

Identifying and meeting the emerging needs of a growing industry requires creative thinking, research, planning (and pivoting) and the courage to take risks. And that's just what these featured industry innovators have demonstrated in their work to breed more sustainable flowers, reduce plastic use, create community, and leverage technology to create new business models and software platforms to move the industry forward.

What inspires and motivates these innovators? What challenges them? Where do they see even more growth opportunities? Floral Management spoke with five industry innovators nominated by their peers, who are focused on changing the floral industry — and often with sustainability in mind.

## INNOVATIONS IN RETAILING

### Jason Bigham

Founder, Penny + Clover, Detroit

**In his words:** "We are a technology company that sells flowers. We are looking at how to use technology to innovate and streamline the buying experience so we can operationalize the business to run without people."

### Innovation

Jason Bigham is rethinking how flowers are sold. His nascent company, Penny + Clover, installed its first specially designed vending machines from HyperVend in Detroit this summer, he says. He's reimagined the floral retail business model, taking inspiration from the burgeoning online flower marketplace and the history of vending machines.

His plan focuses on automation (his goal is to run a business with no employees) and redefining how consumers buy flowers. Working directly with a farm in Ecuador, he's having bouquets shipped ready to sell in the five vending machines he's purchased, which will be placed in high traffic areas (airports, shopping malls, and hospitals). The machines will not only house, display and dispense bouquets but will also provide data on each sale. That information can be used, Bigham says,

to identify sales patterns. "We can change what's in the machine based on what customers are doing," he says.

### Motivation

Bigham's wife, Mary Bigham, wanted to open a flower shop in their hometown. With a background in information technology, point of sales and running his own company, Jason Bigham immersed himself in the floral industry

with sights on higher profit margins, lower overhead, and options to scale the business in multiple ways.

### Challenge

Jason Bigham has taken a page from his competition: online retailers. Like some of them, Penny + Clover's supply chain enables them to ship ready-made bouquets anywhere (an option he is keeping open for future growth). His other challenge has been learning the floral industry and overcoming hurdles such as negotiating space for the vending machines and figuring out how to display a bouquet in a vending machine without a vase and also make it easy for the buyer to carry. (For that he's designed a prototype of a cardboard pentagon case complete with a handle.)

### Future Evolution

As a startup, Jason Bigham's focus is on proving the concept. But he already has plans for growth: not only adding more vending machines but also sharing with others what he's learned about expanding the retail florist business with vending machines.



**REINVENTING RETAIL** Mary and Jason Bigham are founders of Penny + Clover, a new company selling flowers from vending machines. Jason describes the business as a "technology company that sells flowers."