

# **SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE OF SALES & SERVICE**

**Presented by SAF's Professional Floral Communicators-International  
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Selling is the oldest profession in the world; and it goes hand-in-hand with the art of persuasion. Service is a helpful act. Sales is an exchange of goods or services. Persuasion combined with helping a customer purchase products yields good customer service.

Retailers in any industry need to understand the positive correlation between increased services and increased sales. Transferring the enthusiasm of the product into the mind and heart of the consumer while providing top-notch customer service will, in turn, increase profits. If you evaluate your sales, often you will find that 20 percent of your customers generate 80 percent of your sales. The lesson: Focus efforts on that 20 percent niche group.

Often, we think of the person signing paychecks as the boss. But truly, the customer is *the* BOSS. The customer pays everyone's salary and decides if the business will succeed.

And your boss (*read: your customers*) aren't just buying flowers. They're buying:

- Their emotions
- Your shop personality
- Your customer-friendly staff

The recipe for top-notch customer service that will build customer loyalty and increase sales:

1. Knowing what your customers want.
2. Understanding how your customers think.
3. Handling customer interactions correctly.

## **KNOWING WHAT YOUR CUSTOMERS WANT**

When shopping, consumers want to visit a business where they can find quality products with assistance from a friendly, educated person.

### **The shop environment**

- Easy-to-find location
- Adequate parking
- Convenient hours
- Outdoor/window signage

- Creative merchandising and displays
- Organized, neat and clean
- Comfortable atmosphere

### **The product and service**

- Value in the experience
- Commitment to quality product
- Professional design
- Wide range of products and local delivery availability
- Guarantees and reasonable policies

### **The professional sales staff**

- Knowledgeable sales professionals who are visible and available
- Educated advice on care and handling and varieties
- Concerned about their needs
- Don't pressure to buy
- Treat as a valued customer

### **The buying experience**

- Positive environment
- Pleasant contact
- Memorable visit
- Price-value relationship
- Convenience of purchase
- Reason to come back

### **WHAT WILL THE CUSTOMER DO IN RETURN?**

- Become a loyal buyer
- Recount positive experiences (as well as the negative)
- Refer by word of mouth, a powerful tool that you must earn

## **YOUR SHOP'S ENVIRONMENT: DO YOU NEED A "SHOP MAKEOVER?"**

Your shop's physical appearance is important. So check it out. Walk in the front door with a pad of paper and pen. List the good things you see  and the bad things. Be objective. If you can't be objective, ask an outside source to do this for you. Pay special attention to: the parking lot to your front door, visual displays, the traffic flow, signage and comfort level.

### **Curbside Appeal: Is your shop approachable?**

Check parking areas, sidewalks, entrance and window displays.

- Is the shop name and address bold and visible from the street?
  - Use a marquee for name and advertising
  - Abide by local city ordinances
  
- Is it easy to pull in and park?
  - If parking is a problem, use other resources for attracting attention (i.e., easy phone number, such as "999-ROSE")
  
- Drive by the shop from all directions and see what consumers see
- Is the shop area neat and clean?
- Is the front door obvious?
- Make the shop inviting by bringing products outside
  - Follow local ordinances and allow for handicapped accessibility
  
- Appeal to the five senses at the door
  - Sight, sound, taste, touch and smell
  - The shop door is a fast visual area, so keep it simple
  
- Be colorful with products to attract attention
  
- Pay attention to lighting to ensure security and attention

### **Your shop's traffic flow**

Most shops are designed for work areas, not to ensure profit selling. Focus on the sales areas. The shop's traffic flow should pull customers through the store, highlighting display areas, the cooler and the transaction area.

- Walk through the front door. Is there a direct view to key destinations  the transaction area? The cooler? Fresh flower displays?
- Are walkways open and comfortable, creating pathways to the key destinations?
  - Display products to direct and control this pattern
  - Use floor mats or distinctive floor visuals
- Is your shop handicapped accessible?

