

# Small

By Julia Hoffman

## Ways to Make a

# BIG Impact

Take a cue from florists who made small changes that increased sales, profits, walk-in traffic and more.

### What's holding your bottom line hostage?

Decreasing walk-in sales? Stale product lines? Gas prices? Overhead costs that chip away at profits? Unmotivated employees?

If you're nodding feverishly, join the club. No matter what's keeping you from seeing increasing sales numbers, it's likely that the florist across town (or around the corner) is experiencing similar issues. That makes identifying problems easy. Solving them — and simultaneously increasing your sales — is the challenge.

Fortunately, some florists have done just that. They're making relatively small changes — new shelving, upgraded packages for customers, staying open an extra hour — that are making a big impact on sales. And these small things add up, says Dan Zihlman, president of StreetSmart Selling, a Maine-based sales training company.

"The business that remains stagnant risks falling behind the competition," he says. "For a local retailer that competition is not just the store down the street, but a national chain with a much larger marketing budget. Periodic reinvention means a fresh approach and willingness to do new things to serve the customer."

### Add a Fresh Coat of Paint

A little touch goes a long way. It's cliché but true, says Georgianne Vinicombe of Monday Morning Flower & Balloon Company, [www.sendingsmiles.com](http://www.sendingsmiles.com), in Princeton, N.J. and Yardley, Pa. Six months ago, Vinicombe repainted, redecorated and reorganized her Pennsylvania shop. Since then, she's seen walk-in sales increase 20 percent.

But don't just grab a paintbrush, slap any color on the walls and expect your bottom line to notice. Start with a plan, a theme and a good understanding of your customer base, Vinicombe says. Her plan was to make the shop feel "homey," so customers would feel comfortable — especially wedding clients who tend to linger.

"We were able to buy large wooden hutches — like the kind you'd use in your kitchen or dining room — and corner units," she says. Then, she hung chandeliers throughout the store and painted the inside of the shop a "warm, neutral brown," to cover the eggshell-colored paint that had been on the walls since it opened. (See Info to Go for more on why a fresh coat of paint can make a big difference.)

Renovations, which cost the shop about \$3,500, were "definitely worth it," Vinicombe says.

"I've noticed that whenever I have done improvements at either of my shops, gotten a new delivery van, made changes to our Web site or added a product line, customers always notice," she says. And when customers notice, so does the bottom line.



**FRESHEN UP** Georgianne Vinicombe of Monday Morning Flower & Balloon Company added "homey" elements to her store to draw in more passersby.

**Impact:** 20 percent jump in walk-in sales