



inpoint Yourself

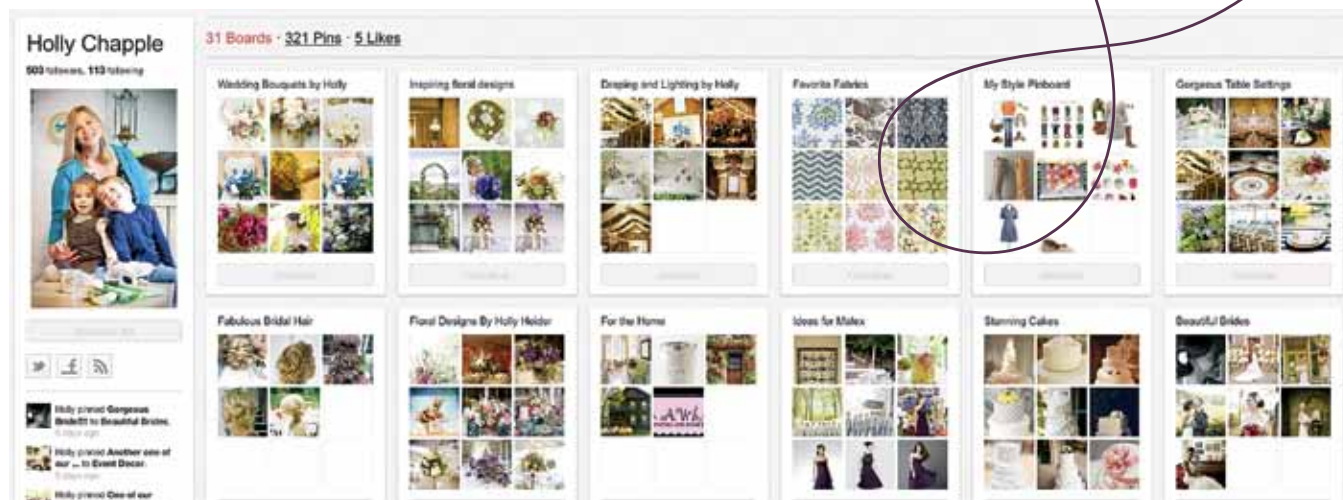
IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

BY CHRISTY O'FARRELL

Retail and wholesale florists share how to shine with Pinterest.

Two small business owners located 2,900 miles apart noticed something mysterious, but exciting, in the early fall of 2011. A site neither had heard of, Pinterest, was sending thousands of visitors to their websites. What the heck is Pinterest?, they wondered. Independently, they concluded:

FIND OUT — FAST.



TRAFFIC MAGNETS When Pinterest users click on photos on event florist Holly Chapple's boards, they link back to her blog, "The Full Bouquet," right where she wants them to land.

Poring daily over their analytics, Jason Miles of Liberty Jane Clothing in Seattle and photographer Carl Christensen in New Hope, Pa., saw Pinterest sandwiched between the expected powerhouse traffic generators driving potential business their way — Google, Facebook, YouTube, Etsy and others. Christensen thought it might be a blog. Miles at first didn't bother to check into it.

Leesburg, Va., events florist Holly Chapple could have told them about the new picture-sharing social media site that was also soaring in her rankings. She'd been using it for months as a tool during bridal consultations. Pinterest entered Chapple's blog analytics in mid-May in 23rd place. Less than 10 months later, and with little effort on her part, it was fluctuating between third and fifth place.

What, Exactly, is Pinterest?

Pinterest, which enables members to pin images onto virtual bulletin boards they create, is a way to replace, if you will, those messy three-ring binders of pages ripped from decorating or cooking magazines, or a busting-at-the-seams scrapbook of quotations and photographs. Brides, known for their prolific compiling of inspiring images, were early adopters, pinning preferred dresses to one board and favored flowers to another.

But it's not just for those heading down the aisle. An estimated 17.8 million members now gawk and gaze at their friends' recipes, design ideas, cool



 **Losing Pinterest now would kill me. I'm moving forward with this in a big way.**

Holly Chapple
Holly Heider Chapple Flowers,
Leesburg, Va.

furniture and dream vacation sites. Even visitors who don't sign up can see the constantly changing visual smorgasbord.

Popular? Yes. Fans love how easy it is. You need not be tech-savvy to share in the eye-candy nibbling and virtual decorating.

