

CSI: Flower Shop



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The Call

SHOP: A florist in Boston, Mass.

SCENARIO: A customer shopping online with questions about arrangement size

EMPLOYEE: Hello, 123 Florist, this is Carrie, how can I help you?

TIM: Hi Carrie. I'm interested in ordering flowers and have some questions.

EMPLOYEE: OK. Ask away.

TIM: I'm on your site, looking at the ABC123 design and I'm curious about the size. It's floating on a white background, making it hard for me to gauge size. And, is there a big difference between good, better and best?

EMPLOYEE: That arrangement is going to look like what you see, and it gets bigger as you increase the price. If you want it to be designed all-round, I suggest spending \$69.99 (the top price).

TIM: OK, so I really won't get what I see if I only chose the 'good' option then, correct?

EMPLOYEE: No, no, no, you definitely will but it will be one-sided. The back is flat with foliage.

TIM: That's a bit misleading. Guess I need to go with the "best" version at \$69.99

EMPLOYEE: Great. That's a good choice.

TIM: But I still don't know how big it will be!

EMPLOYEE: Sorry. That's a nice size, real pretty.

Carrie finished the order and chatted to me about how many customers are equally confused by the "good, better, best" language.

The Analysis

👉 Carrie was friendly, engaging and efficient. She was eager to let me know that spending more would make a difference and did so without coming across as pushy.

👉 Carrie should not have shared with me that other customers are frequently confused by the website's imagery and language, and she did not clearly explain the value in spending more money, which left me feeling less than confident about my purchase. I spent the highest amount offered, but I did not feel particularly good about it.

The Fix

Confirmation is critical. Never assume that a customer is on your website. Instead, once you've positioned yourself in front of a computer, say, "Of course, I can help you. Let's just make sure you're on our site - what does it say in your address bar (or 'white strip at top of the page')?" Skip this, and you could waste time discussing an item that you can't provide or haggling over price because the customer is on another site.

Use common sense language. Consumers get confused by "good, better and best," which is why they pick up the phone and call your store. Rather than acknowledging that "everyone gets confused," reassure and educate your customers: "The arrangement is going to look very much like the picture you see online, and as you move toward the higher end, we are able to add more flowers for a fuller look. It will be beautiful no matter what you spend!"

Stretch the price. Don't let your shop's two or three price points limit what a customer can spend. A simple approach is to educate customers: "We can create an arrangement as priced or take it even higher for a fuller look that is fitting for (whatever occasion is being celebrated)." You'll be amazed at how many customers will take that offer and spend another \$10 to \$20 or more.

Talk to the boss. If you repeatedly hear comments from customers about the language, navigation or images on your site, share them with the owner. Maybe your feedback can lead to some changes to the site to make shopping even easier for customers.

Bottom line: Customers rely on you for guidance even when they pre-shop online. Make sure you have the right answers! 💡

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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