

HURRY UP AND SLOW DOWN!

The members of my staff seem to get so easily flustered (and make more mistakes) when they feel that customers are in a hurry. Help!

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A: **It's all in their heads.** I have watched hundreds of orders being taken and listened to scores of recorded sales calls but have yet to encounter a customer tapping her finger on the counter and yelling, "Hurry up!" Generally speaking, customers will give us the time to complete their order and give them good service. Yet what Deb has noticed at her shop is nothing unique — I hear this complaint from staff every week in flower shops, who say they feel rushed by the customer. The irony, as Deb stated, is that when we try to speed through an order in the name of "helping" a customer, we often end up missing key points and/or making mistakes.

So what's the problem? It's not about the customer, it's about the employee's perception (or misperception) of the customer. We fear customers and are afraid to take control of a phone or walk-in sale. Not just in the big-city shops, where you might presume there's more hustle and bustle; this happens everywhere and with every type of employee: newbies and veterans, young and old.

Is there a way to fix it? Of course! By simply changing your thinking and perspective you won't be crippled by the misconception that every customer is going to hang up or walk out unless you rush through their order. Here are the most common "hurry up" situations I see and how you can handle them better:

You Can't Find the Customer in the System

Take a deep breath and try again. It's critical that you locate the customer so you don't create a duplicate account or accidentally use someone else's information. Say, "Bear with me while I find you in our system — I want to make sure we have all of your updated information."

When you do find the account make sure that you have complete information (including the email address: "which email address should I use to send delivery confirmation?") and confirm that it is up to

date, "Are you still at 944 Laurel Avenue?" Also, be sure to alert your manager or the office when you find duplicate accounts!

The Customer Blurts Out the Order Before You Can Speak

"This is Mrs. Super Important, and I need to have pink tulips delivered to Laura Baldwin at General Hospital in room 701 by noon today, can you do that?" Think calming thoughts and just follow the pattern that I have been preaching in my columns for years: "Of course I can help you! First, have you sent flowers with us before?" Go on to find her in the system (see above) and then just follow the screen by taking delivery information, card message, etc. If you start jumping around the screen trying to keep up with her, instead of following the professional pattern, *you will make mistakes.*

The Customer Makes You Feel Pressed for Time

Acknowledge the customer, but don't get intimidated! "Bear with me please, I want to make sure we have this exactly right, so I'm just double-checking your order," or "We're nearly done, I appreciate your patience."

You can even joke about the software, "I'm not the quickest typist but I want to make sure I cover all the details. Thanks for your patience!"

The Bottom Line: No customer has ever said, "You're taking too long, just cancel the order!" 🌸



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Got a sales or service challenge? Tell Tim about it, and he'll tackle it in an upcoming column. Email tim@floralstrategies.com, or call him, (800) 983-6184.

Cheat Sheet

Don't:

Get flustered and skip essential steps.

Do Say:

"I appreciate your patience, I want to make sure your order is 100 percent accurate!"

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