

by Fred Russell

TWO SISTERS One Shop

Serena Kenner and Cathy Rokes found their individual strengths helped build the foundation for a successful shop

It's a shop match made in heaven. Sisters Serena Kenner and Cathy Rokes took their strengths and weaved them together to help sprout their burgeoning business. Serena is the businessperson in the partnership, and she takes care of running the day-to-day operations of the shop. Cathy is the artisan focusing most of her energy on designing. As anyone who owns a shop can attest, you need to wear both business and artistic caps in order to be successful—and that is not always easy for florists to blend together.

The two sisters have owned Southside Floral in Nampa, Idaho for two years. When they first opened, Cathy and Serena knew they needed to build a clientele base in order to make it. They decided to start with building their wedding segment, and they recently launched a new website which is dedicated to just that side of their business. "We didn't want brides to have to weed their way through our everyday website to find what they are looking for so we tried to make it easy for them," says Serena. "We needed a site brides could go to that would be all about them and their day." She reports that the wedding-specific site is working too.

When it comes to wedding consultations, Cathy says, "I want to make sure our bride gets my undivided attention

so I always try to schedule appointments before or after our regular work hours." She adds, "I turn off the phone and lock the door so she feels like I'm focused on her." She also tries to encourage the bride to make her own decisions because it is her day after all.

One of the bigger challenges they faced was when they first opened. They thought the doors would open and people would just start walking in—but it wasn't quite like that. They overcame this challenge by beating the pavement everyday and meeting with people who could help their business. It helped their wedding business by getting to know all the vendors like


the tuxedo shop, the limousine company, and the event planners. They try to network as much as possible too, say the ladies.

There have been a few particular business strategies that have been successful including media advertising, data collection, and discount programs. Serena and Cathy advertise in local publications and on the radio. They are very selective in advertising decisions and try to make

every penny worth it. The sisters use a POS system to collect data for direct mail pieces.

And they also have a program called "\$5 Fridays," so they get a lot of walk-in business for people who want to take flowers home for the weekend. It

has given them a lot of visibility, and they have been able to retain a lot of those same customers for other occasions and holidays.

"We want to continue to grow and so far we've been successful," say the ladies. It's really just been the two of us since we opened our doors and we're probably going to be hiring another designer and driver." They also want to keep expanding their wedding business and ultimately be a full service flower shop and number one florist in Idaho's Treasure Valley. 



FAST FACTS

Owners:
Serena Kenner and
Cathy Rokes

Shop:
Southside Floral

Location:
Nampa, Idaho

Year Established:
2008

Interesting Tidbit:

- ✿ After working in several different flower shops, Cathy (pictured upper right) decided to start anew, and moved to Idaho. Once there, she and her sister Serena (pictured upper left) decided to buy an existing shop. Cathy and Serena know about working within a family unit, as they are two of 10 siblings.