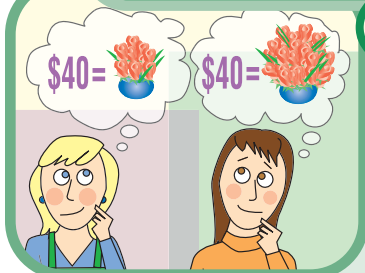


## Counter Intuitive: Smart sales and service tactics

By Tim Huckabee



### The SCENARIO:

A customer calls and says, “I was very disappointed by the flowers — they were much smaller than I expected.”

First, acknowledge and address your customer’s disappointment/anger. Don’t be defensive, be compassionate:

“I’m sorry that you weren’t pleased. Let me locate your order and we’ll take care of this.” Depending on the situation, you may need to replace the order or issue a refund.

But the bigger issue is knowing how to avoid similar unfulfilled expectations in the future.

### The PSYCHOLOGY:

The customer has an idea of how the flowers should look, specifically, in regards to size and visual impact. The two key factors to address are:

Are the customer’s expectations reasonable, considering the budget she has given?

What adjectives are being used by both the customer *and* salesperson to describe the arrangement?

### The SMART RESPONSE:

**1. Suggest a reasonable budget.** When asked why they took an under-budgeted order, salespeople sheepishly tell me, “Well, that’s what the customer said she wanted to spend!”

If you walked into a car dealership, chose a standard model and then told the salesperson that you want the upgraded engine and premium stereo, you’d expect the response to be something like, “Of course we can add those features for \$XX.” Why are we afraid to say that to our customers?

When a customer gives you a price range you know is out of sync with her expectations (and sure to cause a problem order), you must confidently tell her, “We would love to create that design for you. However, based on what you’ve described, I would suggest working within a budget of \$XX to \$XX so we can create exactly what you are expecting.” The customer will appreciate your feedback.

### Make sure you’re speaking the same language.

When the customer says *showy*, *impressive* and *special*, ask, “What exactly do you mean by showy?” The response will guide you to take down the description of the order and price it correctly. You could even show photos of arrangements you consider “showy” and “impressive” or refer to some online if it’s a telephone order.

The bottom line — don’t be afraid to tell your customer that she needs to spend more to get what she wants. That’s better customer service.

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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

### A Site to Behold: [www.bridalguide.com](http://www.bridalguide.com)

Even though you may not be dreaming of tulle and taffeta, some of your most important customers are, and this site can help you walk a mile in their shoes. Skip the “tone your triceps” advice and look for trends and traumas you can help your bridal customers handle. The more you relate to their wedding worries, the more comfortable they’ll be handing you thousands of dollars. Peruse the “fashion & beauty” link to see the latest trends in bridal wear.

**Don’t Miss:** What Bridal Guide tells site visitors about wedding flowers. Click on the “planning & budget” link and select the link for “wedding flowers” in the “wedding professional guide” section. The site recommends that brides look for a florist who “can take your vision and run with it, who offers advice and suggestions but gives you the final say and who commits to working within your style and price range.”

### A Site to Behold: [www.GElighting.com](http://www.GElighting.com)

In the dark about halogen, incandescent or fluorescent lighting? General Electric’s lighting site is a must-see. Click on the “business lighting” section to learn what lighting sources can help spiff up your shop and bring down your electric bills. Don’t know exactly where to use a canopy fixture (walkways and porches) or what type of light a halogen bulb gives (crisp, white light)? Click on the “fixtures” and “products” link for fixture and light source descriptions.

**Don’t Miss:** The Virtual Lighting Designer — here you can select from different lighting styles and see how they light up a virtual retail store. Get there by clicking on the “lighting solution center” link and select “retail store” from the pull-down menu. The virtual designer can tell you the name of the product you need to get a similar look in your store.