**Visual display environments, your silent selling tool**

Attractive displays with a theme and a story create an invitation to buy. The product can sell itself if displayed correctly. Each vignette is designed as a floral composition applying the same principles and elements in design construction:

<b>Principles</b>	<b>Elements</b>
Visual and physical balance	Line
Focal area:	Form
Visual center of interest	Space
Rhythm and depth	Textures
Proportion and scale	Pattern
Contrast	Fragrance
Harmony and unity	Size
	Color

## **The Sensory Connection**

Appeal to the customer on all levels by creating a sensory connection to the five senses in each and every vignette and display you do.

### **Sight: The Visual Pleasure**

- Clear the clutter. Be clean, neat and organized.
- Redecorate more than just seasonally.
- Showcase new merchandise, and discount the mature products
- Amplify your hot spots, power walls and best-selling areas.
- Floral designers should work in public view. Customers love to watch. If not possible, have videos play of staff demonstrations.
- Display floral artistry.
- Bring flowers out of the cooler.

### **Sound: Relax and Browse**

- Play age-appropriate and theme-related music. Sell CDs as an add-on.
- Display water fountains or aquariums for calming effect.
- Caged birds create a natural environment.
- Keep operating noise to a minimum.
  - Employee communications
  - Phone rings
  - Modem connections
  - Door awareness alerts

### **Touch: The Tactile Experience**

- Invite the customer into the display.
- Encourage customers to pick up items. If they hold it, they are more likely to buy it.
- Make sure each item is priced correctly.
- Bring flowers out of the cooler.

### **Smell: The Memory Enhancer**

- Create a visual feast of scents with staged fragrances. Use seasonal favorites or themed reminders.
- Sell aromatherapy products, potpourri, essences and oils, perfumes and food.

- Surround customers with flowers  bring flowers out of the cooler.

### **Taste: The Ultimate Connection**

- Sell food, and give away samples.
- Promote other vendor samples.
- Use food products as a visual part of your display.
- Food fragrances also appeal to taste.

### **Signage Suggests the Sale**

- Identifies product lines and specialties
- Tells product benefits.
- Educates customers.

### **Label Tips**

- Keep signage brief.
- Use buzz words.
- Coordinate a uniform look with colors, themes and store logos.
- Professional printing and correct spellings.
- Post guarantees in writing to encourage confidence.
- Promote upcoming events.
- Highlight promotions or information on people.

### **Provide Basic Needs Areas**

- Clearly mark and maintain restroom facilities
- Provide places to sit and relax.
- Offer refreshments.
- Keep a resource library of floral books and magazines.
- Have a children's activity area.
- Keep umbrellas on hand.
- Keep extra coins at the register for that little change needed or to pay parking meters.

### **Make Transaction Areas Delight Zones**

- Conduct the transaction out with the customer, not behind the counter
- Provide space to accommodate the sale (i.e., check writing or to hold purses and bags).

- Place impulse-buying items here
- Provide recreational items for long lines
  - Self-serve invoices
  - Shop newsletters
  - Refreshments
  - Promotional materials
  - Surveys and comment cards
  - Contest sign ups
  - Notes from satisfied customers
  - TV entertainment with a humorous theme

## **UNDERSTANDING HOW YOUR CUSTOMERS THINK**

Conventional wisdom warns against prejudging customers. But if you analyze how consumers handle emotions and manage information, you can better understand their needs and provide better customer service.

### **The Openly Emotional Customer**

- Shows feelings and emotions
- Relaxed and informal
- Wants to talk

### **The Closed-Emotional Customer**

- Self-contained and proper
- Doesn't show emotions
- Want facts, not feelings

### **The Customer who Manages Information Indirectly**

- Quiet and shy
- Has difficulty making a decision

### **The Customer who Manages Information Directly**

- Controls conversation
- Makes quick decisions

## **Applying Buying Styles**

We've all encountered the following types of customer behaviors. Keep in mind customers can jump from one behavior to another. Watch body language so you can gear the sale toward their current behavior.

**The Dependant-Indecisive Consumer:** enjoys shopping and will linger and explore. They want sales advice before making a purchase.

- Manages information indirectly
- Open customer
- Needs help from sales personnel

**The Socializer-Born to-Shop Consumer:** loves the shopping experience. They consider themselves royalty who enjoy buying. As a trendsetter, they seek out the new “it” item.

