SET DESIGN WAGES BY DETERMINING PRODUCTIVITY

> A shop's capacity to create arrangements has always been a balancing act. Too little design time available and you have an overloaded team; too much time and you have an overloaded payroll.

As shops faced a surge in sales and a drop in the availability of labor the past two years, a new realization emerged that helps florists deal with this long-time conundrum. A designer can produce far more than most shop owners realized. That is great news! There's better news: The more a person can design per hour, the more you can afford to pay them. Right now, there is no choice but to pay more to get the best design help.

Determine Productivity

Most designers are paid by the hour, so the easiest way to determine productivity is to see how much retail product each designer can produce per hour. If you're one of the shop's designers, put yourself to the test, too.
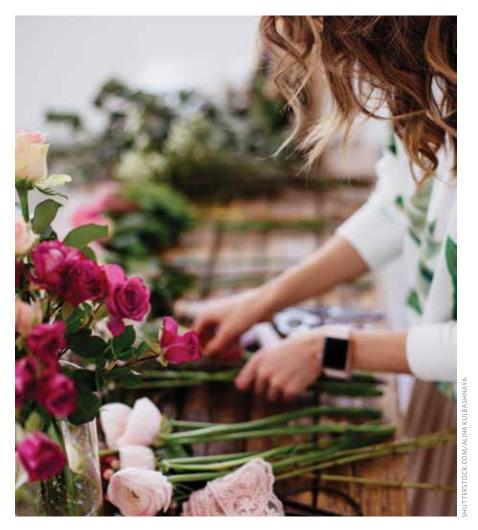
A designer should produce 10 times his or her hourly pay. A designer who is paid $20 an hour should be producing $200 per hour.

The first step is to measure how much each designer is capable of producing during an hour of uninterrupted time. This shows their potential.

The next step is to take into consideration the normal conditions your designers face in your shop. How much time do they actually have to design uninterrupted? Do your designers do double-duty and answer the phone and take orders, load arrangements into the van, or assist walk-in customers? Estimate how many hours per day a designer really has to design.

These two steps will reveal important information that will help your designers reach maximum productivity.

- You will learn what each designer is capable of producing and whether the productivity matches their rate of pay. Both you and the employee will be able to gauge whether they are earning their wages or if they need to find more speed.

- You will see the difference between productivity potential versus what is possible in the circumstances of your shop.

Protect Designers' Time

You might need to look for ways to give your designers more uninterrupted time. For example, you could block off two or three hours every morning for them to work on designs while you and/or another employee take care of the front of the shop. A few adjustments could make a big difference in your design room productivity.

A helpful comparison might be to consider how a medical practice keeps their doctors productive. The doctors' time is the most valuable, so a team is built around them to make the most use of their expertise. They have a receptionist, an intake person and a nurse to help the patient before the doctor is involved. You can create a similar support structure in your shop to protect your designers' time.

Keep in mind that you can afford to pay a designer 10 times what he or she produces per hour without limit. If you have a designer who consistently produces $300 per hour, you can pay them $30 per hour. Consider this: Once you have created an environment that maximizes designers' time (as in the example of the doctor's office), you will have the most productive designers and be able to pay the highest wages in town, which will attract the best talent — and keep your wages within budget. New times call for new strategies, and this may be one that fits your shop. ✿

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