

by John Parkinson

FOR Foundations Success

Spiro Palmer has built a thriving business understanding the importance of value and service

Spiro Palmer provides a good example of serendipity. He started in one direction in his life, and after a chance visit, chose a different path altogether. Originally from Greece, Spiro came to Boulder, Colo., to see his family. He came to the U.S. with very little English skills and an electrical engineering background, and yet, he along with his wife, Angela, built a diversified floral business that serves the ever-growing community of Fort Collins, Colo.

Palmer's Flowers is an expansive retail and design store that personifies business diversification and a strong belief that you must connect with customers and make service a very significant part of their experience.

● HOW DID YOU GET STARTED?

Our family started back in Chicago and has been in the flower business since 1912. When I came over, I did not speak English. I began working with my brothers in Boulder and did some designing. I liked the business, and after six months I decided to stay. I stayed for a couple of years in Boulder, then we started our first shop here in Fort Collins in 1976. In 1982 we moved into our present facility.

● WHAT'S BEEN YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

We started downtown (Fort Collins) and there were 3 to 4 businesses that had been around for years. It was hard to compete, but we were able to work hard, listen to our customers, give good value and service. In the 80s, it was the recession, and trying to finance this facility.

● DISCUSS PARTICULAR BUSINESS STRATEGIES THAT HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL

We wanted a big store and to expand into different areas and we decided to move five miles south from our original store. We bought land and we built our own building. We have had a mission statement from the beginning. It is pretty simple. We always felt we had to make a great working environment for employees. If you have happy employees, you have happy customers. We also want to provide quality unique product with good value. Also included in our overall mission statement is to give back to the community and be profitable.

● WHAT GOALS WOULD YOU STILL LIKE TO ACCOMPLISH?

We would like to expand. Hopefully, by next year, we will have a couple more stores. We went back and bought our old store, and we plan to open another in Loveland, Colo. We have seen a lot of statistics, and our area is going to grow. I believe the population in the next 20 years could increase 50-75%. That's in three or four cities in a 30-mile radius, where we deliver to and we deliver seven days a week.

● WHAT MAKES YOUR BUSINESS UNIQUE?

We take pride in listening to our customers. It's also our relationships with our customers, employees, suppliers, growers, and the overall floral business community. And, we combine those elements with Angela's floral design school (www.palmerschooloffloraldesign.com), which allows us to train our future talented employees! We teach our students a wide array of floral design topics and techniques, and offer a certification.

FAST FACTS

Owner:
Spiro and Angela
Palmer, AIFD

Shop:
Palmer's Flowers
and Decorating
Gallery

Locations:
Fort Collins, Colo.

Year Established:
1976

Interesting Tidbit:

* Michele Adams, Palmer's general manager, says they like to mix up the arrangement selection at the store providing floral designs customers can view on the Web site and then complement it with plants. Adams says this sparks interest and helps bring in additional foot traffic. Additionally, Palmer's has won awards from national publications as well as the local paper.

>>> Spiro Palmer