



## 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, [www.safnow.org/webinars](http://www.safnow.org/webinars)

### The Call

- SHOP:** An Atlanta florist that filled order from an order-gatherer
- SCENARIO:** A customer is angry about size and look of arrangement
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- EMPLOYEE:** Good morning, XYZ Flowers, Lisa speaking, how can I help you?
- TIM:** Hi Lisa. I want to talk to someone about the flowers I sent to my daughter.
- EMPLOYEE:** I can help you.
- TIM:** OK. I’m extremely disappointed with the arrangement. It doesn’t look at all like the photo, and I paid over \$85!
- EMPLOYEE:** Let me check into it for you. What’s the recipient’s name?
- TIM:** It’s Tobin. The first name is Janet.
- EMPLOYEE:** Oh. Uh. I see the order here.
- TIM:** All right. Then can you explain what happened?
- EMPLOYEE:** Well, you didn’t really order that from us, we just filled it to value for the company that sent us the order.
- TIM:** What the heck does that mean? I did a web search for a florist in your zip code, got connected to a site that said they delivered in Atlanta and ordered the flowers based on the picture. My daughter said it was your shop’s name and phone on the flowers, so I don’t understand what you are telling me!
- EMPLOYEE:** Well, you actually placed an order with another company and then we got the order but filled it to value.
- TIM:** Lisa, I am still lost. You’re telling me that I paid extra money to a middleman to get flowers for my daughter?
- EMPLOYEE:** Yeah, that’s what happened. I’m sorry about that, but we did fill it to value. We could pick it up and replace it for you.
- TIM:** Are you going to replace it with what I ordered? That arrangement with all the roses staring at me from the website?

Lisa repeated her weak explanation of how I essentially got what I ordered, based on the net value that her shop received to fill the order. I finally asked for a manager. Her answer was not much better, though she warned me in the future not to deal with “order-gatherers who scam the public.”

### The Analysis

- 👉 Lisa was sympathetic and did her best, albeit with weak language, to help me to understand why the flowers the shop delivered were not identical to the flowers I ordered.
  - 👉 She offered to replace the arrangement.
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- 👉 She kept repeating the phrase “we filled it to value” — two more times after I asked what that meant.
  - 👉 While the offer to replace the arrangement was a step in the right direction, it fell short, because it would be a carbon copy of what prompted my complaint in the first place!

### The Fix

Customers don’t understand what “order gatherer” and “filled-to-value” means, so please don’t use those industry-only terms with the general public. Instead, approach this type of complaint very carefully so you can explain your position, educate the caller and hopefully convert him to your customer. Here’s the dialogue I use:

*I understand how frustrated you must be that the flowers did not look as big as the picture. We will gladly create the arrangement you had envisioned and send it to your sister. But here’s how you can prevent this from happening in the future: When you placed your order, it was not with us, but with another company that took the order and sent it to us. They charged a fee for that service, and that is taken out of the price. And we still need to cover our standard delivery cost, which is not included in that price. We then used every penny, and our expertise, to create an arrangement as close as possible to that picture you saw online. Please call us next time at (800) 555-1212 so we can help you directly. We’ll tell you about all the beautiful flowers we have, give you great service and promise that all your money will go into the flowers. 🌸*

**Bottom line:** Take back your customers, one by one!

**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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