

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 to a CSI Flower Shop Webinar on July 9, as Huckabee makes sympathy/funeral calls. www.safnow.org/webinars

The Call

SCENARIO: Customer needs flowers for his office space
SHOP: A big flower shop in Maine

EMPLOYEE: Good afternoon, 123 Flower Shop. This is Karen.

TIM: Hi, Karen. I am in the process of opening a new office downtown and I would like to talk to you about flowers for the lobby.

EMPLOYEE: Sure, we can do that. We make deliveries to lots of business in town. Do you know what you’re going to need?

TIM: Not really, which is why I thought I would call the experts. I’m thinking about a big arrangement for the front office and maybe something for our conference room when we have client meetings, but I’m not sure.

EMPLOYEE: OK. When do you need these? And do you have a color scheme or budget to work with?

TIM: Again, I was hoping that you could give me some ideas. Is there any way to have someone come and look at my space?

EMPLOYEE: Usually Carol would handle that but she’s off today. Can I have her call you back tomorrow?

TIM: That would be fine. Have her call 555-1212 and ask for Jennifer, the office manager.

Karen took the rest of my contact information and assured me that Carol would reach us tomorrow.

The Analysis

👍 Karen seemed eager to help and reassured me that the store is experienced in handling corporate work.

👎 Karen heard my questions but did not take the time to *listen* to my situation. I mentioned more than once that I had no idea what I needed, yet she twice asked me what I wanted. Ughhhh! This was not just a call for a few quick office decorations; it was the potential start of a long and profitable relationship between businesses!

The Fix

I can’t remind you too often to really *listen* to customers, because every conversation has hidden opportunities for bigger sales and more business. This call was flush with them. When I wait on customers, I operate on two levels. On the surface I am friendly, engaging and attentive, helping customers make the right choices.

Below the surface, I always think about what additional and future business I can get from this customer. When a potential customer calls asking about flowers for the office, they are reaching out to you, the professional, to serve them, so don’t drop the ball — make the best first impression you possibly can! The following is an outline of what I do when presented with the same type of opportunity that I gave Karen. (If these opportunities don’t present themselves often enough, read the May issue of *Floral Management*, which includes several articles on how to drum up more corporate business: www.safnow.org/floralmanagement.)

Connect with the customer. Congratulate the caller on the new business and/or welcome him to the city or your part of town. Doing so illustrates that you are paying attention.

Offer your services BEFORE the customer asks. Even when I hear the customer asking for just one lobby design, I still suggest having a designer visit the location. Why? Offering to send someone out to help choose the proper colors, flowers and style sends a positive message to the new customer. That on-site visit can often lead to a bigger initial sale, too. A visit also helps to ensure that the design is going to be exactly what the customer expects. Additionally, once at the location, the ‘expert’ can scope out the space for further opportunities, either talking to the customer on the spot about plants and other arrangements or communicating that to someone back at the shop to incorporate into a formal proposal.

Explain the full range of services. This is a *perfect* opportunity to become the full-service florist for this new client. During the on-site visit, or in the follow-up call after the proposal is sent, this customer should learn how they can rely on your shop for decorating for holidays, local deliveries of flowers, plants, gift baskets etc., and the connections to have wonderful floral gifts sent worldwide. You’ll be astonished at how pleased the client is to hear that their local florist can offer them so many options and services.

Bottom line: Don’t just take today’s order, search for opportunities for future business. 🌿

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 Friday, July 19, for our latest webinar, **Management 101** for flower shop owners. Learn more at www.fsw1306.eventbrite.com, and register at special SAF-member rates.