

10 TIPS FOR HOME-STUDIO FLORISTS

BY ALISON ELLIS

Hello Floralpreneur!

Welcome to my 10 Tips for Home-Studio Florists. As a home-based designer for the past 16 years I've learned a thing or two... First and foremost this: **EVERY YEAR IS A LEARNING YEAR!** That is the truest advice for any business owner; no matter how long you've been in business there will always be something new to discover, overcome, "deal with", or figure out.

Whether that "something new" is a new technology or a difficult client or a new design technique, **if you're invested in your business and you're truly doing good work, you will always be learning.**

Some are hard lessons. Some lessons are affirmations that the path we're traveling down is the right one. **Look for the lessons!** Don't ignore them.

Every year is a learning year. You've never "made it"....**if you think you've arrived at the pinnacle of your business, aim higher.**

Whether your physical location is a storefront, a basement, a kitchen or a garage, what matters most is that you **deliver what you promise to your clients and always strive for excellence.**

"Perfect" isn't always an option and in fact, it's rarely an option, so don't get hung up on perfect. **Don't let "lack of perfection" stop you or slow you down.**

Implement.

Experiment.

Raise the barn.

I'm about to share **10 Tips for Home-Studio Florists**, but before I do, let me introduce myself. I'm Alison Ellis and I've been in the floral industry for 23 years.

I help florists rock the business-side of their businesses. I have a Bachelor of Science in Plant & Soil Science from The University of Vermont, as well as a minor in small business. ([Read my Core Values here.](#))

I started my business, Floral Artistry, out of the kitchen of our 2nd floor apartment and I recently just completed my 16th wedding season as a home-studio biz.

I'm passionate about the art of good business! Which is why I share heartfelt advice from my personal experience with professional florists around the globe in my Facebook group, my online business courses, and templates for florists.

Pros tip: The right business advice can **take years off of your learning curve!**

Keep doing beautiful work!

I hope you'll enjoy my tips...

With love from me to you,

Alison

Remember:

No two businesses are exactly alike.

Own what makes you unique.

Share your talents with the world.

1. Invoice early and often.

This is the #1 tip I remember from my college accounting course; **in order to get paid...on time!....you must invoice the client** and the best method to follow is to **invoice early** (so they have enough time to send the payment) **and often** (i.e. if they are late with a payment, let them know asap).

If you invoice late, the customer pays late. Don't let that become a "thing".

It's not mean or rude to invoice a client. We're working together. They signed a contract. They know they owe this money. And they should happily pay it.

It IS our job to invoice and send payment reminders. We don't have to like it, but **if we want to have cash in the bank, we have to bill the customer.**

Your billing and payment terms should be clearly outlined in your contract.

Florists typically require full payment prior to delivery. On daily deliveries at a flower shop for example, orders are usually paid via credit card; a florist doesn't wait for a customer to come into pay after a delivery has been made.

On weddings and events, florists usually require a non-refundable deposit or retainer and final payment is due in full 3-4 weeks prior to the event.

**Our payment terms require a lot of trust from the client.
They pay us a lot of money sometimes, up front, before we deliver anything!
But it's how florists work. First, you pay us. Then, we deliver the flowers.**

It requires a lot of trust and it's our responsibility to deliver what we promise.

This is why a good contract and a trust client are a necessary combination when running your own floral empire.

Click to watch:

The Importance Of Contracts In Your Business

<http://realflowerbusiness.com/are-you-eager-to-book-weddings-for-2017-first-consider-this/>

2. Don't over process your flowers.

I always say you have to "**think like a flower shop**" when it comes to pricing and profits, but when it comes to cleaning flowers you do not have to process flowers like a flower shop! When you work from home you can take some short cuts here.

When I first started my business (in my kitchen!) I used to worry so much about the flower care. I didn't have a cooler yet and I always waited until Thursday afternoons to pick up my flowers for weddings.

I'd get home and hurriedly start cleaning roses; stripping off all the leaves and thorns, plucking petals, recutting and then schlepping those buckets down to my basement where it was cool! It was a lot of work.

As the years went on I came to realize that I was wasting a lot of time cleaning flowers "like a flower shop" when in fact, I was usually chopping most of the roses off their stems at about 4-6" long; I didn't need to remove all the leaves and thorns....to get to those short roses.

All I really had to do was remove the plastic and cardboard packing, recut the stems and make sure they were in water because I'm not displaying these flowers....**I'm using them now and cutting them very short, I'm not cleaning them for a display cooler!**

When it comes to blooms like hydrangea, I usually make sure my centerpiece vases are filled with water and I cut them directly into my vessels instead of hydrating in a flower bucket and then re-cutting to place in a vase. I only cut them once.

I also pick up my flowers on Wednesdays now which is a **HUGE** relief when it comes to time management.

You don't have to wait until Friday to start your arrangements!

Handle your flowers with care, but don't wait until Saturday morning to make your designs. I design on Thursdays and Fridays...and yes, Friday nights!

