

# floral strategies

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Tim Huckabee

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BY TIM HUCKABEE

## finishing touches

Tips to help your staff increase “add-on” sales.

A request I receive frequently from flower shop owners is to train their staffs to sell more add-on items. Add-ons are an easy source of extra revenue—without having to attract additional customers—but there’s often some difficulty in getting all employees on board with selling them.

In my training sessions, I start by deconstructing the sales approaches that are currently being used by the sales staffs. The conversation always heats up when we get to selling add-ons. I hear a range of responses from “I just don’t like them, so I don’t sell them” to “We have a really crappy selection of balloons.”

Additionally, some salespeople are inconsistent (subtext, forgetful) about offering them to customers. And some designers and/or drivers are notorious

### sales: a numbers game

I have learned that selling add-ons, from balloons to stuffed animals, is simply a numbers game: The more often customers are offered the chance to purchase additional items, the more items are sold.

Recently I heard an interesting point about selling add-ons—sort of. Back when the major burger chains offered to let you “giganticize” your fries for just 39 cents more, they made a killing. Their secret was consistency. In other words, the edict came down from corporate that every cashier in every restaurant had to offer every customer the upgrade option. Though this line frequently was repeated with less than stellar enthusiasm, it was effective overall because it created awareness about an option for customers.

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for not attaching the items to the orders, leading the salespeople to avoid selling them for fear of customer reprisals.

Last, but not least, is the special “psychic” salesperson who tells me, “I can just tell when a customer will or won’t appreciate a balloon.” My response to that is always, “No one can truly determine that. If you really could, you wouldn’t be working here; you’d have your own TV show!”

### techniques that work

Often I am informed that a shop does a great job of selling add-ons at holidays but falters during the rest of the year. Why? Because the shop owner often makes it easier for the staff to sell those items during the hectic holidays through a variety of ways.

Read on for my 10 top ways to make selling add-ons an integral part of your sales process every day.

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**1. Start with a quality selection of balloons, stuffed animals, candy, etc.** If necessary, upgrade your offerings.

**2. Upgrade your language, too.** Instead of *asking* the tired question, “Do you want a balloon with that?” *say*, “As a ‘finishing touch,’ we can attach a Happy Birthday balloon to the flowers for just \$5!”

**3. Print a list of “trigger words” for your staff to follow.** Whenever I type Happy Birthday, Get Well Soon, Happy Anniversary, etc., on a card, I automatically offer an add-on (excuse me, “finishing touch”!).

**4. Provide some additional verbal ammo to help in the sales process.** Statements like “A balloon will double the size of your gift” and “We can personalize the gift by arranging the flowers in a vase in her favorite color,” empower timid salespeople to sell better.

**5. Drill into your staff that taste is subjective, not objective.** A salesperson might not like stuffed animals and never send one on a personal order, but that should not prevent him or her from selling those items.

An add-on item doesn't have to be only a fraction of the cost of the arrangement. I frequently sell a \$25 vase to someone spending \$75 on an arrangement.

**6. Price all the items.** This may sound like a no-brainer, but I am forever searching for price points in a shop's computer or on the display stands. Clear pricing helps both the staff and the customers.

**7. Code all your add-on items in your system.** If all items are not coded, update the list. And while you are at it, print a “cheat sheet” to post by all the terminals.

**8. Offer incentives.** There are many options for sales incentives, such as offering a bonus to the salesperson who sells the most of a selected item during a specified period. I also have seen commissions paid for every add-on sale, even for containers or other items that you want to move out.

**9. Reinforce the process.** Keep your eyes and ears open to what your staff is doing, and let them know you are monitoring these extra sales. Print reports on your point-of-sale (POS) system, and hold the staff accountable.

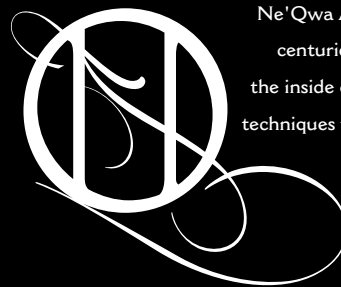
A few years ago, a flower shop owner in Virginia told me he was perplexed that one of his salespeople sold circles around the other two. I knew the problem immediately and confirmed it after sitting in the phone room for 30 minutes: The “star salesperson” simply offered some additional option (“finishing touch”) to nearly every customer. If one salesperson can sell add-ons successfully, all your salespeople can, too.

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**10. Finally, expand the range of items available for your staff to sell.** I know that every flower shop is constantly striving to battle the competition, and product differentiation is one way to do that. Consider offering tickets to the multiplex (at a respectable markup). Gift certificates to local restaurants and day spas are excellent choices, too. What about a coupon book from a car wash? That's a gift nearly any man or woman, teen or grandparent would appreciate.

And don't get hung up on price points. There is no rule that says an add-on item has to be only a small fraction of the cost of the arrangement. I frequently sell a \$25 vase upgrade to someone spending \$75 on an arrangement. Why? Because I gave him or her the option to spend more. ■

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