

## BUSTED BIRTHDAY?

> What if I told you your staff could easily make bigger sales with just a few tweaks to how they talk to customers on the phone? That's the heart of this new column.

Each issue in this space, I'll be going undercover for Floral Management readers — calling a flower shop to pose as a customer ready to order by phone — then sharing high-lights and giving you and your staff a chance to listen to and learn from the actual phone call. Every column will contain five elements: **The Opportunity**, the scenario I used when making the call; **Thumbs Up**, where I elaborate on strong points of the call; **Thumbs Down**, where I examine mistakes and missteps; and **The Takeaway**, which includes a few bullet points to help your team learn from the call. You can also go online to [safnow.org/TimsCalling](http://safnow.org/TimsCalling) to listen to the **Recording** of the actual call, so you and your staff can hear elements that don't always translate into print (including tone of voice and conversation pacing), plus further commentary from me.

### The Opportunity: A Milestone Birthday

I posed as a devoted brother calling from a distance to place an order for my sister's 40th birthday. I requested delivery to her at work at a local hospital and dropped some important clues, including a reference to a big family on the card message: "Happy 40th birthday! We love you. We miss you. Love, all your family in the Big Apple." I did not mention a price, nor did I state that I had anything in mind — in fact, I told the salesperson explicitly that I knew little about flowers and was looking for her guidance.

### Thumbs Up: Friendly Service

The rep asked about my sister's favorite color and was thorough in taking delivery and sender information, including my email address. She asked if I wanted to personalize the sale with a balloon, which is important: Never assume that customers will remember finishing

touches on their own. The clerk had a friendly and engaging phone personality.

### Thumbs Down: Poor Listening Skills

In addition to asking my sister's favorite color, she also asked for her favorite flower. If the customer knows that information (and that's a big if), you've tied yourself to a flower that may be hard to source, when you could have been designing from flowers available in your cooler. Instead of listening to my desire to send "special flowers," she started me at the lowest price point: "The small can typically range from \$30 to \$50." When I was offered a slightly higher price range (\$45 to \$65) and still expressed some hesitancy that the gift would be special enough, the saleswoman told me it would be "a nice size, not too small." That comment was vague and confusing. Better to say, "If you want to make more of a statement, consider spending another \$25 to \$35." Finally, she hung up without running my credit card, a sloppy mistake that wastes time. (If the card doesn't go through, she'll have to track the customer down later.)



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### The Takeaway: Underserved and Undersold

What happened in this call is all too common in our industry: A customer ready to spend money sought advice and professional guidance but instead was underserved and undersold. Though friendly, the employee missed an opportunity to make a bigger sale and a better impression on the customer. Correct these issues in your store by:

- **Coaching your team to make an appropriate suggestion based on the occasion and number of people** the flowers represent.
- Stressing that **customers are the ones paying for the flowers, not your staff**. No one should sell based on their own budget.
- Talking to your employees about **capturing an email address from every customer**. Also, be **consistent about offering those finishing touches**. 🌸



### The Recording

Visit [safnow.org/TimsCalling](http://safnow.org/TimsCalling) to listen to the full call with your staff. Ask them to critique the call for strengths and weaknesses and then share my comments. Start this interaction with your team every month and you'll see sales rise, mistakes decrease and a noticeable increase in customer satisfaction.

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### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

How does your staff REALLY treat customers? Call (800) 983-6184 to volunteer your shop for a free Tim's Calling undercover shopping call, anonymity guaranteed. (Retail value: \$50.)