But popularity doesn't always spell profits, so why are entrepreneurs ecstatic over social media's newest, and best dressed, kid on the block? Because Pinterest encourages users to "repin" or share each other's pins. More importantly, from a marketing perspective, when users click on pinned images, Pinterest links them directly to the original source, such as an ordering website, no matter how many times they're repinned. The site becomes an online catalog, albeit mixed up with a hodgepodge of other items, partially built by people other than your business, liking and commenting as they go.

In Chapple's case, Pinterest leads brides and other prospective clients to her blog, right where she wants them to land. Pinterest also simplifies the process of determining the kinds of flowers brides want, giving her a "really fast way to get right back into their head again." Asked what she would do if Pinterest didn't exist, Chapple said: "Losing Pinterest now would kill me. I'm moving forward with this in a big way."

Karin's Florist in Vienna, Va., isn't even on Pinterest yet but is already reaping the benefits. The blog Style Me Pretty pinned a bridal bouquet from a

wedding it featured, done by Karin's, that was repinned 168 times and a bridesmaid bouquet that was repinned 73 times. Karin's president, Maris Angolia, AAF, said getting the shop on Pinterest is "definitely in the plans for the next couple of months."

From Memo Board to Board Room

"There are a lot of businesses already seeing revenue value in it," said Chris Brogan, whose marketing blog ranks second in AdAge's "Power150," in a Feb. 28 video interview with Teri Evans, deputy editor of Entrepreneur.com. "It's not just a pretty face."

Brogan said a bridal supplies wholesaler told him that Pinterest is outperforming Bing and Yahoo in referring traffic to her site. The fact that more than 70 percent of Pinterest's users are women (some estimates are higher) is not "a bad thing," said Brogan, co-author of bestseller "Trust Agents, Using the Web to Build Influence, Improve Reputation and Earn Trust." "[Business guru] Tom Peters has said for years, if you're not selling to women, you're crazy," Brogan said.

Many of those women use Pinterest to store "wish-lists" for themselves or as gifts, a feature Brogan calls a "reminder of commerce" and one that his mom would appreciate. A skilled gift buyer, his

COPYRIGHT CONCERNS – PROTECT YOURSELF

> Spend 10 minutes browsing Pinterest boards and it becomes clear that few are minding copyright laws. While Pinterest and Cold Brew Labs (its parent company) respect "the intellectual property rights of others," as it states in the legally binding user terms, liability for infringing such laws falls solely on the user.

Not surprisingly, some photographers and attorneys have raised copyright infringement issues over sharing work that is not your own on Pinterest. Indeed, some of the press Pinterest has been getting, about the potential liability for Pinterest users, might cause businesses to use more caution with their pinning.

A conservative approach — pinning only images you own or have licensed — probably is best for businesses, which are more likely to be targets than individuals, advertising lawyer Brian Heidelberger wrote in a March 1 article on AdAge.

Reducing your risk has the downside of limiting your boards' content but "just because the Internet gives a brand the ability to pin an image to a Pinterest page doesn't mean that it's legal," he said. "In truth, the vast majority of images found on the Internet are not "public domain."

Protect Your Work. Some florists don't mind sharing photos of their work on Pinterest and elsewhere with the goal that getting them seen generates business. If you don't fall into that category, you can block Pinterest with "no-pin" code. Just know that will also block you from pinning the shots, unless you upload them directly from your computer (which defeats one of the main marketing features of Pinterest — driving traffic to your website and blog).

Adding a "watermark," or your business name in words across part of the photo, is another way to attempt to protect your work.

mother told him her secret: "Listen all year long." Pinterest gives good listeners a place to record all those ideas.

Perhaps gift-giving was among Ben Silbermann's thoughts in March 2010, when he launched Pinterest, which includes a "Gifts" section. Managed by his company, Cold Brew Labs, in Palo Alto, Calif., Pinterest boasted 17.8

million unique visitors just in February 2012, the most recent statistics available at press time from ComScore, a digital media research firm that approximates the active number of users. In contrast, only 418,000 people visited the site in May 2011, eight months prior. Actual number of users is proprietary to the site.



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DON'T COME UNPINNED

> Follow these practices for attracting and keeping followers, culled from florists and Susan Negen of WhizBang Training in Grand Haven, Mich., who led a Feb. 22 webinar, "Pinterest: What Every Retailer Must Know."

■ Banish Blatant Self Promotion.

