

“*Business
Blooms with
ActionCOACH*”



An array of new marketing ideas, some serious business planning and canny cost saving measures - all courtesy of ActionCOACH - have helped Sandra Griffin's floristry business bloom – despite the recession.

Having spent almost forty years in the sector, Sandra Griffin set up Sandra's Florist in Holbury, Southampton, four and a half years ago. She runs it with her daughter Tracie who looks after the marketing side of the business. All was going well, but in April 2009, with the recession taking hold, Sandra feared that selling a luxury product like flowers made her vulnerable to a sudden drop in sales. She was particularly concerned as she didn't have any practical plans in place to protect her business against a downturn.

She explains: “Buying a beautiful bouquet of flowers is definitely a luxury, not a necessity, so when money becomes tight it is often this sector that is hit hardest.

Looking for inspiration, Sandra attended a business networking session to get some advice and this is where she met a business coach from ActionCOACH.

“We just got talking and I found what he was saying made such a lot of sense – so we ended up having a meeting”.

Sandra and Tracie met with their Action Coach, and true to the Action name, a week later an action plan was put in place. Since then Sandra and Tracie have met with their coach on a weekly basis and during this time he has helped them look at every aspect of the business. Sandra continues:

“Before ActionCOACH the business was ticking along nicely but we weren't in control of our own destiny, but now targets are set and we are organised. We know what we need to do each week and have a clear plan – which feels great.”

Her coach has helped Sandra to focus on her team. For instance the girls working in the shop have specific roles and responsibilities to fulfil from ordering flowers, taking orders to making up bouquets, or writing the personalised cards.

“I now have happy staff as they know what is required of them and feel much more involved”.

Their coach has also worked with Sandra and Tracie to get much better planning in place. He helped them look through past records to identify their busiest days and to apply this know-how to the year ahead. For example, if Valentine's Day falls at a weekend, rather than a weekday, it is much more hectic in the shop. Drawing on this knowledge and spotting that the next Valentines was to be a Sunday, the team planned a month in advance.

Case Study

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Case Study

SANDRA'S FLORIST Case Study



Sandra continues: "Valentine's Day and Mother's Day were always occasions when we'd pull our hair out. Like most florists there are only a handful of days in the year when you are extremely busy, it's crucial to manage those days well, as it's where major money is made or lost.

"Before, we were chasing our tails and finding we had either over or under ordered - it was panic stations. We needed a systematic and organised approach and that is what we have now.

"Being able to access previous data means we can now anticipate and order the correct quantity of flowers and employ the right number of staff. For instance this year we took on five extra drivers for Valentines' Day, so we could really maximise sales and avoid rushing orders through."

My business coach also helped the team focus on the cost side of the business – reviewing suppliers and terms and conditions. Sandra again:

"Action Coach has got us using four wholesalers rather than just two, so we can compare prices to keep the business competitive, which has trimmed our costs by over 10%."

Having focused on planning, keeping costs down and ensuring staff are motivated and focused, their coach then helped Sandra and Tracie take a fresh look at their marketing. For instance they have launched a promotion called 'petal pounds.' This 'money off' voucher scheme is designed to encourage existing customers to buy more frequently and new customers to give us a try.

Sandra explains its impact: "Although it cost a bit to put in place, sending out the petal pound cards has really paid for itself and has generated lots of new leads, we're selling to lots of people who have never used us before."

In addition, they have also started an Elite Loyalty Scheme for long standing customers, who have been issued with a card to receive 10% off each order. "Our customer schemes have definitely helped – at a time when lots of businesses are suffering a downturn, our customer base has increased by 6% so far this year and keeps growing, and our established customers are typically buying 10-20% more" adds Sandra.

Their coach has also encouraged Sandra to create some fantastic PR stunts to generate the 'wow' factor and to keep the shop in the limelight.

Sandra explains: "The first one was Valentine's Day – we hired a male model from Debenhams to stand naked in the shop window, with a bunch of roses strategically placed. The women loved it; it caused great discussion and got the customers through the door as you can imagine!

"For Father's Day, we ran a competition – *What do you call your Father?* Entrants tied a note to the tree just outside the shop with their answer and details. It really got people thinking about us – and connecting us with those special occasions."

The promotional ideas have really paid off. As a result of this increased visibility, large corporate orders have started to come in. With our coach's help they are also now targeting new groups, in fact Sandra's Florist now supplies flowers on a regular basis to local hotels and restaurants - opening up a whole new line of business.

Sandra concludes: "I still have a lot to learn, but thanks to my Action Coach I can see the light at the end of the tunnel; if it wasn't for him – I know we would have gone under. Instead, we've taken control and our future is looking rosy."

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