- Manages information indirectly
- Open customer
- Discuss the decision

**The Analytical Sales-Seeker:** clips coupons, likes discount stores, enjoys volume and will spend the money.

- Closed customer
- Manages information directly
- Asks lots of questions
- Takes things literally and in writing

**The Distracted Mom with Kids:** is in a hurry and strives to make an effort to purchase but often cannot without interruptions.

- Manages information indirectly
- Closed customer
- Multi-tasking

**Control Task Masters:** efficient with time and accessibility, shopping is seen as a chore. They usually are full-time, white-collar workers. They are list makers and have tunnel vision. They will control the sale and make decisions quickly.

- Manages information directly
- Closed customer
- In a hurry to accomplish their list

**The Get-Me-Out-of-Here-I-Hate-to-Shop Consumer:** feels they don't have any choice but to be there. They expect the merchandise to be clearly marked, and the transaction must be smooth and convenient.

- Manages information directly
- Closed customer
- Want speed and convenience



The **SAF Consumer Attitudes and Behaviors about Flower Purchasing Study** helps understand the average floral consumer. Highlights include:

- Men purchase more roses and arrangements more than \$30. It is easier to buy flowers than to do detective work on her sizes and favorite products.
- Young consumers (often labeled Generation Y) buy inexpensive loose flowers. They have less disposable income, are less educated, need more guidance in making buying decisions. Prom is often their first experience with purchasing flowers.
- Baby boomers are the most advertised, direct marketed, but Generation X (technology driven) is close behind.
- Females make 85 percent of the consumer-purchasing decisions.
  - They buy a wider range of floral gifts
  - Have more experience
  - Are more loyal to your shop
  - Like the story behind the product
  - Critical about the attention to detail
  - Filter excessive choices
  - Want personalized care
  - Want an emotionally satisfying product
  - Are convenience junkies
  - Consider flowers to be a true affordable luxury

Women spend more time shopping when they are with a group of other women and less time shopping when with a man. Shopping makes women feel more confident, and they will buy flowers for themselves, because they deserve it.

## **THE CYCLE OF SERVICE**

Many consumers perceive poor service as the norm. When they receive good customer service, consumers are truly surprised.

### **The Cycles of Service**

- Moment of misery: Disappointment in the total experience
- Neutral moment: Normal. Didn't expect good service, and didn't receive it.
- Noticeable: Received fair product at a fair price and the shopping experience worked as it should.
- Magic moment: Wow! Received special treatment and exemplary service, and now expects it every time.
- Rewarding: Buying confidence by developing loyalty programs

## **HANDLING CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS**

The first 10 seconds of the initial acknowledgement between sales professional and the consumer is vital. The consumer's opinion of the sales professional and the shop already has been established. Sales professionals unknowingly can chase away customers during these first 10 seconds.

Before offering assistance, sales professionals must overcome one of the biggest hurdles □ their fear of rejection. Remind sales staff that rejection is aimed at the product, not them. If a consumer says "no," that "no" really means "next one" or "next offer." So don't take a non-sale personally.

### **Staff Dress and Appearance**

The cliché "you are what you wear" applies to sales professionals, but let's update that apron. Credibility and the first impression are made in what your body language says and what you wear. Elevate customer confidence by dressing for success. A dress code is recommended for the whole staff as it creates a sense of order, reassurance for the customer, split-second recognition and a stronger team spirit. In determining your dress code, consider the following:

- Gather input from all shop employees
- Define style suitable for all
- Consider job descriptions
- Add variety, mix and match
- Be specific
- Allow for freedom and flexibility
- Define good grooming
- Address the policies of tattoos, hats, piercing, jewelry, cologne, smoking (and its lingering scent) and gum chewing
- Require name tags
- Discuss maintenance upkeep and replacement policies
- Enforce consistently

### **Making the Approach**

Eye contact has been made, and as the consumer observes you, you need to observe them, categorize them and develop your opening statement.

- Get out from behind the sales counter or furniture.
- Extend yourself physically and emotionally.
- Watch your body language.
  - 7 percent of conversation is actually heard
  - 55 percent is actual body language
  - 38 percent is pitch and tone of your voice
- Do not hold your arms across chest.

