

Sure You're Ready for the End of Recession?

By Amanda Long, Society of American Florists*



If you've been waiting for things to get back to normal when the recession ends, forget about it. "We're not going back to the way things were," retail analyst Ted Hurlbut says. The things that have worked in the past for independent retailers are not likely to be good enough going forward."

So what now? Start by reading Hurlbut's "Preparing for the Bounce-Back" in the November Floral Management. His simple, can-do steps include updating your customer list and Web site, giving the shop a mini-makeover and a spring-back-into-action cleaning and shopping the competition and the

markets to get inspiration.

Once you've made a few merchandise maneuvers and rearranging, it's time to change your mindset. "The biggest change is that consumers are now firmly in the driver's seat," Hurlbut writes in a new article, "The End of the Recession," on his Web site. "They have become far more cautious, and their emphasis on intrinsic value is now far more than a rational response to economic realities, it's become a cultural virtue."

He offers a few tips to get that cautious driver headed in your direction.

- Passion is a prerequisite. Without your guiding passion, employees will be rudderless. Even more importantly, your customers also look to you for direction and purpose. Without your animating passion, your store will feel flat, and your customers will go elsewhere.
- Customers are going to be far more selective and demand the best quality and features for the price, at each and every price point. Assortments will need to be narrower, more tightly focused, and skewed toward more moderate price points.
- You're going to have to pay more attention to cash management. Cash will remain king; expense control will be essential. You must maintain maximum liquidity at all times. Inventories must be kept lean, tighter, and must turn faster. There's no longer room for excess inventories and the costs associated with them.
- Salespeople are going to have to be far more skilled in engaging customers in a relaxed and genuine way. Every salesperson must share in the animating passion of the shop. There is no longer a margin for error. Every employee must contribute value to the business.
- Your customer service must be exceptional and worthy of your customers telling their friends about. You must excel at the basics. Customers will expect to easily find what they're looking for online and off. They will expect knowledgeable employees. They will expect returns to be handled quickly, painlessly, and hassle-free, by empowered employees eager to help. You're not going to be successful if you can't execute these basics flawlessly. Your execution must be exceptional, every time.

That should get you started, but don't stop there. Read the full article and tell us what you've learned from the recession by sending and e-mail to along@safnow.org

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Floral Designer
January 4 -15, March 1-12
April 12-23, June 7-18, July 12-23
September 13-24, November 1-12

Advanced Floral Designer
January 18-20, March 15-17
July 26-28, September 27-29
November 15-17

Advanced Wedding Designer
January 25-26, March 29-30
June 21-22, August 9-10, October 4-5

Special Events/Décor Designer
January 27-29, March 31-April 2
June 23-25, August 11-13, October 6-8

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