

## THE LIMITATIONS OF 'NICE'

> This month, I called a shop in the Midwest, the traditional home of "nice," to play the role of a customer who wanted to express extreme gratitude to a doctor for "life-changing" back surgery. Did the clerk live up to the stereotype and smother me with "niceness"? Was she empathetic to my situation? Read on and then listen for yourself (along with your staff)!

Speaking of good care, as the self-appointed floral sales doctor, I want to make sure your staff is getting its monthly dose of "Vitamin Tim" by listening to the recording of the call I write about here. You can download or play it directly at [safnow.org/TimsCalling](http://safnow.org/TimsCalling).

### The Opportunity: Life-Changing Thanks

I told the employee that I had just undergone major surgery and wanted to express my gratitude with flowers. I was the ideal customer, stating I had no clue about flowers and needed her to guide me toward something appropriate for my needs and proportionate to the sentiment I was trying to convey. This truly was a golden opportunity to sell me anything. (Perhaps that triple spike orchid plant that needs to be moved out?) I even said, "I just want to leave it to you."

### Thumbs Up: Nice... But Nothing More

She was polite. Beyond that, there is absolutely nothing she did right on this call. Even her politeness touches on a huge issue that is a cancer on the retail floral industry: the misconception that because your staff is friendly or polite, they are giving good customer service. That is not the case. (Just listen to the recording of this call to understand my point!)

### Thumbs Down: No Empathy, Poor Service

The employee answered the phone without giving her name and then simply did not listen

to me or the numerous cues, both subtle and obvious, that I presented. She asked the insane question, "Do you have a price range you want to spend?" and then started me at \$50 after I explained that I wanted to acknowledge the doctor's epic, life-altering care. While she was polite, she never connected with me by stating, for example, "That's so good to hear about your recovery" or "Let's send the doctor something spectacular" — the kind of professional comments that would have provided her with an easy way to justify offering a larger design/higher price point. It gets worse: She also rubbed the delivery cost in my face, saying, "There is going to be a \$10 delivery fee...Is that OK?" (What if a customer says no to that foolish question? Do they get a 50 percent discount at your shop?) I even had to prompt her for an add-on, asking, "Is there anything else I can add, like a 'thank you' balloon?"



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### The Takeaway: Train Your Staff to Be the Experts

Customers like independent retail florists: They enjoy calling us and seeking our professional advice. There is an unwritten covenant that exists between the two groups: Customers often proclaim their ignorance of our product and ask for guidance, assuming we are listening, paying attention and offering what's best for our needs. Too often, as in this call, we sell from our own pockets and operate under the unfounded fear that, upon hearing a higher price, a customer will hang up or storm out. It does not happen. But what does take place is that customers follow our lead and buy what we tell them to buy — and what we suggest is frequently way too low. Ever wonder why your website sales are so much higher than your store and phone sales? The website holds up our part of the deal and shows customers higher price points. And they pick them. Your staff can do the same. 🌿



### The Recording

You're only half-done learning from this column. Next step, gather your staff 'round a store computer, read this column to them and then play the recording of my call to this shop by visiting [safnow.org/TimsCalling](http://safnow.org/TimsCalling). Ask your team for feedback on what they heard and have them talk about how they can make better sales moving forward.

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**Tim Huckabee, FSC**, is the president of [FloralStrategies.com](http://FloralStrategies.com), which teaches ultimate customer care to retail and wholesale florists. [tim@floralstrategies.com](mailto:tim@floralstrategies.com)



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