



Grow & Bloom Co.

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY



Planned by Devon Cornelius

November 2020

SUMMARY

Grow & Bloom Collective is primed for growth over the next few years. High-quality plants, home décor, bath and body products, and gifts—all reasonably priced and available to ship across the country.

Since opening in 2017, the business has consistently grown and we have built a strong social media following. At the time of writing this plan, we had nearly 20,000 followers on Instagram and Facebook. That's a major accomplishment for a small business that only started offering online shopping and national shipments a few months ago.

We have a strong brand, horticultural expertise on staff, great location, and strong community support. We're working on broadening our brand awareness and positioning ourselves as plant experts in the country. Comparing ourselves to a few local plant shops, we'd rank ourselves 2nd out of 4. But we want the top spot.

OUR BUSINESS OBJECTIVES FOR 2021 ARE:

- 1. INCREASE OVERALL SALES BY 10%**
- 2. INCREASE WEBSITE TRAFFIC BY 15%**
- 3. INCREASE SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS BY 20%**

This communications plan outlines our strategy to achieve those goals. We started by identifying and prioritizing our audience. Rachel, a 25- to 40-year-old woman is our top priority. She has a stable career, supports small businesses and is environmentally conscious. Linda, a 50- to 60-year old woman is second. She has more disposable income, is attracted to high-quality products and buys seasonal décor. Their desires differ so our messaging will address them uniquely. Our key messages revolve around nature, learning, help and design.

We'll use Instagram to reach Rachel, Facebook for Linda and email for both. We plan to add new pages and more content to our website because that's where we'll drive all traffic. We have seasonal plans and themes, and various communications tactics we'll experiment with and learn from. We have ideas for new content, like videos on plant care, online workshops and tutorials, a monthly email newsletter and customer submissions.

We'll track sales, website traffic and social media engagement monthly. This will allow us to change the plan based on our audience's feedback to ensure we accomplish our goals by the end of 2021. We have two options for the budget: \$18,000 (\$10,200 of which is staff costs) for aggressive growth, or \$11,500 (\$10,200 for staff costs again) for modest growth. Either way, we're confident this communications plan will allow Grow & Bloom Collective to flourish.

PURPOSE

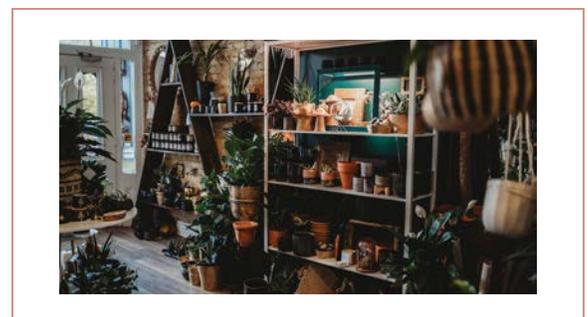
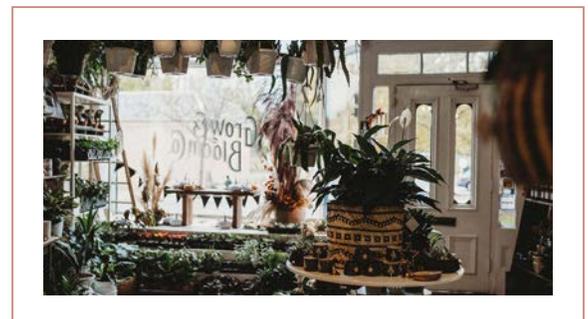
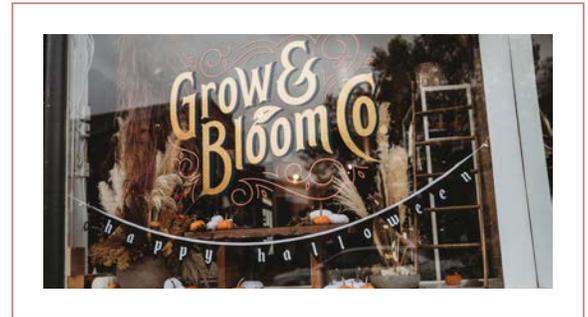
We have two reasons for developing this communications plan on behalf of Grow & Bloom Collective:

- 1. TO FOSTER A COMMUNITY OF PLANT LOVERS**
- 2. TO INCREASE MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE BRAND**

Achieving both goals will result in sizable increases to social media followers, and of course, revenue. This plan will expand the reach of what is an already positive brand affiliation and it will position Grow & Bloom as plant experts in Canada. These strategies can span five years, but we'll focus our specific communications tactics on the 2021 calendar year. The key messages can be carried forward indefinitely, while the tactics will be frequently reviewed and adjusted.