3. Get a cooler.

This is a simple one: get a cooler as soon as you can.
Trust me, it's a game changer.

Working from home we sometimes struggle with legitimacy issues and the question "do you have a cooler" hits us hard sometimes. When you can actually say "yes! I do have a cooler" that adds one more layer of professionalism.

I keep most of my flowers in my cool, air conditioned studio, but **the cooler is key when it comes to boutonnieres, bouquets and fragile blooms in the warm summer months.**

You can make boutonnieres and corsages on Thursdays for a Saturday wedding when you have room in your cooler.

Ranunculus and peonies that are "really open" hold well in the cooler.

When I cut fresh mint from my garden (and other fresh garden goodies) I always chill it in the cooler for 30 minutes to an hour.

A florist can be more prepared and professional and can prepare further in advance with a cooler.

Click to watch:

My Dirty Little Secret (don't worry, it's G-rated)

<http://realflowerbusiness.com/my-dirty-little-secret-confessions-of-a-floral-designer>

Pro-tip: You don't need a storefront to be a legitimate business.
Own what makes you unique.

4. Get insurance.

Legitimate businesses are insured. **This is not optional if you own a small business.** Everyone feels better about working with an insured professional.

"Fully licensed and insured" is a selling point for many small businesses; think of landscapers, contractors, plumbers, electricians, etc.

Some wedding venues will require you provide proof of insurance and professional wedding expos/ trade shows usually expect that you will carry your own insurance policy.

Working from a home-studio doesn't mean that your home insurance policy is sufficient. **Liability insurance for your business is a must.**

Trusted brands follow the laws of good business and insurance is one of those good business practices.

Pro-tip:

You should get a list of your inventory and its current value, know your square footage used for your business (home office, work space, storage space, etc.) when inquiring about an insurance policy so you can answer any questions about your home-work space.

Different providers will surely request different info from you and also provide varying levels of coverage based on your needs, but don't be surprised if you need to take some office measurements.

CONSULT WITH A LOCAL INSURANCE PROVIDER TO FIND OUT WHAT YOU NEED FOR YOUR BUSINESS.

5. Know your Flower Math.

I cannot stress this point enough: **Understanding your pricing and profitability is crucial to running a successful business.** There is perhaps nothing more important to your longterm success than **pricing properly so that you not only turn a profit, but provide value to your customers.**

If you don't turn a profit, you won't stay in business.

Your profit on the cost of flowers & supplies should be 70%.

I make sure to run the numbers on each and every event.

To determine your profit on flowers & supplies: Subtract the cost of flowers and supplies from your total sale (not including sales tax). Then, divide that number by the total sale. You'll get a decimal point that represents a % of profit.

Here's an example from my wedding last weekend:

Sale: \$3,683 - \$1,019 (cost of flowers & supplies) = \$2,664 profit.

\$2,664 (profit) divided by \$3,683 (sale) = .72, which is 72%.

This is how I calculate profits on every order. **It's easy!** Track your profit margins.

Did you know you can find **2 free pricing courses**, on my site?...

Check out: [Flower Boss 2](#) and [4 Pricing Mistakes Florists Make](#).

Pro tip:

If you're not 100% certain how to price like a flower shop, check out my online course, [Flower Math, The Florist's Guide To Pricing & Profitability](#). I share everything I've learned about pricing, recipes and wholesale ordering in this course. **Florists say it's a game changer.** [Find details on Flower Math here.](#)

More on the numbers...

The #1 way florists lose money is by overfilling orders. Each and every "extra flower" you or your staff add to a design is money lost.

Remember: It doesn't matter what you charge if you overbuy.

You can feel confident in the value you provide and also turn a profit!

Pro-tip:

You cannot obtain a 70% profit if you aim to spend 30% on flowers and supplies! It simply doesn't work that way.

You shouldn't have a spending goal; you must have a profit goal.

The best way to do this is by creating recipes for your work and **you must keep your wholesale orders "tight & right" so you don't overbuy.**

Here are a few more free resources on pricing:

How A Single Rose Can Derail Your Flower Business.

<https://youtu.be/eIQW0-qW3vg>

Stem counts vs. floral recipes: What's the difference?

<https://youtu.be/xfE3IRXwDbM>

Why you cannot compete on price.

<https://youtu.be/auL3cPlk8Ug>

6. A "lack of storefront" **does not** equal a lack of professionalism.

Clients should experience value when they work with you and that value does not have to be directly tied to a beautiful storefront.

Oftentimes home-based floral designers experience an inferiority complex because they don't "look like a flower shop", but "**looking like a shop**" **isn't what makes you good at what you do.**

Don't fall victim to the mindset that lack of storefront equals a lack of professionalism.

Be proud of your small business as it is!

Turn it into a positive!

The next time someone asks: "Where's your shop?", don't shrink; don't apologize for "just working from home".

Own it.

