

Communicate on Cue

High-Stakes Conversations, Calm Responses &
Professional Confidence

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Program Agenda

- What are high stakes conversations?
- Common patterns under pressure
- Review two scenarios
- Self awareness & tips to de-escalate
- Employer - employee conflict
- One minute self check - body language
- Role playing exercise
- Reflection & discussion

What Are High-Stakes Conversations?

High-stakes conversations occur when:

- Emotions are elevated
- Expectations are high
- Time or money is involved
- Relationships or reputation are at risk

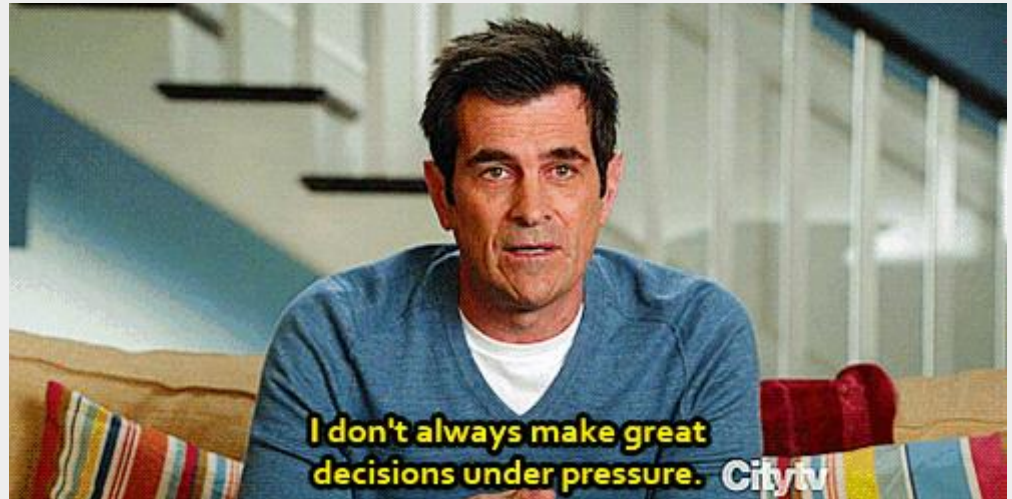
Common floral examples:

- Weddings and funerals
- Missed or delayed deliveries
- Product substitutions
- Budget vs. expectation gaps
- Damaged or delayed product



Reflection

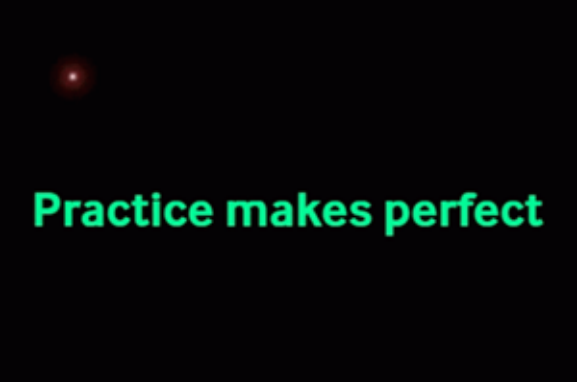
1. One conversation I've been avoiding is...
2. Under pressure, I usually react by...



Common Patterns Under Pressure

Typical mistakes made under stress:

- Talking more instead of listening
- Becoming defensive or overly apologetic
- Avoiding the issue
- Overpromising to calm the client
- Responding emotionally



Practice makes perfect

Skills Floral Professionals Often Lack Under Stress

Common gaps:

- Emotional regulation
- Boundary-setting
- Confident silence
- Clarifying questions
- Separating intent from impact



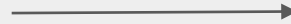
Recognizing Escalation Early

Verbal cues:

- Indirect messages through others
- Hesitation or vague approval
- Sudden reversals

Nonverbal cues:

- Distraction during approval
- Avoiding direct eye contact
- Rushed responses



Floral & Service Scenarios That Create Tension

- 1. Wholesaler places a large pre-booked holiday order with Grower for peak demand** -Shipment arrives: Several boxes show damage and hydration stress, stems are bent or broken, the shipment is short two boxes. **Can apply to Retail**
- 1. Designer's Choice Online Order** – Post-delivery complaint comparing flowers to a photo; dispute over value vs. total cost.

