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The Call

SHOP: A florist in Chicago
SCENARIO: A customer ordering a Thanksgiving centerpiece

EMPLOYEE: Hello, ABC Flowers.
TIM: Hi. I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name.
EMPLOYEE: I'm Amy. How can I help you?
TIM: Amy, I need to order a Thanksgiving centerpiece.
EMPLOYEE: OK. We have them starting at \$69.99 filled with leaves, berries and fall flowers.
TIM: Sounds pretty. Is that a nice size?
EMPLOYEE: It is, they're beautiful. It's what I'm bringing home this year.
TIM: Great, then I guess it will be perfect for my table, too.
TIM: Do I need anything else?
EMPLOYEE: Nope, let me just get some delivery and billing information.

The Analysis

- 👉 Amy was friendly and made a point to connect with me and compliment my choice, by saying it's what she purchased for her own Thanksgiving table.
- 👉 Amy completed the order, confirmed a delivery date and time and offered to email a copy of my order.
- 👉 Although friendly, Amy was not really *helpful* — even after I gave her the chance to upsell me.
- 👉 Amy started me at the lowest price, despite the fact that I never asked where they start or expressed any concern about money.
- 👉 She never mentioned sizes or dimensions and missed multiple opportunities to increase the sale.

The Fix

Many customers order a centerpiece only once or twice a year, so they need extra help in understanding size, color and add-on options. Be prepared to engage and educate about all the possibilities your store offers. Remember, customers are relying on you as the expert with all the answers.

Talk Size. Amy could have asked, "How many people will be sitting at your table?" Had I answered, "We're going to have 10 people," Amy could have responded with, "Then I suggest one of our large centerpieces, at \$125, perfect for a table for 10!" It's a subtle yet effective way to help a customer understand that they should be focused on the size, not the price.

Talk Color. Don't assume that every customer wants a traditional fall palette. I recently took an order for an all-pink centerpiece because Thanksgiving dinner was going to be a birthday celebration for the customer's young daughter. Amy could have asked, "Would you like us to use rich, autumn colors, or would you prefer another color scheme?" (But do resist the urge to talk about specific flowers; keep the conversation focused instead on color.)

Talk Extras. Customers can't buy what they don't know about. Amy should have offered, "As a finishing touch, can I add candles to your centerpiece for just \$5?"

Keep in mind that a Thanksgiving celebration is not limited to the dining room table. Seize this opportunity to educate customers about more flowers for their home. Amy might have volunteered, "Many of our customers also choose coordinating arrangements to decorate their homes: a coffee table arrangement to accent the living room, beautiful foyer flowers to greet guests, small bedside flowers in guest rooms . . ." Have sizes, prices and descriptions ready to help your customers buy these extra designs. Offer this option to every customer, and you could double many of your sales!

A Final Tip. When customers mention cheaper options available at the grocery store, don't apologize. Instead, educate: "Our beautiful centerpieces are hand-crafted by skilled designers using only the very best flowers. They really are the perfect addition to your holiday table." It's a subtle yet powerful way to refocus customers on quality and design instead of price.

Bottom line: Don't just be an order-taker this Thanksgiving; engage your customers to make bigger, better sales. 🌸

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

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