

Hands On

Tips, Trends and Tactics for the Savvy Retailer

by Mary Westbrook

First Hand Account

Chicago Shop Gets Camera Ready

CUSTOMERS WHO VISIT FLOWERS WITH Feeling's Web site, www.flowerswithfeeling.com, get to see more than run-of-the-mill bouquets and contact information. For more than a year, owners Jeff and Tammy Warden have been turning to video to promote their Chicago store, a move that's helped them better educate customers, improve their search engine results and have a little fun.

"The intention we had was to do videos periodically — to choose an event, a wedding, and then to show it from start to finish," Jeff says. "It's really a promotional tool, and it has a wide reach and broad interest."

After they shoot a video, the couple uploads the file to a third-party host, such as Yahoo Video (<http://video.search.yahoo.com>) or Revver (<http://one.revver.com>), and then embeds the file in their site after "tagging" the video with pertinent key words, such as "Chicago," "wedding" or "centerpieces." To reach a wider audience, they also post the videos to YouTube.com.

"When people find our videos online, it's a way for us to



READY FOR THAT CLOSE UP? For more than a year, Jeff and Tammy Warden have used videos to promote Flowers with Feeling in Chicago.

introduce them to our shop," Jeff explains. "Our physical location is off the beaten path. Through the videos, we're trying to generate 'cyber foot traffic.' We want people to press their noses to our window," virtual or otherwise.

So far, the Wardens have created three videos, including a behind-the-scenes look at a wedding at the Drake Hotel. In the future, Jeff says they'd like to post videos weekly, on a wide range of topics.

"People tell us they like them, and every time we post a video our Web site traffic goes up," he says.

Up, Up and Away

"Um... OK... Do you want maybe a balloon or something with that?"

If this is how your shop "does" add-on sales, you're missing a very lucrative boat, says Michelle Nichols, a small-business columnist for *BusinessWeek* magazine.

"In sales, [add-ons] are a great way to increase your sales and profits without increasing the number of customers you serve," Nichols explains. Here are her tips on how to implement a sound add-on strategy at your shop:

- First, list everything you sell. Next, brainstorm which items would be good fits for your customers.
- Solicit customers' feedback. Ask them: "What would make your life easier if you could buy it from us?" Give them a reward for participating — like a gift card or coupon.



Master the Perfect Pitch

Before you hit the streets to win over corporate clients — and we're sure you will after reading about the florists in this month's cover story — spend some time rehearsing what you'll say. According to recent stories in *The New York Times* and *Inc. magazine*, a pitch is ruined when it's too long or simply unfocused. The good news? Practice helps. The stories offer these tips on perfecting your pitch:

- **It's not you. It's them.** Focus your pitch on what your shop can do for a customer. Don't just talk about how wonderful your store is.
- **Learn it. Live it.** Every employee should be able to give the same explanation when a prospective customer asks what your store does.
- **Don't mince words.** The message you send to potential customers needs to be "painfully clear." Limit your pitch to 15 seconds.