



CALL SERVICE INVESTIGATION

Tim Huckabee goes undercover to report the good, the bad and the "you better hope this wasn't your shop."

The Call

SHOP: A florist in Washington, D.C.

SCENARIO: A customer is confused about online sizes.

EMPLOYEE: Hello. XYZ Flowers. This is Peter, how can I help you?

TIM: Hi Peter. I was going to place an order on your website, but I have a few questions.

EMPLOYEE: OK, what arrangement are you looking at?

TIM: I like this 123-ABC one, but I want to know what the difference is between standard, deluxe and premium?

EMPLOYEE: Well, at the standard level, it's going to look like what you see online, but if you add more money, we can make the whole thing bigger.

TIM: Got it. So, if I go to the premium level it's going to be really nice and special for my wife? In a bigger, better vase?

EMPLOYEE: No. It's still going to be in that same vase but we'll add some more flowers.

TIM: I'm confused. You just said that you can make it bigger if I move up to the next level.

EMPLOYEE: Yeah, it's a bit confusing for customers. The arrangement will get a little bit bigger but the container will be the same.

TIM: Then, does the standard one look nice?

EMPLOYEE: Sure.

TIM: Then I'll take that one.

Peter finished the order and assured me that my wife will receive a pretty arrangement from the shop. He also offered a balloon upon learning that I was celebrating my wife's birthday.

The Analysis

- 👉 Peter did his best to walk me through the size descriptions that often confuse customers, and he offered a balloon as an extra way to celebrate my wife's birthday.
- 👉 When I asked outright about the difference in the sizes, I did not get a clear answer. Instead, Peter alluded to making the entire design/vase bigger. And that's simply not the case. Peter lost a bigger sale because of his inability to easily explain the difference that more money would make to my arrangement.

The Fix

Does this conversation sound familiar? You probably deal with similar questions from customers every day. It's important to understand how customers process what they see online. When they see standard, deluxe and premium (or good, better, best), they often presume the difference between each is more noticeable than it actually is. In many shops I visit, roses are priced at \$5 or more per stem. So, moving from standard to deluxe, which increases the budget by \$10, only means two more roses. That will not result in a noticeable increase in the size of the arrangement, so don't promise that it will. Instead, think about making the shopping experience easier for customers while simultaneously making the selling part easier for you.

Your Action Plan

If you use the standard/deluxe/premium price and size guides with customers, ramp up your description with this simple, yet powerful approach: When asked, "What is the difference between the sizes?" (or when the customer tells you that he is looking at an arrangement on your site), explain, "That design is priced from \$40 (the base price) to \$60 (the highest price), and the closer we get to the \$60 (highest price), the more flowers we can add for a fuller look!" That's a smart, easy, clever way to help customers. I use it all the time because customers understand how their money translates into flowers and what really happens when they add more money to the arrangement! 💐

Bottom line: Make improved customer service your goal for 2013 and start by making shopping easier for your customers!

Tim Huckabee, an international flower shop sales and customer service trainer, is founder and president of Floral Strategies LLC and the American Institute of Floral Sales Experts (AIFSE), a retail floral sales certification program. If you would like Tim to test call your shop for this column, contact him at 800 983-6184 or tim@floralstrategies.com.

Start 2013 off on the right foot and join us Tuesday, Jan. 15 for Valentine Boot Camp 2013 – new ideas, plans and designs to make your holiday better organized and more profitable. Register at special SAF-member rates at www.fsw1301.eventbrite.com.