



The Power of Branding

One rarely treats themselves to a dozen fresh cut roses or lilacs to brighten up their office or kitchen. But according to the Society of American Florists, Americans spent about \$19 billion in retail sales in 2003 and 67 percent of the cut flowers bought were for a gift. But why spend all your hard earned money on everyone but yourself?

KaBloom, a national floral chain rooted in Massachusetts, is trying to combat this trend and send a new message about "the power of fresh flowers." They're spreading the word: flowers should be an everyday indulgence, said Laurie Lee, director of marketing at Kabloom.

"People need to get used to the idea that they can buy for themselves," said Katie Laubengayer, co-owner of a franchise in Eagle, Idaho. "It really adds something to their quality of life."

And so far, the company seems to have had no problem spreading its seed. They do this by combining accessibility, quality and convenience, said Lee. The first store opened in December of 1998 in Boston, Massachusetts but now has about 70 stores, including franchises, in 26 states.

Accessibility is a key factor in their growth. Kabloom offers three venues to purchase from: the Internet at www.kabloom.com, the phone at 1-800-Kabloom and through retail stores.

Jamie Potter, of Greenbrae, California, signed to be a franchise owner back in June of 2003. But he waited eight months before actually opening a store to ensure he got an accessible and convenient location.

And what was that? In a strong shopping center, between a high traffic supermarket and a drycleaner, said Potter. And his decision reflects the idea that flowers are not only for special occasions.

This is how KaBloom has come to depict the "power of fresh flowers." It's a hometown, suburban strip-mall or urban, corner store type of place. It has positioned itself in areas that people associate with everyday tasks.

But KaBloom is taking convenience to the next level by offering flowers where traditional retailers can't easily go. In a Boston Herald article dated May 26, 2004, Greg Gatlin wrote that Kabloom will be providing self-service, self-watering, kiosks in places such as malls, office buildings, train stations and other places where a buyer typically wouldn't have access to flowers.

"This reinforces the concept of flowers as everyday life," said Lee.

So how do you create opportunity for a Brand in a seemingly generic product category like flowers? In this case, it starts with the consumer and an understanding of their routine. How does a commute or shopping fit into their day? What is their general mood at the end of that day?

Stop thinking about what you sell—and think about what customers buy, how they buy it, and how it makes them feel. Can KaBloom provide easy access to an unprecedented selection of fresh flowers? Are they able to create a positive experience with attentive service by informed in-store personnel? When they do, they are making sure the rational and emotional benefits of the Brand are being translated into more than mere copy points and promises on a promotional display or an ad.

The actual notion of positioning your Brand to lay claim to a place in the consumers mind is more than just about coming up with the insight...it's about living it. For example, KaBloom specializes its outdoor displays according to the area in which the store is located and the season. Franchise owners take note of what they're best sellers are and what reflect the style of the local culture. In Idaho, it may be a tin of relatively inexpensive, but sunny, Gerber daisies. In California, it is a single, expensive, but fragrant, Casablanca lily.

Americans have almost 77,000 venues to choose from when it comes to buying flowers and convenience alone isn't going to keep these stores in business. "I hope [the attraction to flowers] is emotional," said Potter.

And in fact, it might be. According to the Society of American Florists website, a study done by Rutgers University, in New Jersey, showed that flowers literally make people happy, elevate their moods, and their presence leads to closer contact with friends and family.

KaBloom is betting on that satisfying physical and emotional experience with attention to everything from product assortment and display to service and eye-catching graphics. And they are banking on being at arm's length from their prospects all the time—the convenient choice online, by phone, with shops and now kiosks, in order to drive the most valuable prospects to return to Kabloom (not the local flower shop or the supermarket) again and again. For Kabloom, that's showing the power of fresh flowers. For the rest of us, that's showing the true power of branding!