

**LISTEN IN** as Huckabee makes Valentine's Day calls on unsuspecting florists, Jan. 14, 1 pm EST. Not available? Sign up anyway: You can access the webinar and train your staff all month long! [www.safnow.org/webinars](http://www.safnow.org/webinars).



## The Call

- SHOP:** A florist in Seattle
- SCENARIO:** A customer wants to order an arrangement found on Pinterest
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- EMPLOYEE:** ABC Flower Shop, Hailey speaking, how can I help you?
- TIM:** Hi Hailey. I would like to order some flowers I found online for my wife.
- EMPLOYEE:** Of course. What's the name of design you like?
- TIM:** I'm not really sure since my wife saw it on Pinterest. I just figured you could copy it.
- EMPLOYEE:** Well I can certainly try. Where did you find it? (Tim directs her to the page.)
- TIM:** So how much will that cost?
- EMPLOYEE:** Ummm. That arrangement is all peonies and we usually don't have them now. I could call and check but you're probably looking at \$200 or more. They're kinda expensive.
- TIM:** That's crazy! No way! I don't understand why they'd be so much and why you don't have those!
- EMPLOYEE:** Peonies are typically a spring flower and, even then, they're about \$8 a stem at our shop. Was there any other design you found that you liked?
- TIM:** No, I'm just going to have to find another florist to do it for me. Thanks.
- EMPLOYEE:** Sorry about that!

## The Analysis

- 👉 Hailey made a point to find the design online rather than relying on my description (since customers know so very little about flowers).
- 👉 Hailey shot me down from the start by telling me that my first choice flower, my wife's favorite, would be hard to source.
- 👉 She made matters worse by categorizing peonies as "kinda expensive." (Let the customer be the judge of that!)
- 👉 Paralyzed by my out-of-season choice of luxury-priced flowers, Hailey failed to offer me an alternative.

## The Fix

More and more customers pre-shop online and then call your store (typically with unrealistic expectations). Rather than dreading the call (or, worse yet, sabotaging it), view it as an opportunity to educate customers. The next time you get a call from someone who wants the huge vase of purple callas that he found online for \$39.99 and delivered by a Unicorn, take a deep breath and follow this plan.

**Confirm the Image** Get in front of a computer to access the exact image that your customer is referencing. Don't rely on his or her description or your own hunch; deal with the facts.

**Confirm What You Have (Not What You Don't)** Don't just blurt out that the flower or plant is out of season. Doing so may make the customer feel dumb for not knowing that information. Instead, offer alternatives that you know are available. Hailey could have said, "Those peonies are gorgeous, and we usually start to see them in the late spring. Today I have these flowers in the same rich, red color or those flowers which also have a wonderful fragrance."

**Confirm Price; Don't Presume Price Sensitivity** Customers have no idea of what flowers cost until we educate them. Hailey should have said, "Peonies are a premium flower, typically \$8 a stem. In order to recreate the arrangement in the photo, I recommend spending between \$200 and \$250." Remember, it's going on the customer's credit card, not yours.

**Bottom line:** The Internet is here to stay, so learn to work with it as part of your sales process. 🌱

**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)

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