



## CALL SERVICE INVESTIGATION

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

### The Call

- SHOP:** A florist in Portland, Ore.  
**SCENARIO:** A customer needs help ordering a plant.
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- EMPLOYEE:** Good Morning, ABC Flowers.  
**TIM:** Hi. I’m sorry, I did not catch your name.  
**EMPLOYEE:** I’m Carrie.  
**TIM:** Hi Carrie. I always like to know who’s helping me. Anyway, I need your help with a plant for my sister’s office.  
**EMPLOYEE:** Were you thinking about a desk plant or floor plant?  
**TIM:** Hmmmm. What are my options?  
**EMPLOYEE:** We have great green and flowering plants like azalea, dieffenbachia and schefflera starting at \$39.99.  
**TIM:** I’m not sure what any of those plants look like. Can you just pick the best one for me?  
**EMPLOYEE:** Of course! We’ll do a nice desk plant for the \$39.99 price.  
**TIM:** OK. Let me give you delivery information...

Carrie completed my order, during which I gave her the card message, “Congratulations on the big promotion, we are all so proud of you.” She promised to send care instructions along with the plant so my sister would be able to enjoy her gift for years to come.

### The Analysis

- 👍 Carrie came across as perky and energetic — a big plus in my playbook. Mentioning the care instructions that would arrive with the plant was also a plus.
- 👎 Carrie started out on the wrong foot by not giving her name. Unless you have some doozie of a name, like Rumpelstilskin, identify yourself on the phone — it’s a simple way to make the shopping experience more personal for customers, and will go a long way toward making them think of you first next time they need flowers.
- 👎 Carrie rattled off a list of plant names, assuming I would recognize them. She meant well, but we all know what happens when you assume!
- 👎 By not asking for the card message earlier in the call, Carrie missed the opportunity to be able to recommend a plant based on the scope of the occasion — and surely this one would have deserved a ‘Congratulations’ balloon or keepsake card and, given that it was given by a group, a higher price tag.

### The Fix

Here are the simple, smart guidelines I teach when I train at retail flower shops every week. Read, review and implement this plan and you’ll see a big boost to your plant sales, I promise!

### Know your merchandise.

Do a visual inventory every day to know what kind of green and flowering plants you have available in the store. Make sure you understand their basic care instructions and if they can be transplanted outside. For example, I typically see ornamental varieties of azaleas in flower shops, not the hardy variety that many customers think can be planted outside. When a customer mentions *transplanting outside* please explain the type of plants you carry and offer to order a hardy one for them! Don’t disappoint customers because you don’t have the facts!

### Sell appropriate to the occasion.

Listen to the customer, read the card message, pay attention to the average sale and suggest a plant size and price based on those factors. When I learn that the plant is being sent to celebrate the opening of a new business or as condolence on behalf of a large group I always start at a higher price point, stating, “For such a special occasion, I recommend...” or “On behalf of such a large group I suggest...” You should also take the extra step of asking about lighting conditions.

### Jazz it up.

Offer to upgrade the standard basket or pot to a special ceramic container. Offer to upgrade an orchid plant from a single spike to a double or triple spike.

Plant or orchid food is a great extra add-on too. I also see many shops charging extra for adding fresh cut flowers to potted plants!

**Bottom line:** Make a resolution to sell plants better in 2013! 🌱

**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](mailto:tim@floralstrategies.com).

Learn to take better pictures of plants for your website by ordering a copy of the FloralStrategies Web Photography Workshop webinar at [www.fsw1212r.eventbrite.com](http://www.fsw1212r.eventbrite.com)

Want to hear what happens during Huckabee’s CSI:Flower Shop calls? Join in on the next CSI:Flower Shop Webinar, “Prom and Corsage Sales,” **March 15**.