

## Counter Intuitive: Smart sales and service tactics

By Tim Huckabee



### Play Your Cards Right

When do you ask your customer for the card message — before or after you discuss product? Waiting until after could cost you hundreds of dollars. Think how often you've sold a \$50 arrangement only to have the customer then give you a \$100 message.

I visit shops weekly that use order entry software from major and independent suppliers. Some automatically prompt for the card message before the product and others can be modified to do so. If you take orders on paper, you're in control of the flow of information. **The challenge:** Talk about the card's message before the flowers. Listen to your customer and you will see an immediate increase in your average order.

### Card Smarts

**Create a conversational transition from the recipient information to the card message.** Use the recipient's name as part of a leading question: "And what would you like to tell (Jennifer / Bill / Dr. Jones) on the card message?"

**Listen for cues to upsell.** Sentiments of Congratulations, Happy Birthday or Happy Anniversary indicate a special event and should be budgeted accordingly. If the customer signs the card with 10 names, 10 people may be splitting the cost. Make sure the arrangement has enough oomph to speak for a large group. By getting the card message before taking the order, you avoid the awkward question, "What occasion is this for?"

**Be prepared to make suggestions based upon the message.** Don't ask, "What do you want to send?" Instead, try, "Would you like a suggestion for your sister's birthday?" Then describe the lovely design you'll create just for her. Budget it at least \$15 above your average sale.

It all comes down to listening. Listen to your customer's tone of voice and what he or she is telling the recipient on the card. Pay attention, practice and see immediate profits.

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## Just Browsing Online Sources for the Floral Industry

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

With a recent cover on Newsweek, search engine Google is getting stronger with more options for specialized searches. Click on "advanced search" to the right of the search bar on Google's homepage to limit your search by language, domain (.com, .org) or date. Click on "all about Google" in the right corner and go to "Google Web search features" to see a list of features including, "I'm feeling lucky," which takes you directly to the first Web page Google returns for your query. For example, if you're searching for Huddart Floral Company in Salt Lake City, type in "Huddart Floral Company" and hit "I'm feeling lucky." Google will bring you directly to the store's Web site, rather than giving you a search engine listing of possible Web sites.

**Don't Miss:** Google's new local search, also listed under "Google Web search features." Users can include a city or ZIP code with their search and Google will show local list-

ings only. After testing the feature for several months, Google launched a beta version of a local search engine, [local.google.com](http://local.google.com), in late March. This could have a significant impact on order gatherers and national advertisers that typically dominate search engine searches.

### [www.Gasbuddy.com](http://www.Gasbuddy.com); [www.GasPriceWatch.com](http://www.GasPriceWatch.com)

The price of fuel is like Ben Affleck's love life, you never know what to expect. Keep up with fluctuating prices and find out the cheapest place to get gas at these sites. Click on the icon of your state at GasBuddy.com for a list of Web sites that provide pricing information for specific gas stations in your region. Or go to GasPriceWatch.com and type in your ZIP code for a quick search of local gas stations and their prices.

**Don't Miss:** The latest on fuel taxes, mileage and consumer resources. Click on "links" in the left column of GasPriceWatch.com