

Sales Sins: Part 3

Phrases That Slay Your Sales Potential

By: Tim Huckabee AIFSE

Let's move into autumn continuing our exploration of what I call "The Deadly Sins of the Flower Business." These "sins" are simply costly mistakes that I have seen made in nearly every retail florist I have visited across Canada (and the world) since 1997. My plan is simple: identify the sin, help you spot the symptoms and then give you a solution. In this issue, we'll tackle the two biggies that immediately prohibit you from meeting your sales potential.



1: "How much do you want to spend?"

What's the deal with this craziness? Florists know this question is as bad for their business as smoking or nail biting is for their health, but so many ask it anyway. Can you tell me any other store that EVER asks that question? They sure don't at Roots, Second Cup or Shopper's. So why should you? Hold your excuses: I've heard them all. "It's just easier to find out what a customer plans to spend so I can more quickly show him his choices." Well, I disagree 100 percent. I know from nearly 25 years of experience that most customers don't know what they want or need, so, by extension, they have no idea what they should be spending.

Need more convincing? Here are my four critical reasons to never ask that insane question ever again:

- You make customers uncomfortable by talking about money when they are making an emotional sale. A woman just called you distraught because she heard her friend is in the hospital. How do you make her feel better? Talk about colours and feelings and design options — NOT dollar amounts!
- When you start the dialogue by asking how much they want to plop down at the till, you limit what the customer will spend. You can forget pitching lush, fragrant garden roses; if you got the customer to name a budget right up front and he says \$40, he'll never consider your pricier, luxury items.
- It's just awkward. What happens when you ask a customer what she wants to spend then discover that her need and expectations don't match her budget? You have to apologize! How clumsy it sounds

to say, "I'm really sorry, but that is going to cost another \$25, do you still want roses?"

- Finally, no other industry in the world engages customers by talking about money before their needs. Can you imagine if a waiter asked you your budget before handing you a menu? It's just as silly when you do it.

Solution? Listen better and offer an appropriate item and price. As we discussed in a previous column, if the customer wants to spend less, or more, he or she will tell you. Don't lowball yourself!

2: "Our arrangements start at..."

More floral industry insanity! Have you ever been greeted by someone at Best Buy with, "Welcome, here are the cheapest, least

expensive TVs you could buy from us today!" Nope, it will never happen. But it's another nasty habit that florists have developed. Basically, it has become a sales person's lazy crutch. It's an easy intro for every customer regardless of the reason they gave for calling. Did she really ask what price your designs start at or did you just offer that piece of information? This adds insult to retail floral injury because YOU are THE EXPERT in the eyes of the customer. If someone I trust told me options start at \$49.99, I'm unlikely to want to spend more than that.

Think about the emotional aspect too. How do you think your customer feels when he calls to order flowers for his Mom's funeral services and your opening statement (after offering some condolences, let's hope!) is, "Our sprays start at..." In essence, you're saying to the customer, "I am too lazy to help you match your needs with the PROPER choice so I am just going to tell the lowest price and let you go from there. Good luck!" Finally, if you perpetually lowball customers, they will never truly experience what your talented design team is capable of creating at the \$100, \$150 and higher price ranges!

Solution? Start the conversation by describing to customers designs in your mid-range prices, which is the ballpark where most people shop anyway. Easy!

Stay tuned as Tim covers more 'sins of the floral industry' in upcoming columns.

We encourage you to reach out to him with any questions or comments by calling 800.983.6184 or emailing tim@floralstrategies.com

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.