



No. 2

This is the second in a 10-part series aimed at empowering Floral Management readers to build a foundation month by month, sale by sale, for higher sales, more confident employees and happier customers.



## FIRST IMPRESSIONS DO COUNT!

> Last month, we kicked off this new column by discussing the need to hold regularly scheduled meetings with staff to foster a stronger sales culture in your shop.

This month, we're focusing on improving how your staff members greet and engage customers on the sales floor. I regularly hear that walk-in traffic has dropped dramatically this decade. Even more reason, I feel, that we need to do a better job of making a strong impression on shop visitors.

### Let's begin with language

**What's Happening:** What do YOU say to customers as they enter the shop? I ask because inevitably staff will follow your lead, either actively or passively. The worst opening question (ironically, the most commonly used in flower shops) is, "How can I help you?" I want to scream in response, "You can help me by showing me around your flower shop, asking intelligent questions and making it easier for me to shop here!"

**What Should Happen:** We know that most customers enter the store either on a whim or without specific flowers in mind. Therefore, your staff needs to be taught by you to interact with and listen to customers. When you set the right tone from the beginning, you will make bigger sales, guaranteed. As the owner/manager, you must instill in your staff the fact that customers want to be engaged and listened to, not just asked the same bland questions that we've been using for the past 100 years!

There was a famous study done at UCLA by Dr. Albert Mehrabian that states that face-to-face communication is 55 percent body language, 38 percent tone of voice and 7 percent words. Stunning, right? Think about those numbers in terms of the customer experience in your store. When someone walks in, do they see staff behind the counter checking Facebook

on their phones, OR are they happily greeted by someone walking toward them? What do your customers hear? Is it a sheepish, "How can I help you?" or a more engaging "What's your special reason for flower shopping today?"

**Still Skeptical?** Historically, I have found flower shop staff to be shy about interacting with customers, but why? This is a conversation you need to have with your team. Here are some talking points that I bring out when I do on-site training.

- **You can never profile a customer based on appearance** since you will often get the opposite result. For example, there's a tendency to offer lower price points to older customers based on the assumption that they don't want to spend much and/or are on a fixed income. Unbeknownst to you, that customer pulled up in a new Mercedes and heads to Boca for the winter! Sell her an item based on your conversation and her needs.
- **Customers will not run screaming from a high price.** This is a crazy myth that is perpetuated in our industry; yet in 25 years of waiting on customers, I have probably had only 10 people hang up or walk out upon hearing a price they did not like. Customers are smart — they'll let you know if they don't want to spend that much. All they're really saying is "Give me another option or price point." 🌿

**Tim Huckabee, FSC, is president of FloralStrategies, which provides customer service, sales and POS system training to retail and wholesale florists. [tim@floralstrategies.com](mailto:tim@floralstrategies.com)**



### COMING NEXT ISSUE:

The art of the telephone sale, FloralStrategies style.

**"When someone walks in, do they see staff behind the counter checking Facebook on their phones, or are they happily greeted by someone walking toward them?"**



### NOW HEAD ONLINE!

This column continues at [floralstrategies.com/SAF](http://floralstrategies.com/SAF), where you will find more on **selling face-to-face** along with some **customer service games** to play with your staff to get them more comfortable with selling on the floor. Plus, visit [safnow.org/moreonline](http://safnow.org/moreonline) for a video primer on this topic.