



# SKY-HIGH BALLOON SALES FOR SPRING

Cheer your customers and inflate your bottom line with these tips for the season's major holidays.

BY CINDY HANAUER

A.A. Milne had it right when he wrote the following in the 1926 children's classic, *Winnie the Pooh*: "Nobody can be un-cheered with a balloon."

Piglet was looking for a way to bring cheer to Eeyore after many failed attempts. He ultimately presented Eeyore with a big red balloon, upon which Eeyore replied, "Balloon? You did say balloon? One of those big colored things you blow up? Gaiety, song-and-dance, here we are and there we are!"

## the magic of balloons

Today, we in the floral and gift business still help our customers celebrate the same levity and cheer from balloons that A.A. Milne described almost 90 years ago. Amazingly, latex balloons were already 100 years old by the time he described the joy of balloons in his novel.

Regardless of the category we're selling, balloons add a visual magic to every base product in the store and financial magic to the bottom line. At an average margin of 70 percent and higher, a strong balloon initiative in each of our stores will guarantee sky-high profits for the spring holidays.

Careful inventory management is key when it comes to balloons, but an accurate post-Valentine inventory of this valuable category will prevent double ordering new spring balloons on top of back stock held over from last year. Balloons are profitable only when they're out on the sales floor and sold, so here are some of my favorite selling tips for spring.

## general spring

In most areas of the nation, March brings a mass influx of customers into our stores looking for any sign of freshness, cheerfulness and color. Red, white and green have become worn out, and pastels take center stage.

After Valentine's Day, schedule a "get fresh" campaign in each floral department to remove old, tired and leftover red upgrades and floral department décor. Don't worry — the reds will come back

out in May for Memorial Day, but for now, spring bliss is in vogue. After a major spring cleaning of each fixture, bring on the bright flower bunches, pastel upgrades and spring balloons.

## st. patrick's day

"May your pockets be heavy and your heart be light," is a famous St. Patrick's Day quote. No doubt, St. Patrick's Day is a party holiday, which means that balloon tie-in opportunities are limitless.

In addition to upgrading *Oxalis* plants with stick balloons, promote balloon-enhanced gift baskets, bakery delights and stand-alone balloon displays in the greeting card, candy, beer and promo aisles of each store. Use cellophane bags of foil-covered chocolate coins as yummy and profitable balloon weights. Your stores' pockets will certainly be heavy with additional profits by promoting an optimized balloon program for such a big party holiday.

## easter

Less than two weeks after St. Patrick's Day, "Here comes Peter Cottontail, hopping down the bunny trail." Now is the time to introduce spring balloons in even greater force because Easter is one of the largest of all spring holidays.

In addition to generic flower-shaped balloons, offer Easter-specific shapes such as eggs, bunny rabbits and even juvenile cartoon characters that can be purchased to decorate children's Easter baskets. Balloons also make perfectly profitable enhancements for ready-made Easter baskets filled with candy or flowers.

Easter is also the season for other church events, such as baptisms and confirmations. A separate grouping of religious balloons tied into an impactful display of Easter lilies will add additional sales and profits that are missed by many competitors.

## administrative professionals day

April brings Administrative Professionals Day/Week to the forefront, and you can add holiday-specific balloons to the array of generic spring balloons already on display. In addition to balloons

with “Happy Administrative Professionals Day” wording, be sure to offer balloons that simply read, “You’re the Best,” “Thank You” and “Great Job.” Remember that there are both male and female administrative assistants, so your display of balloons should include an assortment of both feminine and masculine offerings.

Balloons can be promoted and maximized in limitless ways for this holiday, including as upgrades for bud vases, gift baskets, arrangements, plants, dish gardens, candy and wine gifts, and of course, sold as stand-alone balloon bouquets. Don’t forget to have a major representation of balloons in the greeting card aisle, where there will be an additional hotbed of traffic during this week. Administrative Professionals Week is April 24-30 this year, and Administrative Professionals Day is April 27.

## mother’s day

May presents one of the most profitable of all holidays: Mother’s Day. There’s nothing that adds more joy to an already profitable gift than a balloon bouquet flying high from a gift basket, plant, candy gift or floral arrangement.

In addition to Mother’s Day balloons, include “Thank You,” “You’re the Best” and “I Love You” balloons to promote “you’re like a mother to me” purchases. Mother’s Day is a great time to upgrade 75 percent to 80 percent of all products on display because the volume of products sold will help bank additional profits to cover the slower months of summer. Mother’s Day is May 8 this year.

## end-of-school events

After Mother’s Day comes the end-of-school season, during which customers will be looking for displays of flowers, plants and balloons in specific school colors. This is a great way to convert each floral department after the Mother’s Day holiday by capitalizing on graduation, proms, award ceremonies, teachers’ gifts and other end-of-school events.

In addition to balloons being used for individual product upgrades, foil and latex balloons will be used for school event decorations. Remind each store to be aware of local school colors and to build at least one large display promoting these events. School events are held at every level — elementary, middle and high school — so there’s a great opportunity to maximize displays in many color categories.

## watch profits soar

The party doesn’t start until the balloons arrive — and neither do the 70 percent-plus profit margins! Along with the profits from the balloons themselves, the addition of balloon enhancements such as metallic streamers, tulle, candy weights and glitter can add even greater revenue to the bottom line.

With a little creativity, precise order planning and frequent store communication, we all can celebrate the glorious spring holidays with additional sales, maximum profits and sky-high customer engagement. **sf**



*Cindy Hanauer is the founder of Grand Central Floral, [www.grandcentralfloral.com](http://www.grandcentralfloral.com), a Web platform dedicated to connecting those in the floriculture trade. She began her 40-year career in the mass-market floral industry in 1974 and has held leadership positions in every aspect of the business. Cindy can be contacted at Grand Central Floral, 12620-3 Beach Blvd., Jacksonville, Fla., 32246; (844) MYFLORAL (693-5672) or (904) 327-1951; or [cindy@grandcentralfloral.com](mailto:cindy@grandcentralfloral.com).*

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