- Relax.
- Stand upright.
- Listen and laugh when appropriate.
- Believe in your product.
- Do not fidget.
- Show enthusiasm.
- Walking into personal space can be intimidating. Take a tiny step forward, if the consumer backs up, stay where you are. Let them choose the distance.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Give consumers your full, undivided attention.

### **The Opening Statement, Not a Question**

Customers like sales professionals who are warm and friendly, cordial, laugh easily, make you feel good about yourself and project a positive attitude. Treat consumers with dignity and respect, look and act sincere, and most of all, pay attention to their needs.

Adopt a friendly greeting policy that requires sales professionals to greet consumers quickly. Stop being too busy to serve them. You are never too busy. The customers are guests and hospitality comes naturally, like someone is in your home. Imagine you are creating a life-long friend. Elevate their confidence level in you.

- Start a slow, gradual smile.
- Deliver a warm greeting.
- Don't ask a question, such as "May I help you?" Instead, make a comment, such as, "It's nice to see you in our shop."
  - Call them by name
  - Talk about the weather
  - Pay them compliment
  - Make a comment on a product they show interest in
- Don't fake familiarity. Consumers are cynical about motives.
- Don't evade questions. Be honest and direct.
- Don't exaggerate. Consumers are immune to "the first," "the best" or "the biggest."
- Focus the sales message on the need, benefit and uniqueness of your business and provide the evidence to back up your statements.

### **If you are assisting a customer and another customer appears impatient:**

- Acknowledge the impatient customer with a friendly greeting
- Get another sales professional to assist them
- Offer to let your current customer look around and then take care of the impatient customer

## **If you are assisting a customer and the phone rings ...**

- Your No. 1 concern is the customer you are assisting.
- If you are comfortable, ask the customer if you may take the call.
  - Ask the caller if you may return the call shortly.
  - Finish assisting the customer and immediately return the phone call.
- Let the call go to voice mail.
- Provide enough professional sales staff.

## **Your Attitude**

The more shopper-employee contact the greater the average sale. Show you enjoy what you do. Mimic the consumer's pace and listen for needs and objections. Please customers. Don't let personal problems seep through a positive attitude.

## **Win Customers with Effective Wording**

<b>Never say to your customer....</b>	<b>Always say.....</b>
"I don't know" and go on	Take the time to find out
"I don't really care"	Show pride in your attitude, conversation, appearance
"You're wrong"	The customer may not be right, but they are the customer
"What's your budget?"	"Is there a budget I should be aware of?"
"Is \$40 okay?"	Make a statement and offer three price points
"We can't deliver this today"	"We will have this delivered as early as tomorrow"
"I can't"	Lead off with good news. If bad news is heard first, the consumer will focus on that bad news and won't hear what else you have to say. When telling bad news, literally lower your voice.
"But..."	Say "yes," and offer options

That will be “one hundred and fifty dollars.”	Avoid the words “dollars” or “hundred” Instead, say “one fifty.”
“We’re not open yet.”	If you are there, you are open.
“Can you call back later?”	“I will call you back within the hour.”
“Why did you do that?”	Doesn’t matter. Don’t degrade them.
“It’s not my job.”	It is your job to help them.
“It’s not my fault.”	You <i>are</i> the company.
“I’m not allowed to do that.”	You are in charge. Take control.
“Hold on” (phone sales)	You may put a caller on hold only if you <i>ask</i> for permission and only as a last resort.
“I’ll have to speak to the manager about that.”	Understand store policies and take action.
“I can’t promise you anything.”	Tell them what you will do for them.

## **KNOW YOUR PRODUCT**

Customers enjoy learning about products. Create “edutainment” so they will learn about the flowers they are buying and enjoy them even more. Be enthusiastic about your product. If you like it, you can sell it. Show your expertise. Their confidence in you is created when you show you know your product.

