upfront fees, because he was willing to perform his SEO magic, get results, and be paid only for his successes. His rate was generous.

### **A computer whiz in the florist biz**

Not only was Joe's first success with a florist, it was with a very chatty florist who spread the word faster than a forest fire.



**Ken Garland**

Co-Founder & Managing Partner



**Joe Vega**

Co-Founder & Managing Partner

After teaming up with another genius, Ken Garland, they formed the United Florists Network (UFN), and started building websites, performing SEO magic tricks, and getting local florists to the top of search pages and in front of online customers.



## **The United Florist Network worked.**

Partner florists were free to spend their time actually being florists, while gaining lots of new customers, more freedom, no upfront fees and much better returns.

All while promoting their own businesses and growing their own brand in a healthy environment.

## **From survival to success, the UFN way**

Joe and Ken had found a niche in the market, essentially by accident, based on simply turning the tables back in favor of the florists.

And, since they were expert enough in their own fields to make the percentages work, at least when combined with the popularity of the idea among local florists, why not?

A decade later and with an ex-local florist on the team, UFN was an expert in the florist industry, as well as in their own now flower-filled fields, drawing in hundreds of florists with a simple sales pitch:



**Get more customers, sell more flowers and keep more money.**

With an experienced local florist on board, UFN not only studied the industry and visited local florists, it lived and breathed the realities of being in the business.

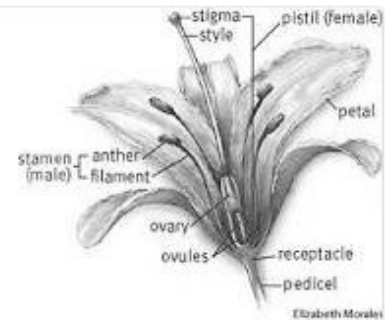
Each and every day, they heard real stories, including the fears, frustrations and joys of serving all the special moments of a community, both happy and sad.

While UFN stayed in the shadows, their partner businesses bloomed.

Of course, others were watching the success story unfold, waiting, looking up the word "flower" in the dictionary, and waiting for the right moment to make their move.

About 22,000,000 results (0.50 seconds)

**flower** definition. The part of a plant that produces the seed. It usually contains petals, a pistil, and pollen-bearing stamens. The American Heritage® New **Dictionary** of Cultural Literacy, Third Edition.



Flower | Define Flower at Dictionary.com  
[www.dictionary.com/browse/flower](http://www.dictionary.com/browse/flower)

Which they did, providing still more choice to the local florist.

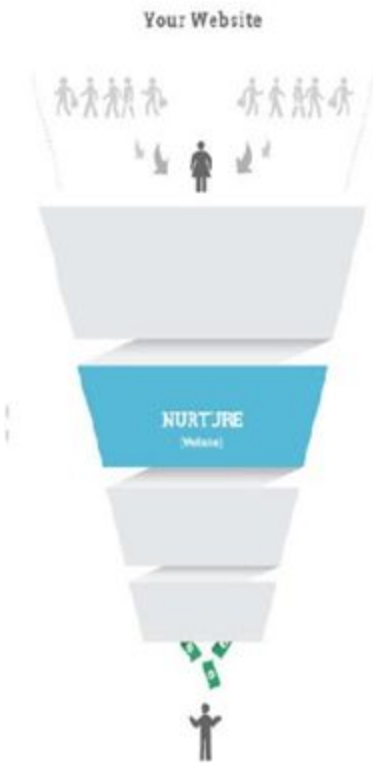
## 4. The UFN model for local florist partners



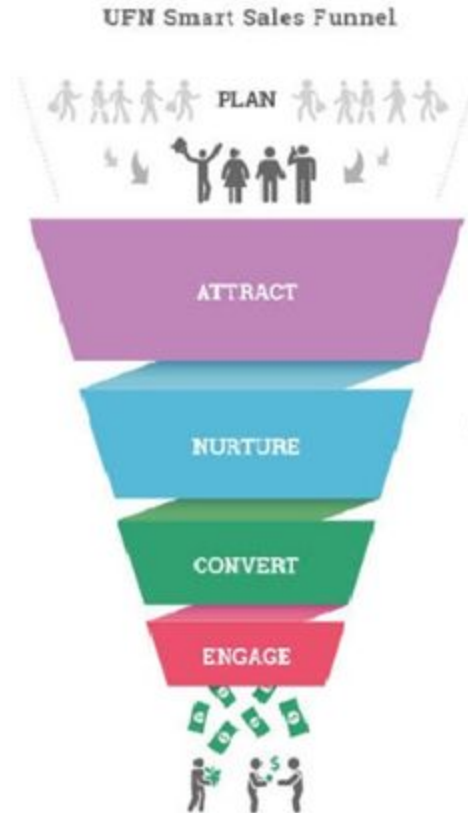
### Funnel Vision

In the online world of search and rankings, there is a lot going on and you need to be aware of everything and how one thing impacts another. Here's how UFN would often see the average florist site, from a success point of view:





**And this is how UFN changed the approach:**



So there's more going on and it's a much prettier picture. But what does it all mean? In terms of results for partner florists, and for those who prefer looking at numbers rather than images, it ultimately means this:

### **A beautiful arrangement**

- **Customer satisfaction rating - 96 percent**
- **Average order value - \$72.82**
- **Upgraded orders - 46 percent**

UFN would start planning what would work best for the partner florist, maximizing all elements to make search engines happy.