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SITUATION

Grow & Bloom opened a storefront in 2017 on London, Ontario's Richmond Row—a popular downtown shopping destination. We've witnessed steady business growth in those three years, as well as community support and a strong following. 2020 presented significant challenges to retailers because of pandemic restrictions but we adapted to those limits by opening an online store that ships across Canada. Though in-store foot traffic decreased, it provided an opportunity for increased online sales and an expanded audience.

STRENGTHS

- Strong branding across online platforms
- Product variety, availability and quality
- Store location and national shipping
- Staff expertise and willingness to assist
- Strong social media following (17.2k on Instagram; 2.7k on Facebook)
- Variety of products beyond plants

WEAKNESSES

- Location doesn't allow for convenient parking
- Prices are higher than some competitors
- Name recognition is limited to London area
- A limited selection of plant-care products and informational resources
- Social media posts are typically limited to selling product
- The newly launched blog is relatively empty

OPPORTUNITIES

- Offer plant care supplies and resources (fertilizer, tools, books, blog posts)
- Offer workshops and tutorials (plant care, creating arrangements, decorating)
- Blog/vlog posts to answer common questions
- Introduce other staff members
- Add new pages to the website to host more information
- Show our audience a “day in the life” at the shop

THREATS

- Big box stores with significantly lower prices (Home Depot, Lowes, Rona)
- Stores that offer one-stop shopping alongside other products
- Downtown parking availability
- Shipping costs
- 2020 pandemic—which Grow & Bloom turned into an opportunity

COMPETITORS

PARKWAY GARDENS

- In business for 50 years
- Online store and local delivery
- Sells fruit and vegetable plants in addition to house plants
- Exclusive store for *Magnolia Boutique* clothing line
- Also sells pottery and home decor products
- Offer mobile potting service
- Sells DIY arrangement kits
- Sells plant care products
- Instagram: 3.1k followers
- Facebook: 3.4k followers



HEEMANS

- In business for 51 years
- Online store and local delivery
- Offers online learning resources
- Offers plant advice via social channels and email
- *Garden School* workshops
- Sells fruit and vegetable plants in addition to house plants
- Sells DIY arrangement kits
- Sells jams, spreads, fruit and alcoholic ciders
- Monthly email newsletter
- Instagram: 25.4k followers
- Facebook: 36.8k followers



VAN LUYK'S

- In business for 49 years
- Online shop local delivery
- Sells fruit and vegetable plants in addition to house plants
- Sells fresh-cut floral
- Community outreach at schools and senior centres
- Blog on their website
- Plant research & development team
- Sells home décor items
- Instagram 786 followers
- Facebook 3.1k followers



RANKING

	Prices & Secltion	Plant Care Resources	Product Variety	Online Store	Social Media	Brand Appeal
Grow & Bloom Co.	2	4	3	2	2	1
Parkway Gardens	4	3	4	4	3	3
Heemans	3	1	1	1	1	2
Van Luyk's	1	2	2	3	4	4

GRADES

Heemans 1st

Grow & Bloom Co. 2nd

Van Luyk's 3rd

Parkway Gardens 4th



GOALS

Our 12-month business objectives for the 2021 calendar year



**10% INCREASE IN
TOTAL SALES**



**15% INCREASE IN
WEBSITE TRAFFIC**



**20% INCREASE IN SOCIAL
MEDIA FOLLOWERS**

VISION

Our vision is to increase our social influence in London, ON and across Canada, resulting in increased sales. This business started from a love of horticulture and floristry and we want to spread that passion and knowledge. We offer more than plants; we offer a community of plant-loving and plant-curious people who seek a deeper connection.