**Carry products that create a buzz and evoke an emotional response.** These products will:

- Advertise themselves visually and sell themselves
- Create a demand
- Offer compatibility with other merchandise
- Be simple and convenient
- Exceed the expectations of the consumer

To differentiate these products you must:

- Establish an identity with proper labeling
- Personify the product by giving it personality
- Create a new generic
- Change the name for more of curb appeal
- Reposition the category to create a selling proposition

## **Use Antiquated Pricing**

Provide accurate item pricing using antiquated pricing such as 99 cents or 95 cents or even numbers like \$40. Antiquated pricing is recognized by consumers as a lower price (i.e.: \$39.95 appears less expensive than \$40.00). As an independent retail florist, you can choose your own pricing structure.

## **CREATING THE NEED**

The No. 1 rule of sales is: Find out what the customer wants and give it to them. Create the UPS □ unique selling proposition □ that is for them. They need to send flowers for an occasion. Everything we sell is an emotion and an investment in memories. Reinforce flowers as a lifestyle, an everyday occurrence. Build excitement, convince them they deserve flowers.

Personalize the conversation and use descriptive words to create the emotion.

**Selling the emotion of giving and receiving flowers creates a memory.** SAF's Emotional Impact of Flowers Study proves receiving a gift of flowers triggers happy emotions and heightens feelings of life satisfaction. Use these points as your sales messages. A gift of flowers ...

- Eases depression
- Inspires social networking
- Refreshes memory
- Increases idea generation
- Increases creative performance
- Improves problem-solving skills
- Makes people smile

Show customers the true value of their floral gift by transforming the arrangement's dollar amount into an investment in memories as well as highlighting the floral gift's emotional benefits. Number your thoughts and say, "*There are two reasons you need this item...*"

## **PRESENTING THE SALE**

Present the sale, don't ask for it. Here is how you present the sale:

- Reiterate the value of the floral gift as an investment in building a special memory for the occasion.
- Use the customer's name.
- With professional sincerity, ask if there is anything else you can do for them.
- Tell them it has been a pleasure helping them and make your thanks sincere with eye contact and a smile.

## **UP SELLING, ADD-ON SALES**

Use the power of suggestion to increase sales. Listen for trigger words that indicate the occasion, such as birthdays, anniversaries, celebrations, multiple buyers, unable to attend, a guilt factor. Use these clues to make suggestions for that little extra to add to their floral gift. If you add just \$3 or \$5 to each order, you will see a significant increase in sales.

Display these impulse items around the transaction area:

- Gift cards
- Balloons
- Home décor
- Plush
- Upgraded vases or containers
- Candy
- Spa products
- Music
- Jewelry
- Water tubes
- Floral food consumer packages
- Executive delivery
- Flower-of-the-month club certificates

## **PHONE SALES**

In many shops, phone sales are the lifeblood. Make it easy for consumers to call your shop. List your shop phone number everywhere. Make sure your number is easy to remember. When talking to consumers on the phone, use these tips to improve your sales technique:

- Place a mirror by the phone.
- Before you answer, take a deep breath and release it.
- Smile while you speak.
- Say your shop name, and identify yourself.
- Answer slowly but enthusiastically.
- Focus. Talk only to the caller.
- Thank the caller in the end.

Avoid:

- Transferring your bad day on to caller.
- Hanging up on a customer.
- Offering only a “yes” or “no” answer. One-word answers are uncaring.
- Asking permission to put them on hold. Do it only if necessary and for no longer than 17 seconds.
- Rushing the call.

- Asking the consumer to call you back; it is your responsibility. Provide a timeframe in which you will contact them. Return calls promptly (within an hour). If you can't, have someone else call. If you leave a message, state your number at the beginning and at the end. Offer toll-free numbers for them to return your call.

