

Counter Intuitive: Smart sales and service tactics

By Tim Huckabee



"Sorry we messed up your last order... what'ya wanna spend today?"

Capitalize on Second Chances

The SCENARIO:

While placing an order, the customer says that she was unhappy with the last arrangement she sent.

The GUT REACTION:

Many salespeople become either defensive or overly apologetic when they hear this statement. Neither is good. It's crucial to deal with the facts, and not the emotions, as you strive to give better customer service.

The SMARTER RESPONSE:

Step One — Set the tone

Tell the customer you're sorry she was disappointed and immediately ask for either an order number or the recipient or sender's last name. This way, you can acknowledge the problem but in the same breath start to seek out the details that will help you deal with the situation properly. Reassure her that you're going to give extra special attention to the order she is placing today.

Step Two — Review the "Problem" Order

Confirm the details with the customer (making sure that she got the correct order in the first place.) For example, "According to the computer, we sent one of our medium-sized vase arrangements in spring colors to your sister last Wednesday — is that what you saw?" This simple approach makes it easy to identify the problem. The customer will come back and tell you exactly what disappointed her. For example, "But no one told me it would only be a medium, the 'girl' said it would be a 'nice size'" or, "It was filled with all purple and blue flowers, those are not what I call spring colors."

Step Three — Charm her

Sound professional — and earn her respect — by offering to deal with the problem pragmatically. For example, "I'm sorry that you didn't like the deeper colors we sent last time. Let's talk about the specific colors you'd like us to use on today's order." However, maybe there was another type of problem — the flowers died quickly, the design was created in the wrong container, etc. In those situations you should offer some compensation towards today's order. Each shop has its own policy and philosophy for the amount that should be offered, but I feel at least free delivery or a 20 percent discount is reasonable.

Every complaint is different. If you view handling them as a fact-finding mission and react to just the facts, you'll find customers tend to change their tone rather quickly.

Tim Huckabee is president of Floral Strategies, a one-on-one sales and customer service training company exclusively for florists. Got a customer service challenge? Tell Tim and he'll tackle it in an upcoming column. E-mail tim@floralstrategies.com or call (800) 983-6184.

Just Browsing Online Sources for the Floral Industry

www.ColorMatters.com

Did you know women are more color-conscious than men and their color tastes more flexible and diverse? Or that the color blue-green is more favored among women than men? Log onto this site for more color theories and read the research that backs them up. The way color is transmitted can differ depending on lighting and background colors — learn how to prevent it from varying in your store by clicking the "color research" link at the bottom of the right column. Scroll down and select "color matching in a retail environment."

Don't Miss: Details on using color to create harmony in your shop. Click on "color & design-art" in the left column and select "basic color theory" to learn the basic color wheel and formulas for color harmony.

www.A9.com

Amazon joined the crowded ranks of search engine services with this site, launched in test mode in early May, giving online consumers another way to find whatever they need on the Web, including a florist. Google supplies A9.com's search results, but the site differs from Google and other search engine services — A9.com users sign on with a username and password from their regular Amazon.com account. By registering users, A9.com offers features other search engines don't, including a "Search History" that lets users access information from the site's servers about all their A9.com searches from any computer at any time.

Don't Miss: The toolbar's "Diary" feature, where users can take notes on any Web page, and reference them whenever they return to the page, from any computer.