"I actually don't have a flower shop. I'm a home-studio designer which works for me because I'm able to dedicate more time and focus on the events I book....what I lack in storefront I make up for in customer service."

Click to watch:

Can you be professional without a storefront?

<http://realflowerbusiness.com/can-you-be-professional-without-a-storefront>

7. Zip ties are the answer.

If you're not sure how to rig something or secure flowers to an arbor or other structure, zip ties are the answer.

You can zip tie one zip tie to another zip tie to create a super long zip tie; you can loop one through another to create a hook for a chair or pew flowers; you can bundle branches to place into vases or vessels in one quick easy step.

Always have zip ties on hand at an event.

8. Never stop improving.

There is so much to learn and absorb both on the business side of the flower business *and* the design side.

Even super experienced, excellent florists should invest in continuing education because there is always something more to learn.

I think this is especially true if you work in a home-studio & mainly work solo.

There is something magical about being surrounded by other florists who are all learning and doing hands-on designing together.

I was hesitant to participate in workshops at first because I didn't want to feel competitive with other designers...I just wanted to enjoy it. But what I've come to see is that it's not competitive. No one's judging you. And it IS fun.

Fall in love with flowers (and your business!) as you grow and gain skills. The more skilled you are, the higher your value.

Never stop learning!

9. You must have an excellent website and a blog!

Your website is the first point of contact with your potential clients.

If you work from a home-studio, your website IS your storefront!

It isn't optional to have a professional website presence...it's essential.

Your website is the only thing that you own! (so it has to be awesome.)

Invest in the platform that you own;
it will pay dividends.

I teach florists how to design **awesome websites that represent your brand in its best possible light and attract your ideal clients** (ie. the client who cannot wait to work with you!) over and over again.

If you updated your own website check out [The Art Of Good Business](#).
Open enrollment periods are listed [here](#).)

The reason **you need to add content to your website** is because you don't own Instagram or Facebook so when you create content for these free social media platforms you're driving traffic to THEIR platform, but you're not doing enough to **drive traffic to YOUR website**.

I hear florists say that their customers "find them on Instagram", but that doesn't mean that it's the best use of your time or your content.

Use Instagram, use Facebook, but your very own website is still the #1 place you should be sharing your "best stuff".

Additional resources:

Get my FREE Website Tips to Build A Better Website here:

<http://realflowerbusiness.com/websites>

And find out more about The Art Of Good Business here:

<http://realflowerbusiness.com/the-art-of-good-business>

10. Get a flower friend (and join my Facebook group!)

One of the smartest things I've done for my business was befriend another local floral designer.

She was also home-studio based and by all rights she should be someone I considered "my biggest competition", however, when we developed a friendship and a business relationship simultaneously we found that **we BOTH flourished.**

If I was booked, I'd send a referral to her.

If she was booked, she'd send 'em to me.

If I wasn't sure if I should charge \$500 for this particular delivery, she'd reassure me that when we talk through the time, labor, # of people, etc. that was in fact a very fair price.

If she wasn't sure what to say to a client, I'd talk it out with her, and sometimes I'd write her an e-mail template to send along...

It's not necessarily easy, but if you can develop a relationship with another florist it can be hugely helpful.

Now, you don't have to be best friends, BUT if you have someone to turn to if you run out of floral foam after the wholesaler closed for the holiday weekend or you're looking for a specific container, it makes life a little easier.

If you need a florist to turn to, JOIN MY FACEBOOK GROUP HERE.

Connect, Learn, Make More Money, Book Better Events & Type Fewer E-mails.

Just make sure I can tell you're a florist so I can approve your request!

If you know a floralpreneur who'll enjoy this course or would like to join my group, **please pass it along and share the love!**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



photo: Ashley Largesse

Hi. I'm Alison Ellis.

I'm a floral designer & business educator.

I love to help educate and empower florists to achieve their business goals and keep doing beautiful work which is why I share heartfelt advice from my personal experience with my list of professional florists.

I've been in the floral industry for over 23 years and started my own business, [Floral Artistry](#), in 2001. I have a degree in Plant & Soil Science from The University of Vermont as well as a minor in small business.

I'm the author of [FLOWER MATH, The Florist's Guide To Pricing And Profitability](#), [E-mail Templates for Florists](#), [Contracts For Florists](#), [How To Write Proposals That Sell And Book More Weddings More Quickly](#), [Wedding Workflow](#) and [The Art of Good Business: a digital experience with Alison Ellis](#), as well as FREE courses, including [FLOWER BOSS, A Free Training Course For Florists](#), [Pricing Mistakes Florists Make, A 4-part video series](#), & [FLOWER BOSS 2, On Industry Standard Markups](#).

I'm a business contributor for Florists' Review and Flirty Fleurs, I'm also a member of the Chapel Designers.

Find my blog at [realflowerbusiness.com](#).

To ask me a question or drop me a line e-mail: info@floralartvt.com