Pinterest's etiquette rules urge users to "avoid self promotion." Granted, Pinterest's "Pin it" button and price tag features (see next item) seemingly contradict this rule. But be mindful of practicing moderation: Pin related, but non-floral content from time to time, so you don't turn off followers.

■ **Price some, but not all pins.** If you put a price in the description, it will automatically add a price tag banner across the left corner of the image and add it to Pinterest's "gifts" section.

■ **Don't be tack-y.** Make sure your pins reflect favorably on your business. A good rule of thumb: If you wouldn't tack it up on a wall in your shop, it doesn't belong on your business' boards.

■ **Don't over-pin.** It's OK to occasionally pin several things at a time, but it's generally better to space your pins out over the course of the day and week.

■ **Don't disappoint followers.** Keep the most up-to-date pins — spring, not Valentine's Day — at the front of the lineup. And don't send followers to empty boards. — C.O.

It's early. But the site's "exceptionally high engagement," or time spent per visitor, suggests Pinterest "does indeed have staying power," said Andrew Lipsman, ComScore's vice president for industry analysis. "For businesses who specialize in selling products with particular visual appeal — and flower arrangements would of course qualify — Pinterest is a marketing channel they should certainly be considering."

The Power of Pinning

Consider it? Diane Lagerstedt is already addicted. "Pinterest is like crack!" said Lagerstedt, of wholesaler Washington Floral Service, who has a personal account on Pinterest. She's not alone in her addiction; January visitors spent, on average, 98 minutes on the site.

Washington Floral Service isn't on Pinterest yet, but will add a "Pin It" button to its website, Lagerstedt said. Other wholesalers use Pinterest to inspire their florist customers and also to speak to a consumer audience. We "want to reach out to the general public, really showing them all the amazing work designers are capable of doing," said Brandy Bober, who manages Greenleaf Wholesale Florist's San Antonio and Dallas Pinterest accounts.

Yvonne Ashton, who manages Pinterest at Mayesh Wholesale Florist's Parma, Ohio, location, said she pins to keep the Mayesh brand top of mind with its customers, "which all leads to increased traffic to our site and more leads."

Part of Pinterest's power is in its multiplier effect: A Pinterest user can repin to a board seen by her 15 followers, and some will repin to their 25 followers and so on. That, combined with Pinterest's click-and-link ability and its hypnotic hold, has created a clamor from companies to both facilitate and learn more about marketing using Pinterest. When more than 1,000 viewers tried to access a Feb. 22 WhizBang Training webinar on Pinterest for retailers, it crashed for some and others couldn't get on.

Teleflora is considering adding "Pin It" buttons, to its members' websites, next to Twitter's "Tweet" and Facebook's "Like" buttons, making it easier for customers to pin product images from florists' sites to their boards, said CIO Jim Talarico. He couldn't specify when the

company would add the buttons but said he expects florists' requests for them to grow quickly.

FTD has received "limited requests" so far to add "Pin it" buttons to its Florists Online sites, spokeswoman Emily Peterson said, adding that the company wants to learn more about the risks and benefits, given the copyright issues and legal concerns that have been raised. (See "Copyright Concerns," p. 23.)

Tame Your Enthusiasm?

Regardless of how the copyright questions settle out, some marketing consultants are cautioning certain businesses not to get too carried away with the latest social media site to become popular. "Pinterest is an interesting site with some real, immediate applications for online retailers and Etsy merchants, but the site itself offers little for most typical businesses and it's certainly not the next big thing," said John Jantsch in a Feb. 29 post on Duct Tape Marketing. "In fact, it's the search for the next big thing that is hurting many businesses."

Instead, Jantsch said, business owners must focus on differentiating themselves and use Pinterest and other tools to support that distinction, such as by creating interest in their websites, presentations and stories.

"That's what makes Pinterest worthy of the investment in time and not some magic fairy dust promise of traffic and riches," Jantsch said.

"Never bet on one platform," Brogan told SAF, though he added that visual sharing will remain part of the social networking "vocabulary."

The co-owner of Liberty Jane, which markets doll clothing and patterns, doesn't question Pinterest's value. Miles has, in less than six months since he stumbled upon it last fall, gone from Pinterest neophyte to cheerleader. He blogs and offers training on Pinterest's marketing power at www.marketingonpinterest.com, and is also penning a book about Pinterest marketing. Likewise, photographer Christensen quickly became "bombastically enthusiastic" after his initial discovery of it last year.

