

DEFLATED CONGRATULATIONS

> Don't make customers BEG to spend BIG money at your shop! I've been writing a lot this year about *listening* to customers and not simply *hearing* them. That's a theme I'm returning to this month, for a call I made to a busy store in New England — you'll hear the accent! I posed as a dad who had just learned about his daughter's engagement and wanted to send congratulations flowers. Was I well served or was I undersold? Read my synopsis below and be sure to play the recording of the actual phone call for your staff (available at safnow.org/TimsCalling). Trust me, when they hear someone else making familiar mistakes, they will change their habits.

The Opportunity: Engagement Cheer

I explained that I was calling from out of state, so I needed the best flowers to stand in my place to express my joy about this good news. I joked that this engagement was long overdue, a subtle hint that I wanted to send an impressive design. The card message read, "We are THRILLED for you and Kenny. All our love, Mom and Dad." I stated, "I know nothing about flowers. What do you suggest?" I also volunteered, "I want it to look NICE." In short, I communicated very clearly that this was an epic occasion, made no mention of a budget and essentially begged her to give me her professional guidance.

Thumbs Up: Basic — Really Basic — Sale Details Covered

I struggled to find anything this salesperson did or said that made a good impression on me as a customer and reflected well on the store. While she did not go above and beyond the call of duty, at least she nailed a few items I consider to be absolute basics. She ran my credit card *before* hanging up (and caught that it was declined) and asked if I was a new customer (to search for me in the system). But

all of this is the bare minimum, and none of it helped create a relationship or good conversation. Remember, when you answer the phone you ARE the flower shop to the caller. When I make these calls (and review the recordings) I ask myself, "What did this clerk say or do that made the sale memorable?" Sadly, for this call the answer is nothing.

Thumbs Down: No Personal Connection

Customers often share little, intimate slices of their lives with us when ordering flowers, and we should acknowledge those moments. When I stated my reason for ordering, the clerk should have at the very least said, "That's exciting news" or "Congratulations to you, too!" (When I told her that heartfelt card message, her response was "Uh, OK.") Her total disregard for my excitement cast a shadow over the call. She then proceeded to robotically ask the all-too-common-and-ridiculous question: "How much do you want to spend?" Followed by the verbal equivalent of rubbing salt in the wound: "Our arrangements start at \$40." UGHHHHH!! Why do we let staff give such poor service? Then, I gave her another opportunity and asked what she would recommend spending. Her answer: \$50. Yes, her professional advice on how I should celebrate a major event in my child's life was to spend \$50. (It gets worse! Listen to the recording to discover the debacle that ensued when I asked about attaching a congratulations balloon.)

The Takeaway: Better Training for Better Results

To me, this call demonstrates a huge problem that is slowly chipping away at the retail floral industry: a total lack of in-store training and continuing education. I truly hope that you cringe when you listen to the recording (and maybe even recognize it as not being terribly far off from what might have been said by your staff). In defense of the woman, she was just saying and doing what she learned from all those working around her. I am actually very excited about this call since it is an amazing learning opportunity. The mistakes made by the sale rep are easily corrected. I encourage you to ask your team what could have been done better and then discuss and teach them how to integrate those concepts into their sales approach. 🌱



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. And keep all the feedback coming about how you are using this column and the audio file to educate your staff about the best way to take a phone sale!

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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.)