

WE HAVE ANGER MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Occasionally, we make mistakes on orders, like every florist. However, my staff cannot handle angry customers, so they come running to me to take the call and put out the fire. Help!

TERRI SNYDER | OWNER | FLOWERS & SUCH | DENTON, TEXAS

No one likes to deal with an angry, upset or disappointed customer.

However, it's part of the business and we need to handle those people with the same finesse that we use when making a sale. If you start to treat complaints simply as incomplete orders, your collective perspective will change and they'll become easier for all to handle. In other words: An order is complete only when the sender and recipient are 100 percent satisfied. A complaint shows that, for whatever reason, your shop did not reach that magic number and now, having brought that to your attention, the customer is giving you a second chance to get it right.

First, you need to get your staff to step up their game, take ownership of these situations and systematically work with customers to get them to that 100 percent satisfaction mark.

Let 'em Yell

If a mistake was made, no matter how minor, a customer is entitled to be angry or upset. I draw the line at someone cursing at me (that's when you should get a manager), but otherwise, a vocal, angry customer is not a big deal, if you handle him correctly. Let her explain what happened (or his version of it) and LET HER FINISH. Don't cut her off or try to get in a corrective or defensive one-liner. Remember, you're really just working on an order that wasn't executed correctly, so be polite, courteous and calm.

Check The Facts

Once the customer is done, offer your sincere apologies and then delve into details by finding the order and corroborating all the facts. "Mrs. Customer, I am so sorry that we didn't deliver the flowers on your daughter's birthday. I can imagine how upset you are, and I know that I would be too if I were expecting a delivery

that did not show up! I will personally resolve this for you. I just need to start by looking at the order." (Search for it with her order number, phone number or last name.) Once you have the order on the screen, scroll the details, looking at when it was placed. Did she place it too late for same-day delivery and no-one told her? Did she place the order online herself and actually choose the wrong date? Did the store attempt to deliver on the correct date but the order was refused because the recipient was not at work (and there are notes on the order from the delivery person)? Regardless, you MUST deal with the facts and not get caught up in her yelling or his huffing and puffing. Remember, you're simply in charge of completing this order because your store did not achieve 100 percent customer satisfaction on the first attempt.

Tell, Don't Ask

The customer is already upset and calling you seeking resolution. Why then, I ask the entire floral industry, do we think it's acceptable to then sheepishly ask, "What would you like me to do?" That approach will only make matters worse. Remember, when taking an order you should be offering your professional suggestions — on style, color, size and price point. Likewise, when dealing with a complaint (aka an incomplete order) offer your professional suggestion/resolution. "Mrs. Customer I know that we didn't get those birthday roses delivered on time so I would like to resend them today with an extra dozen included, at no charge of course, and an apology note from our store, explaining that you had intended to have these delivered to her yesterday."



Your next move as the owner/manager is to set a meeting date and time in which you will tear out this column and review

my plan with them, starting with the new definition of a complaint as an *incomplete order*. 🌿

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Got a sales or service challenge? Tell Tim about it, and he'll tackle it in an upcoming column. Email tim@floralstrategies.com, or call him, (800) 983-6184.

Cheat Sheet

Don't Say:

"Let me get my manager."

Do Say:

"I'm sorry to hear that, let me help you out!"

beautiful, Naturally

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