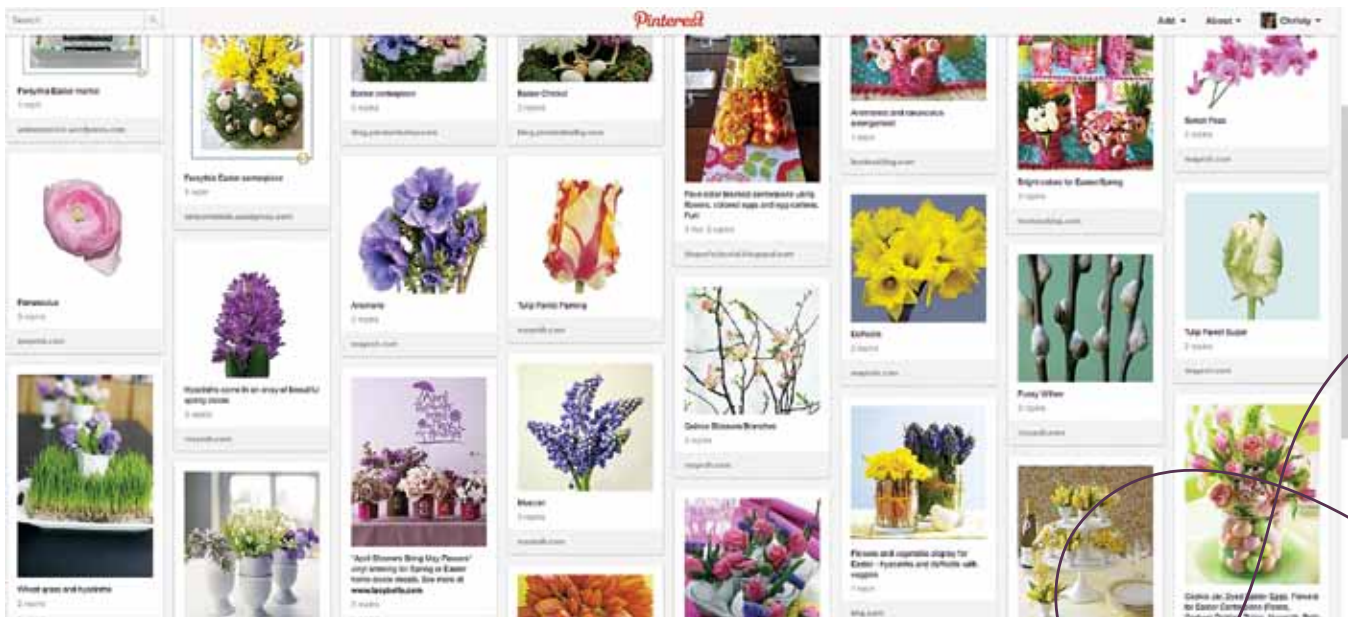
"We've seen a direct impact in our revenue," said Miles, declining to be more specific about sales. He does share

Your Pinterest Score

To measure your "Pinfluence," check out two analytics providers that have popped up to meet the demand:

<http://pinpuff.com>

<http://www.pinreach.com>



RIPE FOR REPINNING Pinterest users have shared, or “repinned,” several of the bright, bold images on Mayesh Wholesale Florist’s “Easter Inspiration” board, upping the number of viewers who might click through to the company’s website.


analytics, which show Pinterest holds the sixth spot overall and the first among social media sites. In January, Pinterest drove 2,019 visitors to Miles’ site, 53 percent of whom were new; he surmises about 1,000 were prospective buyers. Those visitors arrived through 652 referral links (1,402 over three months), or pins, some that may have landed multiple visitors. “I can see these pockets of new people finding us.”

By comparison, YouTube channeled 1,154 visitors Miles’ way in January, 39 percent of whom were new, through 17 referral links. And Facebook delivered 881 visitors that month via six referral links, he said. Only 20 percent of the visitors were new. Yet, “I spent four years building my Facebook traffic,” he said. He acknowledges Facebook isn’t designed to have visitors leave its site, as Pinterest is. Instead, Facebook users are encouraged to “like” or comment to support brands they favor, but neither action has a link baked in like Pinterest’s.

