

Speed TRAINING FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Fast track your team into FLORAL EXPERTS!

BY TIM HUCKABEE, FSC

You're over the biggest hurdle — having managed to fill the schedule with new hires for the holidays. Now comes the hard work: training them to hit the ground running.

That's where I step in. My name is **Tim Huckabee**, and I own **FloralStrategies**, a company dedicated to training staff how to sell flowers quickly, efficiently, accurately and confidently.

Twenty years ago, I launched FloralStrategies to bring an easier way of selling to the industry. I have worked with more than 6,000 floral retailers across the globe, and in this article, I share highlights of my plans to make your holiday season more profitable.

For your new or temporary seasonal floral employees to be most productive and efficient, they need a strong grounding in 1) how customers shop for flowers, 2) what they expect in terms of service, and 3) how they typically act. Here are five steps to training staff how to sell flowers.

STEP 1: Give them the right mind-set.

A big portion of my training program involves giving staff perspective on selling a luxury purchase — one that they may have never bought themselves. This is a critical step in ensuring that you'll have productive staff, not just clerks. *At the end of this article, you'll see a link to a recorded webinar of my training for your staff to watch (short and sweet yet powerful).* A core concept to convey is that “we're not selling flowers or plants; we're selling emotions and sentiments.” Furthermore, I reinforce the idea that customers automatically look at your staff as experts, and they need to leverage that position to sell bigger.

STEP 2: Explain the customer patterns.

Though many customers know exactly what they want, most don't and wander into a floral department to browse or grab a quick gift. Because they perceive your staff as experts, they often ask, “What do you think?” and “What

do you recommend.” The best guidance you can impart is to tell staff to pepper their customer conversations with these phrases: “I recommend ...” or “I suggest...” Shoppers typically respond by following the “expert's” advice and buy what is recommended or suggested.

STEP 3: Give them basic sales skills.

If I were to boil my entire training process down to two pieces of advice, they would be: 1) Listen to customers so you can suggest or recommend appropriate items, and 2) Don't be afraid to hear “No” — which simply means “I don't like that option or price; show me something else.” I elaborate on these in the recorded webinar that is mentioned at the end of this article.

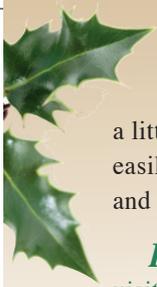
STEP 4: Emphasize the “finishing touches” (add-ons).

You can easily increase revenue by training staff to always offer an add-on, aka a “finishing touch,” to each sale — a much nicer term, don't you think? Instead of asking, “Would you like anything else?” play the role of the expert and guide customers. “As a finishing touch, I can add a velvet bow to your poinsettia; they're just \$5” or “As a finishing touch, I can attach a ‘Get Well Soon’ balloon to the flowers; they're only \$5.”

STEP 5: Reinforce and manage.

The most productive flower departments have managers or supervisors who continually educate staff on product (make sure they can pronounce what they are selling!) by giving them basic knowledge to answer customers' questions (How long will they last? How much water does that need?).

Review the key components of the sales process so staff feel comfortable making suggestions, upselling and offering “finishing touches.” The bottom line is that with



a little extra time and energy spent on your part, you can easily see an increase in both your department's average sale and the satisfaction level of your customers.

For additional training resources, visit floralstrategies.com/samples, where you will find years' worth of articles I have written and sales tips for your team.



To access the webinar on sales basics, visit floralstrategies.com/superfloral.



Tim Huckabee, FSC, is president of FloralStrategies, a company that provides on-site sales and customer-service education to retail florists. Contact him by e-mail at: tim@floralstrategies.com, or visit www.floralstrategies.com.

FloralStrategies Celebrates 20 Years

The airlines *love* Tim Huckabee. Since 1997, when he started **FloralStrategies**, Tim has journeyed more than 2 million miles by plane, let alone miles traveled in rental cars.

Why so much travel? To train florists to serve better and sell bigger, one shop at a time.

Conservatively speaking, Tim guesstimates that he has visited more than 6,000 flower shops on four continents. And when not jetting around the globe, he continues to educate retailers with monthly webinars on topics ranging from wedding sales to staff manage-

ment, holiday boot camps to design trends.

In 2012, Tim started a new division of his company, **TOTALtraining**, to give ongoing support to his customers by making secret-shopper calls to their staff and providing additional coaching.

Tim regularly speaks at regional and national conferences for organizations like the **Society of American Florists (SAF)** and the **British Florist Association (BFA)**. In addition, to keep in tune with consumers' ever-changing habits, Tim spends every busy floral holiday working at a different flower shop, answering the phones and taking orders, listening and learning. sf






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 Toll Free: 800.504.3347
www.bottomleys.com