

floral strategies

Training florists to prosper!

Book on-site training at YOUR SHOP!

Boston - March 5
New York - March 12
Philadelphia - March 19
Atlanta - March 26
Miami - April 2
St Louis - April 9
Chicago - April 16
Denver - April 30
Dallas - May 7
Houston - May 21
Phoenix - June 4
San Diego - June 11
Los Angeles - June 18
San Francisco - June 25
Seattle - July 9

Offering the only on-site customer service, sales and technical training program in the floral industry!



Tim Huckabee

floralstrategies.com
800.983.6184



BY TIM HUCKABEE

you don't say

The language you use in your shop can affect your image. Here are several words and phrases to avoid.

I often hear that the retail flower business really is not about selling flowers but about selling feelings or emotions. It's our goal to make our customers feel "warm and fuzzy" about their purchases. While I agree with that concept, I think florists can go much further to impress customers.

The tool that you and your staff can use to achieve that goal is *professional language*. Whether you are selling a \$25 bouquet or booking a \$5,000 wedding, how you speak and the words you choose can make all the difference.

I am a big fan of using analogies to illustrate my points, and for this point, I have one about cars: Isn't it funny that if you buy a 2005 economy car from a dealer, it's referred to as "used," but if you choose a luxury brand 2005 model, you're given the privilege of purchasing a "pre-owned" vehicle? No matter what you call it, it's a car that someone else has previously owned and driven, but the language used by a savvy dealer can change your impression (and maybe help justify your purchase).

bad words/good words

I have developed a list of more than 40 critical words and phrases that florists can use to sound more polished and professional, and here are a few of my favorite bad terms and my suggestions for their replacements.

1 Do/Create. At the top of my list is that poor little two-letter word "do,"

which is beaten to death in flower shops every day. You *do* the laundry, but you *create* or *design* a flower arrangement. With just that one minor change, you will differentiate your shop from the competition. When you are booking weddings, it will be easier for a bride to spend hundreds of dollars on the special designs that you are going to *create* for her, rather than *do* for her.

2 Filler flower/Accent flower. Another term on my list is "filler," which, in my opinion, is what goes into meat loaf and hot dogs—not flower arrangements. Regardless of whether you are talking about baby's breath or Queen Anne's lace, telling customers you will finish their rose arrangements with "accent flowers" paints a much prettier picture. If you're asked "What's an accent flower?" you can say, "We'll add baby's breath [or waxflowers or *Limonium* or whatever] to complement the roses [or main flowers] in your design." Trust me, they'll get it.

3 Nice/Beautiful. "Nice" is a four-letter word. If you had a nickel for every time "nice" has been said in your store, you'd be reading this from your beachfront villa in the Caribbean. I advocate using "beautiful" as the new "nice." Here's my logic: Customer A calls and asks to have a \$25 bouquet ready for pickup. Customer B calls and orders a \$150 centerpiece for a dinner party she's having. Both A and

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 147)

success strategies

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 40)

B ask me at the end of their call, "Is that going to look *nice*?" My response to both is identical: "Of course, the flowers will be *beautiful*!"

"Beautiful" is so great because it doesn't have to be tied to a price point; it makes every customer feel great about his or her purchase. When I do on-site training, I often am asked about other adjectives such as "glamorous," "elegant" and so on. My answer is to definitely use them but do so cautiously. For example, I might refer to the \$150 centerpiece as "glamorous" but probably would not say that about the \$25 bouquet. The short answer: Stick to "beautiful"; it's always appropriate, and customers are reassured by hearing it.

4 Problem/Question. You don't have "problems" in your store any more. Here's my example: "Mrs. Customer, may I have a number to reach you today in case I have any problems with your order?" Yikes! You already are planting a negative thought in her head even before she has hung up.

Play the ambiguity card instead, saying, "Mrs. Customer, may I have a number to reach you today in case I have a question about your order?" Yes, that question might be asking her for a new credit card because the first one was declined, but you are still keeping your conversation positive.

5 Wire-service order verbiage. When you go to the dry cleaner, do you expect to be told what chemicals and machines will be used on your sweater? No. You simply expect to be given a ticket and told when to collect your garment.

Now think what your staff is telling customers who want to send flowers out of town. "That's a wire order, and we have a \$7.95 fee for that and a \$40 minimum. I can contact a florist in that town although I am not sure if they have that container." Good grief. All she wants to do is send flowers to her aunt, not get a flow chart of the wire-out process.

Like the dry cleaner, I don't want to confuse the customer with all the technical details and possible issues. Instead, I like to instill confidence in the customer by simply and truthfully saying, "We'll work closely with our favorite flower shop in that city." If the order is going to a small town, I modify my statement to, "We'll find the best florist in that town for you." Although I have not said that I am going to *call* the florist, I have implied that I am going to take the best order possible (proper budget, clear description and a second choice) and communicate it to that shop.

Remember, watch your language because it can affect your bottom line. For more samples of professional florists' language, please contact me. ■

Tim Huckabee is president of FloralStrategies, an on-site training organization for retail florists based in New York, N.Y. For further help with selling, contact him by phone at (800) 983-6184 or by e-mail at contact@floralstrategies.com, or visit www.floralstrategies.com.

CELEBRATE YOUR INNER SPIRIT

NE'QWA DECORATIVE ORNAMENTS & EGGS

NE'QWA FRAGRANCE LAMPS

NE'QWA CANDLE HOLDERS



Ne'Qwa Art™ is proud to bring you the centuries-old tradition of painting on the inside of glass. The same meticulous techniques that captivated emperors and art connoisseurs ages ago are used to create each of our decorative accessories. After all...true beauty comes from within.

 Ne'Qwa Art™

For information about our showrooms, or to view our product line, visit us at www.neqwa.com or call 877.821.8635

Circle No. 157 for Free Info