

CALL SERVICE INVESTIGATION

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

Tune in LIVE: CSI: Flower Shop Webinar on April 29, as Huckabee makes Mother’s Day calls. www.safnow.org/webinars

The Call

- SHOP:** An Indianapolis flower shop
- SCENARIO:** A customer sends flowers to his secretary
- EMPLOYEE:** Good morning, 123 Flowers, Angie speaking. How can I help you?
- TIM:** Hi, Angie. I want to send some flowers to my secretary.
- EMPLOYEE:** Of course. It’s too late for today. Can we send them tomorrow?
- TIM:** That’s fine.
- EMPLOYEE:** What’s her name?
- TIM:** It’s Karen Walker and we’re at XYZ Company on 123 Main St.
- EMPLOYEE:** Do you know what you want to send?
- TIM:** Nope. Give me some ideas.
- EMPLOYEE:** We have a great special, it’s a smiley face mug filled with bright flowers. It’s \$29.95.
- TIM:** I guess so. Will that look good? She’s been a big help this year.
- EMPLOYEE:** Sure. It’s nice for a desk.
- TIM:** Let’s do it. Can you add a balloon?
- EMPLOYEE:** Yes. I’ll find a Thank You balloon for you.

Angie finished the order and promised to have the flowers delivered early the next morning. She politely closed the transaction by thanking me for my call.

The Analysis

- 👍 Angie was friendly.
- 👎 When I said, “Give me some ideas,” Angie presented one option, at the lowest available price point.
- 👎 When I said, “she’s been a big help this year,” she failed to offer an upgrade.
- 👎 I had to ask for a balloon.

The Fix

You wouldn’t let a friend stumble into a black-tie wedding wearing jeans, so don’t allow your customers to flub a gift opportunity with flowers or plants that are not appropriate for the occasion.

Angie meant well but she did not give me the level of service I deserved. She simply did not pay attention to what I was saying and missed many easy “indicators.” Her inattention cost her shop a much higher sale. Even worse, if the customer isn’t happy with the paltry design that shows up on his secretary’s desk, he’s unlikely to revisit the shop in the future.

Let’s look at how Angie could have better handled her responses:

1. When I doubted her suggestion and asked, “Will that look good?” Angie should have said, “It will look good but if you really want to make an impression, I recommend...” At that point, she should have followed up with higher-end options and upsells.
2. When I volunteered, “She’s been a big help this year,” Angie should have snapped to attention: Big help means big money (not a \$29.95 mug of flowers). Was I speaking Klingon?
3. It was Angie’s job to sell me a balloon; don’t make customers do your job.

Pay close attention to your customers this Administrative Professionals Week. Friendly service — saying “good morning” and “thank you” — is not the only element of good service. Train your staff to identify individual “indicators” such as the card message, the customer’s demeanor and the average sales history (when available). You’ll discover many opportunities to offer bigger designs and higher price points. But you have to act on those opportunities. Customers are relying on you, the expert, to tell them what they need.

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.

Join us on Tuesday, April 16, for The Mother’s Day Boot Camp 3.0 webinar and you will dramatically increase sales. Register with SAF-member rates, www.fsw1303.eventbrite.com.