We can connect people with nature, which leads to a deeper appreciation and love for self. We will underscore the therapeutic benefits of plants to inspire people to create green havens in their own homes. The communications goals in this plan are fundamental to achieving our business objectives.

CONNECTION

Our messaging is rooted in:

- Connectedness to nature and beauty
- Ideas and inspiration for creative expression through plants, flowers and décor
- Positioning Grow & Bloom as plant experts who are excited to help others
- A strong sense of community with Grow & Bloom as the hub

AUDIENCE



RACHEL

25-40 year old female
Lives on their own or with spouse
Stable lifestyle and career
Mid-level income (45-\$60,000)
Appreciates nature and physical activity
Curious about house plants
Learns about plants online or from relatives
A creative spirit, looking for outlets
Willing to spend more on some products to support local businesses

Environmentally conscious
Willing to engage in workshops, either alone or with friends

Interested in interior decorating
Influenced by social media pictures and popular styles and designs



LINDA

50-60 year old female
Likely a homeowner and empty-nester
Established lifestyle and career
Mid to high income (\$60-75,000)
More disposable income than Rachel
Prefers floral and decorative arrangements over houseplants

Vacations often and doesn't want to maintain house plants

Willing to spend more on seasonal décor
Attracted to high quality products and reliable brands

Spends more money on gifts for others
Appreciates the beauty of nature indoors
Influenced by the perceived status of certain products and brands

MESSAGING



We listed the messages in order of priority. The first message is seasonal but it's part of the bigger theme of bringing the outdoors inside to connect with nature. The second is about community, the third is about us being experts and the fourth encourages interior design with our products. The key messages align with our business objectives of fostering a plant community, positioning Grow & Bloom as plant experts, inspiring people to connect with nature in their homes, and motivating people to create.

Rachel is our highest communications priority because she's more likely to be interested in building and fostering community. Though she won't spend as much money as Linda, she'll be with us longer. By consistently demonstrating our plant expertise and high-quality products, Rachel will grow into a Linda-type of person over the years. We want a long-term relationship with Rachel because she can influence peers on social media, has a desire to learn about plants and will be a continued revenue stream for us.

Linda is a lower communications priority but she's still important to our business goals. Linda will spend more than Rachel on seasonal décor, floral arrangements and house/home and bath/body products like candles, soaps and other gifts. We still want Linda to shop with us because she is influential in her social group and will help position Grow & Bloom as a desirable brand. Linda appreciates luxury and high-quality products, and she is willing to spend money to get them. Linda is likely a mother or aunt and will buy gifts for people like Rachel, introducing them to our brand. Linda is important for both the short- and long-term.

TACTICS

Using our segmented audience—Rachel and Linda—we can determine their differing needs and how to best reach them. Based on their demographics, we can safely assume that we'll reach Rachel on Instagram, Linda on Facebook and both by email.



The first message, which aims to connect the audience with nature, will reach both personas but the tactic will differ based on person and platform. Rachel will see house plants and fresh-cut flowers on Instagram and Linda will see seasonal items, like table centerpieces, wreaths and floral arrangements on Facebook. Both would receive the monthly newsletter email (which launched in November 2020). The email can highlight discounts, new items and featured stories on the blog.

In each post or email, we will link back to the website to buy, learn more, or otherwise engage with our content. We can also host workshops to teach people how to create floral arrangements and similar decorative items. People can buy a pre-packaged kit, or select their materials, and then watch a video on our website or join a live class on Zoom. Rachel is more likely to engage with this content for herself, but Linda may see it as a gift opportunity for friends and relatives.

The second message aimed at fostering community is directed at Rachel. We can run Instagram campaigns asking followers to send us pictures of themselves and their favourite plant or space. We'd post these pictures and stories and tag the sender. It helps people to see others like them. They can encourage, share and connect, strengthening the link between people and our brand, while also forming new connections with Grow & Bloom at the center.

Just like parents want to show off their children, plant lovers want to brag about their plant babies. This also takes the pressure off Grow & Bloom to be the lone source of inspiration. We can foster community by letting people inspire each other and simply helping them connect over shared interests. Once we're allowed to meet in-person again, we can then offer workshops and tutorials as mentioned above. Learning together and meeting new people in those settings is a great way to foster community.



