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Reviewing The Industry

If I had a dollar for every time someone has called me asking for good statistics on the green industry...well, I wouldn't be on a tropical isle, but I would definitely have the new pair of designer shoes I want.

There is just not enough available statistical information about our industry. Yes, the USDA does provide an OK snapshot of sales, crops and size in the largest production states, but what about the states not being surveyed? The Ipsos-Insight Consumer Tracking Study (formerly produced by the American Floral Endowment) tells us about consumer buying patterns across retail outlets and categories but nothing about the trade. There are also a number of sources that provide other pieces of the puzzle like international import and export figures and the Society of American Florists' research showing that flowers make people happy.

Unfortunately, we've never had a good, complete picture of our industry — one that told us what trends were affecting growers or allowed for the differences between large and small growers...until now.

A New Resource

Earlier this year, *GPN* and OFA — An Association Of Floriculture Professionals conducted a survey of growers to try and fill some of the information gap we've had for so long. The survey, dubbed the *GPN/OFA State Of The Industry Report*, targeted growers or grower/retailers only, with representation from all areas of the country and operations of all sizes.


The grower recipients were asked a range of questions — everything from how long they have been in the industry to what were last year's sales numbers. We wanted to gather demographic information because it's a good gauge for the health of the industry and also because it allows for a more in-depth interpretation of data. Because we know how long the respondents' companies have been in business, we can find out if older companies are posting healthier sales than younger companies or if younger companies are planning more growth than older companies.

But for me, the really interesting information came from the questions on industry trends. If there is little available information about industry demographics, there is even less information about industry issues or trends — things like pay by scan and immigration. In fact, to my knowledge, the *GPN/OFA State Of The Industry Report* is the only source for this kind of information right now...maybe that's how we were able to fill a room during the OFA Short Course for our presentation on the Report — people are desperate for this kind of information.

What's Coming

For those of you not at the OFA Short Course, your first glimpse of the information from the *GPN/OFA State Of The Industry* survey will be the initial report that appears on page 37. This overview article will introduce you to the kind of information we collected from growers. It is designed to give you a taste of what we learned and does not go in-depth into the data or explore the cross tabulations. That will come over the next few months as we publish follow-up articles in *GPN* and *GPN Weekly*.

We know numbers are of little importance without their context and the input of actual growers. The articles you'll see this fall and through the winter will focus on a single topic like starting a marketing initiative, tracking industry growth and dealing with immigration. We'll take a deeper look at the data gathered on those topics, including regional and size-of-operation trends, plus we'll talk to growers from around the country to get a personal perspective on the numbers.

Both *GPN* and OFA — An Association Of Floriculture Professionals are committed to gathering the information our industry so desperately needs. Next year, we will be examining the independent garden center industry and in 2008 will return to wholesale growers. We believe this every-other-year approach will allow us to track trends in both industries while building a database of historical information that can be used to predict where the industry is going. 

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Can't wait for all of the State Of The Industry Report to be published throughout the coming months? You can purchase a complete copy for \$125 by E-mailing the *GPN* office at jpaul@sgcmail.com.