

## 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.

### The Call

- SHOP:** A florist in Portland, Ore.
- SCENARIO:** A customer calls for flowers, with a \$100 budget.
- EMPLOYEE:** Good morning, XYZ Florist.
- TIM:** Hi. What’s your name?
- EMPLOYEE:** Mark.
- TIM:** Thanks, Mark. I need to send some flowers to my wife today. I want to send something nice for about \$100. Can you do that?
- EMPLOYEE:** Sure we can! Are there any favorite flowers you want us to include?
- TIM:** I have no idea what those might be, but she loves yellow. Do you have anything yellow?
- EMPLOYEE:** Yes, we have lilies, snapdragons, alstroemeria. Lots of yellow.
- TIM:** Let’s do it. How big will that be?
- EMPLOYEE:** \$100 will be a nice size. She’ll love it.
- TIM:** Mark, I’m trusting you. I want to make an impression.
- EMPLOYEE:** Will do. Let me get some delivery information from you

Mark took down my delivery and billing information. He asked if I wanted my \$100 to include delivery and tax and thanked me for calling.

### The Analysis

- 👉 Mark was polite and efficient.
- 👎 Mark failed to provide good service. I told him I didn’t know anything about flowers and then he rattled off “lilies, snapdragons, alstroemeria,” as if I were a design-room pro.
- 👎 By not offering his name immediately, Mark missed an opportunity to personalize my shopping experience and help build a relationship between the customer and the store.
- 👎 Mark used frustratingly vague language: What the heck does “nice” mean?
- 👎 Mark foolishly offered to “do the order for \$100 including delivery and tax,” even though I was prepared to spend \$100 plus those fees. We all know what happened next: My wife got fewer flowers, the arrangement had less visual presence and the store made less money.

### The Fix

When you take an order, you act as the interpreter between the customer and the designer. After I explained the purpose of the gift, Mark should have said, “Of course! Let’s talk about what you envision for your wife. Would you like us to create a tall and airy design or a low and compact one?” When you engage customers in this dialogue — and listen to their responses — you send a powerful signal to them: Your wife isn’t getting something “nice” (ahem, off the shelf) from our store. We’re creating something unique just for her.

Rather than asking about flower preference, query customers about hues: “Does she have a favorite color?” That way, you can offer an arrangement built around a color or palette, instead of an off-season or impossible to source flower. (As a secret shopper, when I want to scare salespeople who ask me the “favorite flower” question, I usually say lily of the valley, and then wait for them to pass out.)

Go to Home Depot and ask for a nice-sized two-by-four and they’ll laugh you out of the store. Be specific with customers; share dimensions and use descriptive language (“It’s a perfect size for a coffee table.”). Educating them will create realistic expectations. Plus, upon learning what \$100 really meant for my wife’s gift, I might have spent more. (For more sales tips on how to describe arrangements to customers, go to [www.safnow.org/moreonline](http://www.safnow.org/moreonline).)

And by all means, don’t ask whether their budget should include delivery and tax; it doesn’t anywhere else, why should it at a flower shop?

**Bottom line:** Friendly isn’t enough. Great salespeople listen.

**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).

Join us on Tuesday, May 21, for our first design webinar, featuring Judith Blacklock, one of England’s biggest celebrity florists! Register at SAF-member rates at [www.fsw1304.eventbrite.com](http://www.fsw1304.eventbrite.com).