TACTICS

Our third message, also directed at Rachel, positions Grow & Bloom as helpful plant care experts. We want people to seek and trust our advice. The blog just launched in November 2020, alongside the email subscription, and the timing is perfect. We want our website to be a place that proactively answers common questions and offers tips and tricks for plant care.



Written posts are good but video entries would be ideal. Videos in this context serve two purposes: to serve helpful content, as well as connecting the staff to our audience. That personal connection is incredibly valuable to strengthening relational ties to a business. We can share the videos (or snippets of them) on Instagram stories and direct people back to the website. Instagram posts can also recruit people to submit questions either through direct message or through the website's contact form.

The fourth message is inspiring people to create cozy and beautiful homes. Both Linda and Rachel will receive these messages. We'll use Instagram, Facebook and email to reach them. We'll share product information, pictures, prices, seasonal items and limited-time offers. Linda will see more of the high-end products, as well as bath-body and home décor items. Rachel can see some of them as well for aspirational purposes, but Instagram will mainly host low-cost and mid-level plant and home décor products.



Product shots can feature the store as a backdrop, which is a whimsical and inviting place. We can also use customer-submitted photos to show how people are creating beautiful spaces with our products. We want people to invite us into their homes. We want Rachel to believe that she can easily create a comfortable living space. And we want Linda to buy our products to make her home show-worthy.

We recommend using paid social media ads to target our desired demographic on both Facebook and Instagram. We believe this strategy will increase our online presence, increase website traffic and introduce our brand to new people. We want more Rachels to follow us on Instagram and more Lindas to follow us on Facebook, and more of both to subscribe to our emails. It starts with relevant messaging and content on the appropriate channels and then we need them to see it.

The above tactics are examples and not an exhaustive list. We will need to be flexible in our methods and observe what is working and what our people want to hear, and adjust accordingly.

CHANNELS



Instagram is our main channel to reach Rachel with alluring imagery, inspirational and aspirational content, as well as helpful information. We'll establish a seven-day rotation between the four messages (nature, community, help, design). Currently, we post daily and our audience seems to enjoy that frequency. We will use Linktree (or a similar app) to direct people from our profile to various pages on our website. We can also set up paid ads to target people in Rachel's demographic. In addition to posting, we will respond to direct messages, engagement.



Facebook is our primary channel to reach Linda with design inspiration, high-end products, gift ideas and luxury items. We'll showcase seasonal décor, floral arrangements and design ideas. On average we're posting three times per week and we plan to maintain that frequency. Each week will include product posts twice and interior design once. We will link each post to our website for purchase or further engagement, like shopping or subscribing to the newsletter. We can also set up paid ads to target people in Linda's demographic. In addition to posting, we will respond to direct messages, collect feedback and track engagement.



The Grow & Bloom website is the central location to where we'll draw our audience. Our most important pages are **Shop**, **Blog** and **Events**. Online shopping is available and we ship across Canada. We can link to products or categories but we'll need to update the sort and filter features on this page. The blog just launched and we need more content immediately, including: product features, client stories, tutorials and answers to common questions. We want people to browse and search this page, get lost in our world of plants, inspiration and advice. We want people to share it with their friends, leading to organic growth of social followers.



We will send a newsletter by email once per month. Initially, this will go to all subscribers, not just a specific demographic. As our list grows, we can segment our data to better target Rachel, Linda and potential new audiences. Email is our opportunity to combine several messages based on that month's theme (e.g. holiday, special event or season). We can share products, sales, blog or vlog posts, client stories and pictures. It's an opportunity for two-way communication, thus we strongly suggest enabling replies.