Strategic Pinning

Big-name brands such as Nordstrom, Bergdorf Goodman and Bath & Body Works have their own ways of using Pinterest. All show product, of course, but Nordstrom also invites users to pin architecture that inspires them to one of



 I use [Pinterest] like a reference library ... to get my juices flowing.

Emily Mays

Flùranaiche Custom Botanical Design, Niagra on the Lake, Ontario

its boards. Bath & Body Works includes a “Gingham” board with pictures, such as a dress and a bicycle, that have nothing to do with soaps and lotions. Such big-brand tactics are well within the reach of small businesses. Florists are gradually grabbing onto the power of the pin, by using Pinterest to:

Get to know the client. When consulting with brides and other event clients, Kathy Dudley of The Bloomery in Butler, Pa., looks at their boards for insight not just into their floral styles but also to the overall feel (and budget) of the event. She looks for recurring colors or flower types, and pulls samples based on what she sees.

Show your brand, not just your stuff. Carlette Peters of Davenport at Five, a flower and gift shop in Raleigh, N.C., uses Pinterest as an “online portfolio,” something to show her style to prospective clients. Florists can also use Pinterest to show the shop’s overall aesthetic and culture, and that means pinning a range of images — floral and otherwise — that reflect your brand, advises Dudley, who includes boards on her personal Pinterest account on “Inspiration Plants and Planters” and “flowers,” but also “technology” and “food.” Even when she decides to change

her profile to show her business name, she will maintain a similar mix, she said.

Spot trends. Georgianne Vinicombe looks for recurring patterns in images repinned numerous times. Peach roses? White and green wedding bouquets? Repins become a barometer for what's hot. "If I was a wholesaler or a farm, I'd be looking at what they're pinning for event décor, or if they're pinning a lot of the same color for future home décor inspiration," said Vinicombe, owner of Monday Morning Flower & Balloon Co. in Yardley, Pa. "Wouldn't that be powerful to know? If I produce this product, they're likely to buy it."

Organize your ideas. Pinterest becomes a much more easily accessible version of that stack of magazines or file of tear sheets you just can't scrap. Jennifer Pryor has a "My Projects" board where she keeps ideas, such as a space-saving, neat way to organize ribbon, that she wants to implement in her Lexington, S.C., shop, White House Florist. Nancy Witte-Dycus, AAF, of Fantasy Flowers in Thiensville, Wis., pinned a unique display idea, a cheese grater used as an earring stand.

Create a local presence. In her Pinterest webinar, Susan Negen of WhizBang Training in Grand Haven, Mich., said boards such as "Customers' Pins," "Businesses We Patronize," "Local



[Pinterest] allows everyone to take a look-see [at my work]. It's easy.

Carlette Peters

Davenport at Five, Raleigh, N.C.

Events" and "Favorite Places Around Town" would be good choices to add variety and engage your community.

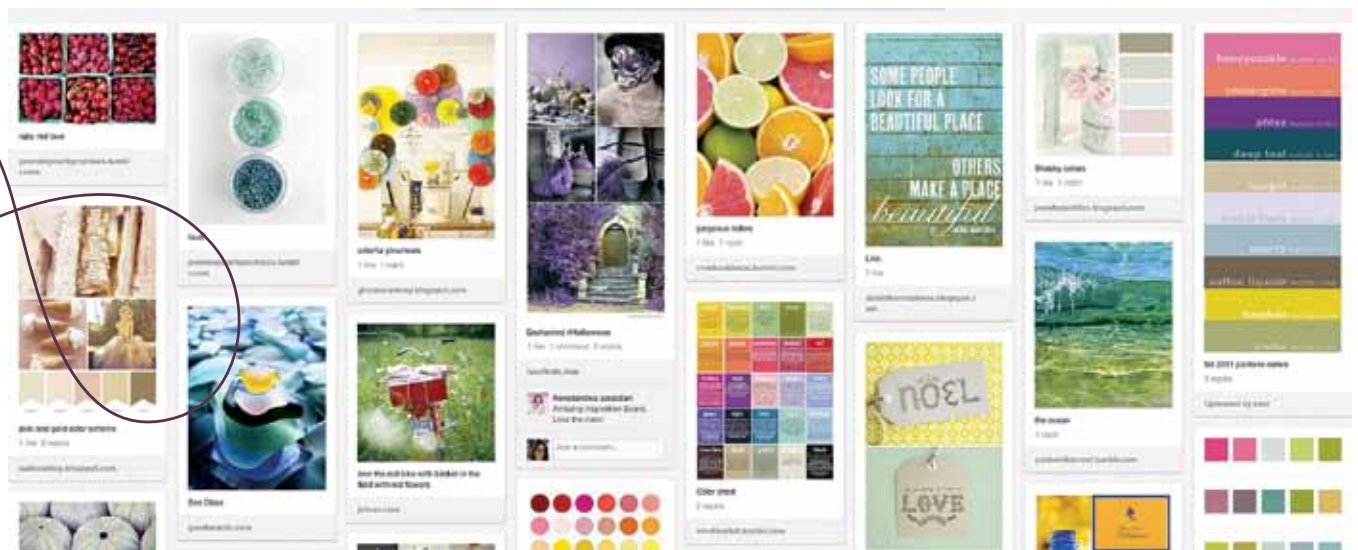
Get to know customers' tastes. Let customers show you styles they'd like to buy by creating an open board, such as "What We'd Like to See," Negen said.

