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Tricks and Treats

Making life and work a little better
requires access to the right
selection of goods and services

By Rebecca Ascher-Walsh

Budding Beauty: There's no better training for being in the service industry than toiling away as an assistant. Toby Kassoy, the artist behind the floral company Lillabello, spent years working for an executive at UPN before backing her hobby with a business. She spotted the need thanks to her boss, a man she describes as "a great guy but very high maintenance, so I couldn't just call up some run-of-the-mill place for flowers. In addition to a great product, you also needed great service." Kassoy, who worked her way through college apprenticing in a flower shop, found the encouragement she needed when her father learned he was sick and got to work creating a business plan for her; her doors opened a week after he died. Kassoy has no storefront, instead working out of a monstrous warehouse that caters to clients such as CBS, the CW, Focus Features, Paramount Television, 3 Arts Entertainment and Warner Bros. "An executive can e-mail me at 9 p.m. with an order to go out the next morning and know it's taken care of," says Kassoy, who keeps her business small enough so that she can answer all e-mails and phone calls herself. Kassoy also keeps track of important dates such as anniversaries and birthdays, as well as preferences; she will take pictures of repeat orders upon request to ensure no order is ever duplicated. (www.lillabello.com; 310-337-1130)