

Best Flower Shop Practices: Part 1

How to Sell Better

I'm a bad salesperson. Really. I say it all the time when I am training staff at flower shops. I just hate to sell, in the sense of being pushy. And I hate to be sold by pushy clerks. You too?

HOWEVER, I do consider myself a great listener and that's been the real secret to my success over the years in helping florists realize double digit increases to their average ticket value.

The floral industry runs into problems when we focus on selling a product or service instead of HEARING a customer's needs. When you listen, you discover MANY opportunities to help customers choose the appropriate and proper item. The funny thing is, customers usually spend more when you adopt this approach to serving them rather than following the old-fashioned, ignorant path of asking, "How much do you want to spend?" Guess what, they don't know and they want your help!

How can you become a better listener? It's easy, just slow down and pay more attention to the customer. For example, if he sounds exasperated after dictating a lengthy apology message to you, assure him that everything will be okay and that you can help him pick the right flowers to express his remorse. Then give him the chance to spend a lot on something really special. After all, he's desperate for forgiveness! If he doesn't want to spend what you have suggested, he'll let you know and share his budget. Don't be afraid of hearing, "I don't want to spend that much." You can always move down to something less extravagant, but you can never move up if you start small.

Pay close attention to the details customers share when they tell you their card messages. Listen for the celebration of milestone birthdays and anniversaries, occasions for which you should offer bigger designs. If you hear a long list of names on a funeral order, say something like, "On behalf of such a big group I recommend one of our larger plants priced at..." In short, sell to the card message; it's your guide to helping customers choose the perfect gift!

Shoppers rely on us for our opinion. How often do you hear "Is that enough?" or "Is that going to look nice?" or "What do you think?" LISTEN to those questions and give professional advice. Here are a few non pushy things you can say:

"Of course, spending more will allow us to add more flowers for a fuller look."

"It's going to look beautiful BUT if you want to make more of a splash, consider spending closer to..."

"I think that looks great AND you can personalize the flowers with a Happy Birthday balloon for just..."



So, if you really want to sell better, stop thinking about selling! Focus your energy on listening, engaging customers and making realistic suggestions. And remember, don't sell from your own pocket! Do this and sales will soar!

Now that you are thinking differently, you need to make sure your staff is too. To start, lead by example and start offering prices and choices relevant to the customers' needs. Make sure to share those success stories with your staff and explain how you changed your thinking (even if you have been working in floristry since Confederation!). Consider doing some role-playing and discussing options based on the sentiment, relationship between the sender and recipient, and the number of people that the gift is meant to represent.

Go to www.floralstrategies.com/CF for **FREE** access to our Holiday Boot Camp webinar with further training, tips and ideas to implement right away. This is a **\$100** value **FREE** for Canadian Florist readers!

BY: TIM HUCKABEE *AIFSE*

“ I do consider myself a great listener and that’s been the real secret to my success... ”

Tim Huckabee AIFSE was born, raised and educated in Connecticut and moved to New York City in 1993 to start working at a high-end flower shop called Surroundings, where he learned every aspect of the flower business such as handling telephone sales and customer service issues and dealing with walk-in customers. In his frequent conversations with florists, he realized there was a dire lack of sales and service education in the industry. That motivated him, in 1997, to launch FloralStrategies, a company that trains florists in sales, customer service, and how to get the most out of their POS system. He visits 250 shops annually, hosts a monthly webinar series, speaks at floral conventions, and writes a monthly column for the Society of American Florists.