Turning Around a Tough Conversation

Effective turnaround steps:

1. Acknowledge emotion
2. Clarify facts
3. Offer realistic options
4. Reframe toward solutions

Wholesale/Grower Example: Shipment Issues at Peak/Holiday

Recommended Handling

Address the issue immediately with the grower

Separate emotion from facts (counts, condition, photos)

State the business impact and timeline pressure clearly

Collaborate on solutions (credit, replacement, freight adjustment)

Reinforce the long-term relationship while resolving the issue

Balancing Empathy with Boundaries

Empathy: “I understand this is a big day and details matter.”

Boundary: “Let’s confirm exactly what you need so I can find a substitution.”

Lake Forest Flowers – Boundary in Action:

- Change confirmed directly with the customer
- Modification made efficiently without debate
- Design integrity maintained

Delivering Difficult News Effectively

Most common mistake:

- Over-explaining or justifying

Better approach:

- Clear
- Calm
- Brief
- Pause

Lake Forest Flowers – Designer’s Choice Order Example:

“Designer’s Choice arrangements are created using seasonal flowers and current availability, so each design will vary from photos shown. The arrangement you received reflects the value selected and was designed at the full price point of your order.”

When Someone Freezes During Conflict

First skill to practice:

- Pause and breathe
- State facts clearly
- Anchor to policy or expectations
- Offer an appropriate alternative (if applicable)



Applied Example:

“I understand this is frustrating. Designer’s Choice arrangements vary by season and availability. Your order was designed at the full value selected.”

A Small Daily Habit That Builds Calm

Daily practice:

- Repeat-back listening

Example: “What I’m hearing is...”



De-Escalating Frustration in Real Time

1. Slow It Down

- “Let me make sure I understand.”
- “I can hear that this is frustrating.”

2. Validate Without Agreeing

- “That makes sense given your expectation.”
- “I understand why you’d feel disappointed.”

3. Reset Expectations

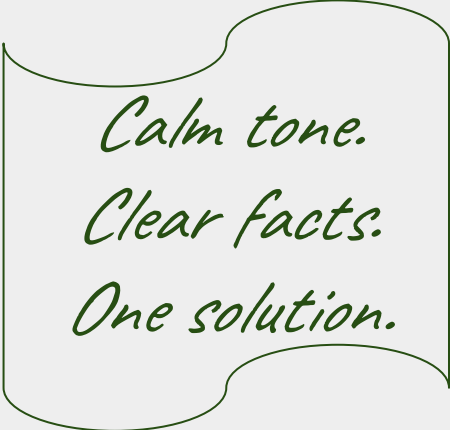
- “Here’s how this option works.”
- “The floral value reflects the product, not delivery or tax.”

4. Hold the Boundary

- “That’s not something we’re able to offer.”
- “Here’s what I *can* do.”

5. Redirect Forward

- “Moving forward, I recommend...”
- “Let’s talk about next steps.”



Calm tone.
Clear facts.
One solution.

Employer–Employee Difficult Conversations

Common internal high-stakes conversations:

- Performance feedback
- Schedule or availability conflicts
- Mistakes during peak seasons
- Attitude or professionalism concerns
- Burnout and workload stress

Key principles:

- Address issues early
- Be specific and factual
- Separate behavior from character
- Invite dialogue, not defensiveness



Handling Repeat Offenses

Common repeat issues:

- Excessive cell phone use during shifts
- Habitual lateness

Recommended approach:

1. Set clear expectations (written + verbal)
2. Address behavior promptly and privately
3. Use specific examples and patterns
4. Ask for employee perspective
5. State consequences clearly
6. Document conversations



