

## Counter Intuitive: Smart sales and service tactics

By Tim Huckabee



### Sales Speak

Everyday at the shop means opportunities for upselling, but during the holidays, those opportunities increase tenfold. Make sure you're primed and ready to maximize the sales potential of every customer. Did you know that you already have the most powerful tool to do so? Your voice! It's not only what you say, but also how you say it that influences your sales-counter success.

### Don't Ask

I often hear staff present price as a question, "That's going to be \$50, is that OK?" or "That'll be \$78.99 with delivery, is that OK?" Ouch! I don't think I've ever had a Macy's salesperson ring me up and ask, "If that's OK?" The price is a statement, not a question — otherwise you're subtly telling a customer she can negotiate the cost of an item.

When training flower-shop employees, I hold up a piece of paper, point to someone in the group and ask her name. I show trainees (by drawing) that the name — "Sally Jo Salesperson" — registers as three flat lines, followed by a period because it's a fact that it's her name.

When I repeat her name while raising my voice — turning it into a question — I ask the group if they'd believe that was her name if she was just introducing herself to them. I joke that if I only heard "Sally Jo Salesperson?" I'd wonder if she were in the witness protection program — since she asked her name instead of stating it! This is a good visual sales exercise to demonstrate to staff during your next meeting/training session.

### Powerful Phrases

In addition to using your voice as a tool, two powerful phrases can enhance your sales presentation: "I'd recommend choosing" or "I'd suggest spending \$XX." For example, if a customer orders flowers for her parents' 30th wedding anniversary, the salesperson might say, "Wow, 30 years — that's great! I'd suggest sending our larger arrangement, perfect for the kitchen or dining room table, for \$XX."

When you use these low-key, non-threatening lines, you position yourself as the educated expert, offering the appropriate item and price! The customer follows your lead — and if you sound confident and sure, the sales will be quicker and bigger — I know from 11 years of experience!

**The Bottom Line:** prepare your staff for the holiday rush by demonstrating that when they set the tone, customers will respond positively!

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**Tim Huckabee** is president of Floral Strategies, a one-on-one sales and customer service training company exclusively for florists. Got a customer service challenge? Tell Tim and he'll tackle it in an upcoming column. E-mail [tim@floralstrategies.com](mailto:tim@floralstrategies.com) or call (800) 983-6184.

## Just Browsing Online Sources for the Floral Industry

### [www.Health.Discovery.com](http://www.Health.Discovery.com)

Did you know washing your hands long enough to sing a verse of Yankee Doodle Dandy helps you avoid the flu? Communicative disease experts recommend washing hands with soap for 15 to 30 seconds, according to Discovery Health's site. Learn more flu prevention pointers to share with employees by clicking on "health center" in the left column. Select "cold and flu center" and scroll down for more ways to avoid the flu, including cutting back on alcohol and getting at least seven hours of sleep a night. Post the pointers in high employee-traffic areas as a friendly reminder.

**Don't Miss:** Information on stopping stress in Discovery Health's "stress center," under the "health center" category. If the holidays have your head pounding, take a quick break and focus on your breathing.

### [www.DnB.com](http://www.DnB.com)

Want to get the scoop on a business you're courting for a corporate account? Wondering how your competitors are really doing? Type a company name and location in the search feature on D & B's Small Business Solutions' homepage and dig up the goods on any company, including its credit report (for a fee ranging from \$25 to \$122). Joe and Rhonda Sexton of Flowers By Guenthers used this site as a resource before purchasing their Onalaska, Wis.-business in 1999 (See cover story, p. 22).

**Don't Miss:** Two examples of how small businesses have used information from D & B — it'll help you weave through the product listings to find what will really help your business. Click on "get credit reports" and select "case studies."