

# Focal Points

## AIFD Announces 2013 PFDE Results

### *Celebrate the Newest Professionals in the Institute*

One hundred thirty four of the 135 candidates were successful in their bid to become a Certified Floral Designer (CFD®) as bestowed by the American Institute of Floral Designers (AIFD), it was announced by **John Kittinger AIFD, CFD**, president of the Institute.

The candidates participated in AIFD's rigorous Professional Floral Designer Evaluation (PFDE) session held June 26, immediately prior to the AIFD National Symposium "Passion" in Las Vegas. Earning a CFD® is the first step of the PFDE; the ultimate goal is to become an Accredited Member of AIFD.

Of the 134 professionals, 90 designers earned their CFD credentials in Las Vegas and 44 designers maintained their CFD credentials. Forty seven designers created artistic designs that were so excellent in presentation that they have been invited to become a member of AIFD and they will be inducted during ceremonies at the 2014 AIFD National Symposium "Transition Transformation" in Chicago, July 3-7.

During a PFDE, candidates must create five designs in four hours – product and categories are not announced until the PFDE begins. Designs are then evaluated based on ten points of professional floral design including mechanics, balance, color, theme, line, creativity and mechanics.

Prior to participating in the design portion of the PFDE, candidates must complete certain education requirements and successfully complete an online test to evaluate their fundamental understanding of design.

CFD designers are required to maintain their professional designation by accumulating 25 hours of floral design continuing education or serving in various capacities in floral associations.

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Make sure you mark your calendars to see the newest AIFD members be inducted during ceremonies in Chicago next year at the 2014 Symposium "Transition Transformation." Details at [aifd.org/2014-symposium](http://aifd.org/2014-symposium).



## The Pricing Squeeze: How to Talk to Prospective Clients About the Value of Your Service

By Wayne Gurnick AIFD, CFD

When was the last time you went to a car dealership and told them that you would like to purchase a BMW, but you only have enough money for a Toyota? How successful were you? By the way, I think very highly of both car brands, but everyone knows that BMW is “the ultimate driving machine” while Toyota is a reliable, ordinary method of transportation.

As floral designers and wedding professionals, we need to take lessons from BMW – the company has a high quality product, exceptional service and has no trouble articulating its value. If your product is mediocre and your service marginal, this article is not for you. I bet that most of you are passionate about what you do, have a special skill and talent and always go out of your way to create an exceptional experience for your wedding clients. So, why is it that on a daily basis, you find yourself in the uncomfortable position of having to explain to a prospective client why you cannot drop your price by 50% to accommodate her over-budget wedding?

Yes, there is the bad economy, but too often it is used as a convenient excuse for people to feel like they have the right to negotiate beyond the realm of reason. As I see it, someone who is struggling financially should revisit their decision to throw a Saturday night wedding for 200. So, it’s really not about the economy, but about our ability to be confident in telling our prospective clients exactly why we charge the fees that we do – it is because we deliver value!

A word of caution – don’t fall into the angry and resentful trap. Think about the fact that most brides and grooms are not knowledgeable about our business and don’t understand what’s involved. This is particularly true if they’ve attended other weddings where hard working talented professionals did what they were supposed to – made everything look effortless and simple. To start, craft a story about how your services benefit the client. In my case, as a wedding planner and floral designer I tell my clients stories of how I was able to orchestrate weddings within impossibly short time-frames, come up with design concepts that worked within my client’s limited budget or transform a beloved patch of overgrown forested land into a magical wedding venue when everybody said it couldn’t be done.

Acknowledge the fact that most wedding clients are not doing research to become a wedding pro – they just want to make good decisions and they are quickly overwhelmed by the amount of information. Give them specific examples that they can relate to and demonstrate how you can save them time and money, while delivering their vision. By doing this, you are also establishing rapport and a personal connection, which is important in developing trust.

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## State Association Gifts Local Floral Designer with Free 2014 Symposium Registration

The Arkansas Florists Association is the first to announce the winner of AIFD’s gift of a complimentary general registration to the 2014 National Symposium “Transition Transformation” (July 3-7) in Chicago. The winner is **Katherine Rodocker** of Flowers and Home in Bryant, Ariz. Katherine is pictured third from the left in the photo above.