If you have an automated phone sales system, make it easy to reach a real person. Plan your recorded hold message, and keep it updated. If you don't offer a 24-hour answering service, then after hours messages should provide information such as :

- Web site address
- Store hours
- Emergency contact number

## **BUSINESS PRACTICES**

As a florist, you are leading a profitable retail business; you're not a hobbyist. You truly must evaluate your customer service and often you overlook the flaws. Your mission is to improve profits with the following directives:

- Sell more by providing quality unique products and memorable customer service.
- Reduce operating expenses with productive employees and efficient equipment.
- Negotiate with suppliers for buying options.
- Offer varieties of ways customers can place orders
  - Web site
  - Phone
  - After-hours phone service
  - In person
  - Pre-order forms
- Offer services and products your customers want. Determine what sells and get rid of what doesn't. Survey your customers and sell what they want to buy
- Provide "shopper-entertainment"
  - Be a destination shop
  - Plan monthly in-store events
  - Strive to surprise your customers
  - Establish a positive shop image
  - Advertise your specialty everywhere
- Make a memorable impression
  - Taking a late delivery for a forgetful customer
  - Contact number for after hours services
  - Longer store hours to meet the needs of your customers
  - Different design styles to step away from cookie-cutter looks



- Hire nice, friendly personnel with personalities that are trainable, friendly, perky, excited and passionate. Observe your best employees and examine their traits. Even with no openings, watch for these people and take their application. Set a model behavior pattern yourself. Customer service is everybody's job, so talk every day about the importance of your customers
- Become a service icon with an in-depth customer service training
  - Formal system of employee-customer feedback
  - Practical coaching of employee standard
  - Continual training and team building and cross-training
  - Communicate with your employees for suggestions
  - Offer incentives to your staff to increase sales
  - Conduct a customer identification seminar
- Maintain store policies
  - Post your corporate mission statement and a written service standard
  - Post your return policy, and make sure your staff is well informed about it.
  - Guarantees
    - Determine what is really important to the customer
    - Performance of product and service
    - Promise prompt action
    - Advertise and promote your guarantee

## **ONLINE SHOPPERS**

Providing online shopping is essential for surviving in today's market. Avoid customer frustration by providing the basic needs.

- A safe and secure Web site
- Guaranteed and consistent products and services
- Quick response on question and request
- Have an attractive Web site
  - Customer friendly
  - Quick check out
  - Constant maintenance

## **LOYALTY REWARD PROGRAMS**

Meeting the needs of customers, exceeding their expectations and making their experience as convenient and pleasant as possible creates repeat customers □ and repeat customers is a true measure of success. Building confidence, loyalty and trust with everyday acts of professionalism builds quick results. Keeping your current customer base and maintaining them is more cost effective than to pursue new customers. It costs

about \$100 to target and capture a new customer. For just a few dollars you can market your current customer base. This is your goldmine in the backyard. Building lifelong, long-term relationships should be your goal.

### **Conduct a Customer Satisfaction Survey**

There are many ways to develop loyalty, and the more contact you have with consumers, the better. The modern world of retailing is all about customer profiling. The first step is to find out as much about your customers as possible. You want to then track information and ask questions. Acquire this information with a survey. Ask specific questions.

Guidelines for crafting a consumer satisfaction survey:

- Grab attention with an eye-catching and colorful form that complements your shop's signature look.
- For a more accurate response, do not disclose that a survey will be conducted.
- Ask a limited amount of questions.
- Avoid asking personal questions and just acquire pertinent information.
- Format circle responses for simplicity. Phrase related questions together.
- Leave space for comments on improvements.
- Ask for names and addresses. Verify they are on your mailing list.
- Pre-paid postage reply forms receive a better return.
- Test this survey on a small target group to determine potential problems.
- Distribute to all customers.
  - Deliver with orders
  - Hand to walk-in customers
  - Post online
  - E-mail surveys
  - Direct mail
  - Select focus groups
  - Provide customer-exit interviews
  - Conduct telephone interviews no longer than 10 minutes
- Offer an incentive to complete and return the survey
  - Discount coupons
  - Free products
  - Valuable prize contests
  - \$ 1 bill attached to the survey
- Follow up with a phone call or note
- Use the information gathered for improvement
- Meet your customers personally and get to know them
- Consider outside sources to conduct the survey for unbiased results

### **Educate Customers**

This is the Information Age, and consumers crave information and education. Establish yourself as *the* flower expert:

- Offer workshops and classes that create an emotional bond
- Distribute newsletters via e-mail and direct mail
- Create a trends library
- Post signs on displays to tell about flower varieties and design styles
- Provide information on local TV spots
- Distribute press releases to local media outlets
- Educate sales professionals on products, styles and trends
- Include educational materials with your delivery products