Key Takeaways

High-stakes conversations are part of daily floral work

Skill—not personality—determines outcomes

Calm is contagious in shops, studios, and events

Boundaries protect teams, clients, and creativity

Practice builds confidence and leadership presence

Adjusting Delivery So the Message Lands

Tone

- Match calm, not emotion
- Lower volume to lower intensity
- Neutral ≠ cold

Timing

- Address issues early, not emotionally
- Avoid peak stress moments
- Pause before responding

Body Language

- Open stance, relaxed shoulders
- Eye contact without staring
- Stand at an angle, not squared off

People respond more to how you say it than what you say.

The One-Minute Self-Check Before You Speak

0–15 Seconds | Regulate

- Take one slow breath
- Drop shoulders, unclench jaw
- Lower your voice before speaking

15–30 Seconds | Check Timing

Ask yourself:

- Is this the right moment?
- Does this need privacy?
- Can this wait 10 minutes?

30–45 Seconds | Set Intention

Choose **one** goal:

- Clarify
- Set a boundary
- Problem-solve

45–60 Seconds | Choose Your Opening Line

- “I understand why this is frustrating.”
- “Let me clarify how this works.”
- “Here’s what I can do.”

Role-Playing Exercise

Scenario Options:

1. Designer's Choice online order complaint
2. Wedding bouquet last-minute color change
3. Valentine's Day roses & freeze/heat damage complaint
4. Wholesaler with damaged/shorted product at holiday from Grower

Roles:

- Client
- Floral professional
- Observer

Focus on:

- Clear care-instruction reinforcement
- Calm refusal with empathy
- Professional closing language

Reflection & Discussion

Take 2 minutes to reflect:

- Which scenario feels most challenging?
- Where do you tend to react instead of respond?
- What skill will you practice first?

The way I communicate shapes my:

- Team culture
- Client trust
- Brand reputation

Homework:

- “One phrase I’m going to practice is...”
- “One habit I’m taking back to my team is...”

Closing Reflection

"Your flowers may open the door — your communication determines what clients remember."

Thank you!



Additional Resources

Social Media & Design Ownership – Sample Policy

Design Ownership

- Floral designs created during work hours, using company materials or for company clients, are the property of the business.

Posting & Credit

- Team members may share work they helped create **with permission**.
- Posts must credit the business clearly (tag, mention, or caption).

Personal Branding

- Personal portfolios and social accounts are encouraged.
- Original work created on personal time, with personal materials, belongs to the individual.

Professional Standards

- No client names, pricing, or behind-the-scenes images without approval.
- Content must reflect the brand's values and professionalism.

Example Language for Repeat Offenses

Cell phone use: “I’ve noticed you’ve been on your phone several times during design hours this week. Our expectation is that phones are used only on breaks. Is there something going on I should be aware of?”

Tardiness: “You’ve arrived late three times this month. Being on time is essential for team flow and customer service. Moving forward, arriving late may result in reduced shifts or formal write-ups.”

Example Language – Design Ownership Conversation

Suggested phrasing: “The arrangements created during your shift are part of our company work and represent our brand. You’re welcome to share photos, but they must credit the shop and cannot be presented as independent work.”

Follow-up boundary: “If you’d like to build a personal portfolio, we can discuss projects created on your own time or collaborative crediting options.”

Design Ownership & Social Media Boundaries

Common issue:

- Employees photographing arrangements made during work hours and posting them as personal work

Key principles:

- Designs created on company time belong to the business
- Clear crediting guidelines protect everyone
- Social media policies should be explicit

Recommended approach:

1. Address promptly and privately
2. Clarify ownership and expectations
3. Offer appropriate alternatives for sharing
4. Document the conversation

Communication, Leadership & Brand Reputation

Strong communication:

- Builds trust with clients
- Protects your brand in high-emotion moments
- Models professionalism for teams
- Turns challenges into loyalty opportunities