AIFD gave the gift in hopes that associations would use it to help raise funds to support their respective floral design education programs. You can read more about this program at [aifd.org/2013/08/2014-state-floral-groups/](http://aifd.org/2013/08/2014-state-floral-groups/).

*In the photo l-r: Glenn Oswalt, president of AFA; Jan Diederich, Chair of Arkansas Cup; Katherine Rodocker, Winner of 2013 Arkansas Cup; Marie Ackerman AIFD, CFD, PFCI of Teleflora.*

### AIFD and Social Media



[www.facebook.com/AIFD.CFD](http://www.facebook.com/AIFD.CFD)



AIFD page can be found on the AIFD homepage at [www.aifd.org](http://www.aifd.org) (click on the LinkedIn symbol to get to the page).



<http://twitter.com/#!/AIFDHqtrs>



[www.youtube.com/user/AIFDHqtrs](http://www.youtube.com/user/AIFDHqtrs)

# The Pricing Squeeze

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If your clients feel they can trust you, then they will believe your information.

Examples and real stories are very helpful in educating your wedding client. For example, many brides are surprised to find out the cost of professionally assembled welcome baskets and are quick to say that they can do that task themselves. I patiently explain all the steps – going to a few different stores to get containers, packaging, wrapping, food, toys and other items; removing price tags, packaging and wrapping, arranging for refrigeration, transporting to the hotel, arranging with the hotel staff how the baskets will be delivered. Phew – all that for 12 welcome baskets! It's true – this is not rocket science, but it takes time and needs to be done a day or two before the wedding. Is that what a bride would want to be concerned with the day before her wedding? Examples like this one help the clients understand the time and effort that goes into the wedding details. Explain the basis for your pricing. Help your clients understand that pricing for wedding related services is not random or deviously intended to take advantage of them. You need to explain the steps involved in your work and how much time they require, not to mention expertise.

Demonstrating expertise is difficult for wedding professionals because our work has been commoditized and because our services do not require special certification or education. This is where you need to deploy your creativity to express the value of your expertise in terms that clients can understand and respect. Examples are very helpful. Start out by asking a question "Did you know that in order to have a wedding on the beach, you need to secure a permit and that there are a number of restrictions, such as not being able to serve alcohol?" You are not trying to make the client feel stupid, but you are giving them examples of things that you know as an expert. They wouldn't know these things and that's precisely the point.

Explain that there is more to designing a dining room than placing ten tables with ten chairs around each – you need to consider the flow of traffic, the placement of musicians, access to the bars, how to showcase the design elements with lighting and so much more. I explain to my clients how much time my staff and I will spend on the day of their wedding coordinating and managing all the details, arriving before anybody is there

and leaving long after the last guest has gone. I also describe the skills that I have refined over my years of experience – my design sensibility and my ability to capture my clients' vision; I back this up with images of my work. Examples like these help define and quantify the value of our professional services for our clients.

It is important to give a specific and relevant tip – not to give away all your expertise before you are hired, but to give a "freebie" that clearly demonstrates how much value you provide with your expertise and talent.

The steps that I've described are very important, but there is one final crucial element. You need to be confident about the quality of your product and service and not be timid about naming your price and defending it. The wedding industry is

made up of many creative people and they often find it difficult to have "money" conversations with their clients. Well, get over it – you need to be a savvy business owner. If you have the luxury of additional staff, then make the financial discussion the responsibility of your business manager. Either way you do it, believe in yourself, price your service fairly and tell a compelling story. You will not win every customer and you will certainly not win every difficult negotiation,

but you will get better at it and feel strong about being able to justify your value.

Takeaways:

1. Tell a story about how your services benefit the client. Keep in mind that most brides and grooms are not wedding experts and don't know what is involved.
2. Give examples of how your expertise saves your clients time and money. Demonstrate your creative ability and talent.
3. Give examples of time consuming tasks and activities that you handle. Relate your work in terms of time, experience and knowledge.
4. Explain the basis for your pricing.
5. Provide valuable and tangible tips as an illustration of your expertise.
6. Use examples and stories to establish your credibility and trust.
7. Be confident about your expertise and value and don't be timid about clearly stating your fee.