### **Other customer incentives to keep them coming back**

- First-time buyer's discount
- "We've missed you" coupons
- Budget-friendly cash-and-carry options
- Flower-hour specials
- Flyer mileage
- Referral programs
- Frequent-buyer programs
- Kids' club programs
- E-mail delivery confirmation with photo of recipient receiving flowers
- Send thank-you cards or e-mails personalized by staff
- Gimmicks with each delivery or order placement
- Personalized care-and-handling information

### **HANDLING CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS**

Always try to make the customer happy, even an unhappy customer. Consider the experience an opportunity to improve your business. Learning from mistakes makes you a better retailer.

There is a fine line between a demanding customer and a chronic complainer. Only 4 percent will complain back to the provider. The other 96 percent tells friends that may damage your reputation. It is better to strive for perfection every single time.

When a customer complains, the first step is to handle the complaint immediately. Empower employees to handle problems; make them in charge and become the respondent to the situation. They are to talk with the parties involved and provide the personal attention. The more times the customer has to repeat the problem, the lower his or her confidence level goes. As you are dealing with an unhappy customer, follow these steps:

### **1. Care about the situation:**

- Listen and give your absolute attention
- Maintain eye contact, keep an open body position and smile
- Appreciate their feelings and ensure their validity
- Thank them early and often; Let them know you appreciate their business
- Diffuse all defensiveness
- Always use “I” and not “we” to make it more personal
- Summarize the complaint
- Evaluate the problem and explain
- Ask what they would like to have done
- Provide options and respond with a resolution to the problem
- Apologize quickly and very sincerely and make them feel well-served

### **2. Help the consumer receive the results:**

- Treat the situation as your No. 1 priority and take action
- Make the customer feel like an individual, not a number
- Always have a positive attitude
- Emphasize the importance of resolution
- Look up the history of the order and get the facts
- Talk with the employees involved
- Provide a win-win situation for you and them
- Go over the top if necessary
- Minimize paper work, making this a simple but productive process
- Send them a note or a gift afterwards
- Share this complaint with staff
- Don't agree to an unrealistic resolution, find an agreement. Often times, the customer just wants recognition and may not expect more. If the customer's desired resolution negatively affects your bottom line, you may say “no.” You have the option to “fire your own customer.”

### **3. Review your shop's handling of the order for possible flaws caused by:**

- Employee's personality clashes
- Conflict between departments
- Employee behaviors or personal issues
- Turnover rate
- Product performance
- Lack of education and information

The true mission statement of customer service is to continue to build service with each and every customer interaction.  
A satisfied customer is a repeat customer,

and puts dollars in your pocket.

## SAF RESOURCES

Visit the SAF Market at [www.safnow.org](http://www.safnow.org) for materials to boost your business. Here are a few items to check out:

- **The Perfect Sale.** Great for new hires, train staff with this course. It follows a retail sale from start to finish, covering how to ask the customer the right questions to verifying the final order details.
- **Flower & Plant Care Manual and/or online course.** Train staff on proper care and handling with the industry's ultimate authority on cut flowers, potted plants, bedding plants and foliage plants.
- **Flower Name Tags.** Label and price every item in your store, including individual plants, containers on display and even the display units. Use SAF's Flower Name Tags for a professional look.
- **Flower Therapy Pocket Guides.** Train staff on using the language of colors and emotion to create excitement for floral gifts.
- **Hip Giver's Guide.** Distribute the Hip Giver's Guide to keep customers excited about giving floral gifts. A PDF is available for download at [www.aboutflowers.com/hipguide.htm](http://www.aboutflowers.com/hipguide.htm).
- **[www.safnow.org](http://www.safnow.org).** Visit the Marketing Tips and Tools section for digital materials and promotional advice. Check out ideas in "Create Customer Loyalty and Generate Referrals (Marketing Kit 2006)" under Specialty Programs.

## SUGGESTED READING

- "Delivering Knock Your Socks Off Service," by Kristin Anderson and Ron Zemke
- "Why We Buy : The Science Of Shopping," by Paco Underhill
- "Success strategies for retail selling," by Lynda Paulson