Appearing high in searches attracts potential customers, who are then nurtured, so that:

1. **Sales happen**
2. **Repeat sales happen**
3. **Customer loyalty is created**
4. **Word of mouth brings in more customers**
5. **They go through the same nurturing process**

And with all that comes ongoing support and the floral industry's most streamlined and highest converting selection guide, to help and inspire. Along with total freedom of choice.



**Hundreds of florists across the United States recognized a beautiful arrangement when they saw it and became UFN partner florists.**

## **5. Success, progress and the end of UFN**

Erm ... whaaat?!

The UFN success story is the history of what you know today as Lovingly.

For years, UFN considered the idea of creating a centralized site under the UFN brand name, or a new brand name, where local florists stand strong together, continue to be promoted as individual local florists, while making life even easier for the consumer.

But with the business growing so quickly, UFN was kept increasingly busy ensuring its partner florists made it to the top of the rankings and continued to succeed on their own terms.

During this period, they also saw competitors creating centralized sites and using elements strikingly similar to those long used for local florists by UFN.

Imitation is the greatest form of flattery, after all.



Still, UFN decided it was time to step out of the shadows and into the light. *Hi, Lovingly!*

## **6. The secret of local florist success...**

Antiques!

OK - on the surface of it, antiques and flowers are pretty much at opposite ends of the spectrum. We get that. The art world is very much part of this, too, though.

Think about this:

In the antiques and art worlds, any potentially great find is evaluated by something known as "provenance". Check it out:

## prov·e·nance

/ˈprəʊvənəns/ 

*noun*

the place of origin or earliest known history of something.

"an orange rug of Iranian provenance"

*synonyms:* origin, source, place of origin; [More](#)

- the beginning of something's existence; something's origin.  
"they try to understand the whole universe, its provenance and fate"
- a record of ownership of a work of art or an antique, used as a guide to authenticity or quality.  
plural noun: **provenances**  
"the manuscript has a distinguished provenance"

In business, choice is always good. Today, local florists have choices that present better options than the stranglehold of the you-know-who wire services. Once you have choices, of course, you have to actually make a choice and run with it.

### **So how do you choose the best service for your business?**

Back to provenance. Any service is going to sell itself to you. That's what we're doing right now. Any service is the best service in that service's own opinion. But is it really the best service for you?

Here's a list of things to look into:

1. **Where is the proven history of the service?**
2. **What level of expertise does it have in its own field?**
3. **Does it have a high level of expertise in my field?**
4. **In what areas does it advise/help?**
5. **In what areas does it demand certain things?**
6. **How does its pricing system work?**
7. **Are there hidden fees?**
8. **What does the small print say?**





Art and antique experts search out the provenance of anything brought before them. In the simplest terms, they want to know:

1. **Where does it come from?**
2. **Where was it before that?**
3. **Is there a fixed line of ownership back to the source?**
4. **Can this be objectively demonstrated to us?**

In other words, if somebody turns up claiming to have a [photograph of Billy the Kid](#), that person will have a lot of work to do to convince the experts to sign up.

Before these guys commit themselves to something, you can bet they do their homework and ask a lot of questions.

**Why?**

Because they've been [burned in the past](#).



**Would you buy this picture of Billy the Kid?**

There was a time they weren't as strict and demanding as they are today, and they were hurt by it. To a lesser degree, it still happens.

Which brings us back to the start of this post describing the first changes you went through as a local florist, when you made mistakes and learned from them.

**And became an expert.**

As an expert in your field, you need committed experts on your side. Anything else is an invitation to be hurt.

You didn't build your own expertise only to partner with somebody who doesn't have it, or only has it in one area, leaving them weak in the other.



**The Lovingly team are experts in the online world *and* the florist industry.**

We built our expertise and our success on and around turning the tables back in favor of the local florist, and we did it over many years of hard learning and hard work.

As Lovingly, we are going forward with the aim of bringing our partner florists into one space, thus creating greater convenience for the customers and a strong community of local florists who demand a service by experts, for experts, which actually puts them first.

**As a local florist, you now have options. By design, they all look great on the surface; but Lovingly strongly recommends that you do a little digging into the details of each.**

**It's your choice. And it's about time, too.**



**OK - this final photo is totally random. Thanks for reading!**