

EXOTIC MISTAKES

> I went back to the Midwest this month and offered a straightforward scenario: I posed as a proud uncle whose niece just got a big promotion and would be moving to Hawaii. For the most part, the clerk took my lead and ran with it; however, at the beginning of the call she made one of the worst customer service blunders possible. Intrigued? Good! Listen to the recording to see if you and your staff can spot it.

The Opportunity: Congratulations from Afar

The salesperson and I talked about what a big move this was for my niece, and how exciting it would be for her. As always, I played dumb, leaning on the employee to guide me on what to order and even what to spend. I explained that I couldn't go west to see my niece, so I was opting to send flowers instead. I gave the clerk a blank check. Where would you have started me?

Thumbs Up: Energy and Personality

I enjoyed this woman's enthusiasm, energy and ability to pick up on some clues. She was efficient and thorough and laughed with me on the phone. It was refreshing to hear someone connect the dots and offer a design appropriate to my needs instead of the typical, robotic, "Our arrangements start at..." Those things may not seem like a big deal, but as you listen to the recorded call each month (and dip back into the archives), notice how most salespeople keep a super-stern demeanor. I say it in my training sessions all the time: The floral industry takes itself *way too seriously*. Let down your guard, have more fun at work and get chatty with customers. They like it!

Thumbs Down: Going Low on Price

Beyond the huge breach of customer service protocols in the beginning on the call —

again, you'll have to listen at safnow.org/TimsCalling to hear that — this clerk made multiple gaffes that had a negative impact on the sale. To start, she insulted me by asking, "Is there a price range?" Yes, there is a price range, but it's in your head, as the sales expert, and you need to make that suggestion to a customer and then let him or her go lower or even higher!



Don't be afraid to hear a customer say, "I don't want to spend that much." The clerk also offered, "Our minimum is \$30." Who cares? I, as the customer, never asked! She took the card message *after* we talked about flowers. That approach is clunky and backward. Always take the card message before selling your product so you know what to offer based on the occasion, relationship between sender and recipients, and the number of names on the card. Sadly, I was not offered the chance to personalize the flowers with a balloon, candy or other finishing touch. Finally, even when I asked her if I was spending enough she tentatively offered a higher price by stating, "We can go to \$90 or \$100 if that isn't going to hurt you." Can you imagine a waiter offering you a steak and saying, "You can order that prime rib at \$45 if that isn't going to hurt you"?

The Takeaway: Offer What They Should Send, Not What You Would Spend

I regularly remind staff that the customers are the ones paying for the flowers, not themselves. It's easy to overlay our own spending patterns and budgets onto what you recommend to customers, *but* when you do that everyone suffers: The shop doesn't make as much money, the recipient is underwhelmed, and the sender is disappointed. Customers rely on professional florists to offer the best design for their needs. They trust us. A common customer complaint I hear: "The flowers were pretty. They got there on time. They smelled wonderful *but* they weren't as big as I thought they would be. If I had just been told to spend more money, I would have!" Don't let that happen in your store anymore! 🌸



The Recording

You're only half-done learning from this column. Next step, gather your staff 'round a store computer, read this column to them and then play the recording of my call to this shop by visiting safnow.org/TimsCalling. Turn it into a group discussion: Ask your team for feedback on what they heard and have them talk about how they can make better sales moving forward.

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
How does your staff REALLY treat customers? Email tim@floralstrategies.com to volunteer your shop for a free Tim's Calling undercover shopping call, anonymity guaranteed. (Retail value: \$50.)