

WITHOUT DEEPEST SYMPATHY

> What happens when you take a delicate funeral order without showing empathy for the sender? This issue has always been a pet peeve of mine. Even when I called this major, multi-store floral business, I was treated clinically. And sadly, this happens too often. We need to step up our service to make a better impression to customers.

The Opportunity: Make It Special

I intentionally fed the clerk details about the occasion in the hope that she would “connect the dots” and help me choose a spectacular design to commemorate my grandmother. I expressed frustration at not being able to attend services in person (an obvious clue to aim high) and added that this arrangement was being sent on behalf of many children and grandchildren (an even bigger clue that this was a premium order). Based on that shop’s pricing, she should have offered me a \$250 design — at the very least.



Thumbs Down: SALES INSANITY

I spent more than seven minutes on this call, yet I never heard a humanizing comment from the clerk such as, “I am sorry for your loss” or even, “That’s sad to hear.” Either nicety could have served as a springboard for both better service and a higher sale — a chance for the sales clerk to reassure me in my purchase by sharing something like, “And I will help you to choose some beautiful flowers to celebrate her.”

From this missed opportunity, the call took a turn for the worse. She used the ludicrous “stack of numbers” approach: “We can do something at \$125, \$150, \$175.” How does that help me? What made her think I would understand what those prices meant? Please make sure that you listen to this recording with your team members, so they never make that mistake.

A much better approach is to describe the design, paint a picture and put the price at the end. When I pressed her for her advice, she said, “You could go **as high as** \$200, but you really do not need to spend that much.” Yes, she really said that! This was after we talked about the large group sending the flowers. And for the record, this shop is outside Chicago, not in a small town.

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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, available at 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 funeral sales moving forward.

Thumbs Up: The Extras Count

When I approach selling add-ons in my training program, someone inevitably chimes in, “Except with funerals, of course, right?” Wrong! I was pleased to hear how easily, comfortably and professionally the clerk asked if I wanted to add a personalized ribbon. She suggested wording and told me the price, so that I could make a buying decision. Additionally, she did some probing and offered a beautiful color scheme for the design.

The Takeaway: They Can Only Buy What You Offer

This call is a great exercise in understanding that you can be articulate, efficient and courteous, as this woman definitely was, but still give inadequate customer service. Had I been offered a \$350 easel spray, I would have bought it. And if that was too much for my budget, I would have reacted the way your customers will, and simply asked for a lower price or different design. Remember, you won’t sell \$350 easel sprays until you offer \$350 easel sprays. 🌿



Tim Huckabee, FSC, is the president of FloralStrategies.com, which teaches ultimate customer care to retail and wholesale florists. tim@floralstrategies.com

SHUTTERSTOCK/SEVENTYFOUR