

CALL SERVICE INVESTIGATION

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

LISTEN IN as Huckabee makes birthday, anniversary and sympathy calls, Sept. 10. Not available? Get the DVD and train your staff all month long! www.safnow.org/webinars

The Call

SCENARIO: A customer complains about rose prices
SHOP: A florist in Pittsburgh, Pa.

EMPLOYEE: Hello, XYZ Florist, this is Jane, how can I help you?
TIM: I need to order some roses for my daughter. Can you tell me how much a dozen costs?
EMPLOYEE: A dozen roses with filler and greens is \$69.99.
TIM: Whoa! That’s crazy! I was just at the grocery store and saw roses for \$19.99. Why are you charging so much?
EMPLOYEE: I’m sorry but those are our prices. I could do a half dozen if you want for \$39.99...
TIM: No, I want a dozen. I just can’t believe you charge that much. I see roses growing all over the place. That just seems like a LOT of money.
EMPLOYEE: I’m really sorry but there’s nothing I can do about the price except to offer you fewer roses or to maybe make an arrangement with some roses in it.
TIM: Ughhh. Well, I guess I don’t really have a choice. I’ll just have to pay that price — but they better be the best, freshest roses you have!
EMPLOYEE: I’m sorry that you’re upset but I’ll make sure these roses are great.
TIM: I hope so since I am going to see them tomorrow!

Jane talked to me about color choices, vase options and finished the order in a smooth manner.

The Analysis

👍 Jane kept her cool even when I started to bark at her. Good job!

👎 Jane apologized for the rose prices three times. Big mistake. Who else apologizes for charging reasonable prices for their product or service? Hairdressers? No. Plumbers? Nope. Lawyers? Never. Only the floral industry actually apologizes to customers for what we do. Crazy, huh?

The Fix

Embrace the idea of educating customers instead of apologizing ; it strengthens your position as the professional.

On Prices Let the customer make their comments about how they have seen better prices elsewhere, even at other flower shops. Then, take a deep breath and educate them: “I don’t know what other flower shops charge for roses (or orchids, or whatever) but we pride ourselves on the quality of our flowers and plants, and we guarantee their freshness. Of course, we have other options too, let me show you our wonderful lisianthus...”

Explaining that you don’t know what the competition is offering is a polite way of saying that you don’t really care, since this is not an episode of “Let’s Make a Deal.” At the same time, you’re professionally standing by your product and prices and diplomatically letting the customer know there are lots of other options to suit his budget.

On Policy When customers don’t like your replacement policy or delivery fees, stand your ground and explain but don’t apologize. For example, “It is our store policy to pick up an arrangement when a customer claims that it’s completely dead, since we need to find out what happened, as I am sure you can understand. Of course, we can coordinate to pick up those flowers when it’s most convenient for you.”

“Yes, we do charge \$XX for delivery to that ZIP code. However, if it’s more convenient for you, we can have the arrangement ready for pick up or I can send your wife a smaller design.”

No, you’re not being rude, curt or abrasive by using any of these approaches. Instead, you’re simply stating your company’s policy for the customer’s better understanding. It’s what’s done in every other retail environment, so why not at your store too?

Bottom line: Educate customers so they’ll respect you, your store and our industry! 🌿

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.

A note from Tim: It was great to meet so many readers of this column and hear your feedback at the SAF Growth Solutions conference in June. I hope to meet even more of you at the SAF Phoenix 2013, Sept. 18-21. Please come meet me and attend my workshop, CSI: Flower Shop LIVE, and hear real CSI calls being made.