Cross-pollinate. Look for boards in complementary categories that accept multiple contributors; ask to be added, Dudley said. For example, among her boards is "Bourbon and Boots Finds the Best of the South," which is actually a group board started by the Little Rock, Ark., retailer. Would-be collaborators can email the Bourbon & Boots staff member listed to pin all things southern.

Where and Why to Find the Time?

Tweeting, posting, pinning — who has time for it all? That's the question florists are asking themselves, as they fit Pinterest into their schedules. Some florists on Pinterest say they won't cut their Facebook time to find minutes for pinning; others admit their Facebook time has slipped.

Dudley, who's been strategically building her personal Pinterest boards to float out select examples of her event work and wedding accessories, agreed florists shouldn't forfeit the investment they've made in Facebook. "You don't want to let it slide," she said.



COLORFUL AND CREATIVE This "Color" board, from Breckenridge, Colo.,-based Petal and Bean's Pinterest collection, doesn't directly relate to flowers and plants, but adds variety to the shop's presence on the site, and gives prospective clients a sense of what inspires co-owners Stacy and Dina Sanchez. "We use a lot of online tools to communicate and collaborate with our clients, and we love the flexibility and all the eye-candy that's flying around on Pinterest right now," Stacy Sanchez said.

Emily Mays of Flùranaiche Custom Botanical Design in Niagra on the Lake, Ontario, has not deserted Facebook for Pinterest. But her Facebook posts — not Pinterest — took a back seat during a recent busy period. She continues to use both for business, but is more inspired by Pinterest's visual collections.

Vinicombe sees Facebook and Pinterest as two distinct but necessary efforts, so she plans to carve out more time for Pinterest so she can do both.

SAF SHOWCASES FLORAL ARTISTRY ON PINTEREST

> SAF is sharing floral inspiration through its Aboutflowers channel on Pinterest, www.pinterest.com/aboutflowers. Aboutflowers will add to its starter collection of 18 Pinterest boards, showcasing photography and information on flowers for Easter, Weddings, Prom, Mother's Day, Design and several color-specific buds such as white, purple and yellow.



The images link to SAF's consumer website (www.aboutflowers.com) and other SAF social media channels, such as the Flower Factor blog (www.aboutflowersblog.com), YouTube videos (www.youtube.com/user/SAFaboutflowers), and Flickr photo gallery (www.flickr.com/flowerfactor). SAF's various consumer social media channels encourage visitors to find a local SAF-member florist through featured links to the National Florist Directory (nationalflo리스트directory.com).

"The goal of Aboutflowers on Pinterest is to increase the visibility of florists and flowers among a key demographic — women in their 20s and 30s," said SAF Vice President of Marketing Jennifer Sparks. "We want to encourage them to make flowers and florists a greater part of their everyday lives." —C.O.

In it to Pin It

For more tips on getting started on Pinterest and representing your business well on the site, go to www.safnow.org/moreonline.

"Every florist should be on Pinterest," Vinicombe said. Her blog measures went "way up" to 346 page views at one point

after getting on Pinterest, and traffic to one of her websites is up 60 percent, which is not typical, she said. She attributes some of the additional traffic to Pinterest.

"Linking is extraordinarily powerful. Pinterest takes it to another level," she said. "I mean let's face it, Facebook doesn't link anybody back to your website through a picture. That's really, really strong stuff." 🌸

Christy O'Farrell is senior editor of Floral Management. cofarrell@safnow.org

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