TIMELINE

QUARTERLY

6 HOURS/QUARTER

- Capture ideas
- Create marketing materials and seasonal templates

THEMES OR HOLIDAYS			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Valentine's Day	Mother's Day	Gardening	Thanksgiving
Indoor crafts	Easter	Fresh flowers	Christmas

MONTHLY

6 HOURS/MONTH

- Collect statistics from Facebook and Instagram (followers, likes, shares)
- Collect website statistics (hits, shares, conversions)
- Compile and send email newsletter

MESSAGING			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Nature	Nature	Nature	Nature
Help	Community	Community	Community
Design	Help	Help	Design

WEEKLY

8 HOURS/WEEK

- Create and schedule social media posts
- Update blog/vlog content
- Choose sale items

ONLINE POST ROTATION						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
IG: Decor	IG: Plants	IG: Plant Care	IG: Client Decor	IG: Plants	IG: Sales	IG: Plants
FB: Plants	Update Blog	FB: Decor			FB: Other Products	

BUDGET

ANNUAL

Squarespace commerce website hosting		\$410
HypeAuditor (2 reports)*		\$600
Google Analytics (free version)		\$0
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		\$1,010

QUARTERLY

6 hours staff time @ \$20/hour	\$120	\$480
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		\$480

MONTHLY

6 hours staff time @ \$20/hour	\$120	\$1,440
Linktree social links	\$10	\$120
Buffer social post scheduling	\$0	\$0
Workshops (staff time @ \$20 + material)	\$60	\$720
Facebook ads*	\$250	\$3,000
Instagram ads*	\$250	\$3,000
		<hr/>
		\$8,280

WEEKLY

8 hours staff time @ \$20/hour	\$160	\$8,320
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		\$8,320

TOTAL COST FOR ALL ACTIVITIES **\$18,090**

TOTAL COST MINUS OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES **\$11,490**

*OPTIONAL

HypeAuditor provides a profile of our social media audience, including authentic engagement, and demographic information (age, gender, location, interests, ethnicity, etc.). This analytical data is incredibly valuable, but it isn't essential to our success. We have conducted summary research of our existing followers, which provided the personas of our target audiences.

Paid advertising on Facebook and Instagram is expensive but highly effective at reaching specific demographics. We developed a relatively large social media following in a short period, so we don't believe these expenses are mandatory. Targeted ads would, however, grow our followers much faster than organic methods.

SUCCESS

We will use a blend of quantitative, qualitative and observational data to evaluate the success of this plan. Our business objectives are increasing sales, increasing Grow & Bloom's social influence and nurturing a plant community. The measurable goals are a 10% increase in annual revenue, a 15% increase in website traffic and a 20% increase in social media followers after 12 months. We will use our sales accounting system to track revenue, Google Analytics to measure website traffic and our team records of social media followers (if we don't use the HypeAuditor service).



Analytics will determine how our social posts and emails convert into sales. After the first quarter, we will know the type of content that resonates with our audience. We will also know which pages and posts on our website are viewed most, how long people stay and how they engage. Monthly statistics will allow us to compare days and times, weekly averages and traffic after a newsletter or promotion. Because Grow & Bloom is a small business, we can be responsive to our audience's needs and preferences. This type of formative evaluation will allow us to experiment, adapt and gather valuable information about what they want. We can then adjust our communication tactics in response.



This communications plan will continue to take shape over the year based on the above data, in combination with qualitative and observational data from staff. We should record daily foot traffic in the store, as well as the number of calls, messages and emails. All the above will contribute to an ongoing process evaluation where we can continuously improve the plan while considering our audience's experience. One of our main goals is to nurture a community, which is about people finding a group of like-minded individuals with similar interests and desires. To build that, we need to know what they like and provide it.



After 12 months, we'll conduct a summative evaluation to determine if we met the three stated objectives of increasing revenue, increasing website traffic and increasing social media followers. We are confident this communications plan will lead to our success.

CONCLUSION

Grow & Bloom is poised for growth. We have a comparatively large social media following built in three years and timeless products that recently regained popularity. We wonder if our business goals weren't ambitious enough, considering our strong brand presence and service offer for cross-country shipping. We believe this communications plan has identified and prioritized our audience to support growth, not just with revenue, but also with website traffic and social media engagement.

We are committed to experimenting with various tactics and maintaining our small business responsiveness. Our small size is a benefit in nurturing a plant community because of less staff and corporate hurdles, we are more accessible to the public. The faces they see on video and names they read on the blog or emails are the same people they interact with at workshops, on the phone and for customer service. We have the horticultural expertise on staff so we must find ways to communicate that with our audience. Following this plan will position Grow & Bloom for endured success and growth.

