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in a heart shaped vase"
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Say "Hello" to Higher Average Sales!

Every time the phone rings in your

shop there's an opportunity:
you can take an order for the
normal amount or you can
offer a premium arrangement,
which would make the customer happier
and the shop more successful. It's your
choice. Maybe it's time to elevate your shop's
sales skills to the same level as your floral
design skills.

here is a huge disconnect between what consumers are willing to spend and what shops are willing to offer. It's one of the most obvious ways to increase sales for every shop, yet few owners are willing to respect the skills involved in selling in the same way they respect design skills.

For shop owners willing to learn and change, this opportunity can easily offset the entire effect of the economic downturn and the impact of order-gatherers and drop-shippers.

How can you tell if you have untapped potential in your average shop sale? Look up your average website order: that's what your customers are choosing on their own. You should expect an order taken by a professional florist to be the same if not higher.

Selling is not about being "pushy" or using strong tactics. It's about discovering what customers need and helping them choose the right flower design for the right purpose. It's called "suggestive selling" because all you do is make suggestions that guide the customers' purchases. The hard part is learning to listen and then describe a product before you recommend it. And that isn't hard once you and your phone crew make the commitment to learn the script and follow the sales process every time.

Step #1 - Mind Your Manners

No matter how stressful it is or how busy the shop might be, your phone crew should always answer with a friendly voice. Each caller should feel that the person who answers is smiling.

teleflora.

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Say "Hello" to Higher Average Sales!

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The most professional way to answer a shop phone is, "All Flowers. This is Sue" or something similar. That way, the callers know they've reached the right place and that Sue is ready to answer their questions and/or take their orders.

If the caller asks a question that the shop employee can't answer immediately, then it's okay to put the caller on hold after asking for permission. "I'm not sure. May I put you on hold for a minute to check on that for you?" Once given the "go ahead," don't leave the caller on hold for more than two minutes. If it's going to take longer than that, ask if you can call the customer back and get the call-back number.

Never begin taking an order by discussing price. A phrase such as 'How much did you want to spend?' degrades your products and your floral skills."

When callers are ready to place an order, take the order. Even if there are customers in the shop, once you answer the phone, serve that customer. Most orders won't take more than a few minutes to complete and in-shop customers can browse until you or another staff member can take care of them. If you put a caller who is ready to place an order on hold, you take a very real chance of losing that order.

Step #2 - Help Them Choose

Never begin taking an order by discussing price. A phrase such as "How much did you want to spend?" degrades your products and your floral skills. It should never be uttered in your shop. Customers aren't calling the shop to discuss the prices of flowers. They want to send an impressive gift to someone. Your employees should ask for the recipient's name and address and then for the enclosure card information so they can find out what the event is and get prepared to make suggestions.

After you get the name and address of the recipient ask, "How would you like the enclosure card to read? This starts the process off with the right focus – that of determining the occasion and the appropriate flower arrangement for it.

If the card is signed by several people instead of one person, then your staff should immediately switch gears and offer a higher priced design. For example, "Since this gift is from your family (your co-workers, several friends, etc.) then I'd suggest our Lushly Lavender arrangement that features a fresh-from-the-garden look incorporating roses, hydrangea and other flowers in shades of lavender and pink. It features a lavender vase in a satin glass finish and it costs \$150. How does that sound?"

Always start with one of your higher priced designs. If your customers rarely buy

designs that cost \$100 or more, then it's probably because you never offer them. Avoid the cardinal mistake of assuming a customer won't be interested in spending \$100 or more. Whether callers are sending flowers for a one-year or a thirty-year anniversary,

let them decide if they'll send a \$125 or a \$75 arrangement. Offer your best first and then let the customers guide you.

Step #3 - Suggest Add-ons

Always suggest an add-on. Add-ons enhance the purchase and set your shop apart because the arrangement is customized for the recipient. It also serves to move your average sale up.

Have a list of add-ons at each phone station and be sure that it becomes standard operating procedure to offer one with each order.

Enhancements are also a great way to increase your average sales and they're easy to suggest. Give your staff a script they can use and it will be that much easier for them to add more products to the initial sale. For instance, "We can add three premium roses to that arrangement for only \$18. It takes the look to a different level. Would you like that?" Or, "For something extra special,

we can arrange this bouquet in a beautiful heart-shaped vase that she'll want to keep forever for only \$10 more."

Remember that most of your customers want to send something that is not only appropriate, but that will be remembered. Help them accomplish this.

Step #4 - Use Your Website

Your phone crew should be ready to access your shop's website because, often, callers will be looking at the website when they place an order. If they aren't looking at it right that minute, then they likely have been looking at it recently and know what you have to offer.

When a customer refers to your website, you should access it immediately and find the design mentioned by the caller. Shop employees should tell the customers right then if you can send that design or if substitutions will have to be made. If you don't have all the particular flowers needed or that specific vase on hand, ask the caller what he/she likes most about the design and then your employee can help find a suitable substitution.

For example, the caller might say, "Oh, I know she loves pink roses." That lets you know that it's not the vase or the style that interests the caller – it's the color and roses. This will help you assist the customer in choosing another design that is equal to or even better than the one he/she is looking at on your website.

A well-trained phone staff should be able to salvage almost any order, even if what the caller asks for isn't exactly what the shop can provide. Only a tiny percent of callers have something so specific in mind that they can't be satisfied with a suitable substitution. It does take more creativity to work around a product that you are out of, but with some practice you can easily accomplish it.

When your sales team concentrates on selling products and they don't focus on price, you average sale will increase. Given the right choices, your customers will gravitate to higher prices and better quality gifts. This makes for a healthier shop and more satisfied customers. It's a win-win for those shop owners who are willing to learn and change.



Rich Salvaggio AIFD, AAF, PFCI

Teleflora Vice President



Keep it Clean and Fresh

Conditioning flowers correctly and keeping your work area and refrigeration units spotless are never-ending chores around the shop. But they're not only necessary - they're vital to your business and your customers' satisfaction.

an flowers ever be too fresh or your shop too clean? Well, no. The more ✓you know about keeping cut flowers fresh longer and easy, efficient ways to keep your design area and coolers clean, the less time you'll have to spend on those tasks. When you get into good cleaning and flower conditioning habits, they'll serve you well and save you money and customers.

One thing any florist never wants to hear is, "The flowers we received from your shop were dead in a couple of days." Such a statement can only mean one thing - you have a serious problem in your shop! What's worse is that you probably won't even hear that statement because most unsatisfied customers never let you know - you just never receive another penny from them and they tell everyone in their vicinity about the bad experience.

Flower conditioning relies on stem cutting, feeding, and the correct temperature maintained in your cooler, but there are other facets that can make a big difference. Cleanliness is also extremely important to keep bacteria at bay.

Seasonal Concerns

With autumn flowers and fillers comes more pollution than usual! Bouquets that feature items such as cattails, wheat, pods, millet, pussy willow, and gourds, can increase the amount of pollution in the buckets and other containers. To keep your stock fresh, clean bucket water every day or even a couple of times a day.

Gerberas are very popular flowers all year long, but are especially attractive in fall colors of bright yellow, orange, rusty brown, and eggplant. However, these flowers must be carefully conditioned or they will quickly develop droopy heads. Their hairy stems attract bacteria and the stems get blocked up easily, cutting off hydration so that the flower heads flop over. Use conditioning that is developed especially for these flowers and

you'll save yourself time and trouble. Crysal's sells a Gerbera tablet. Use it as directed and change the solution every three days to keep Gerberas fresh as daisies should be.

Up with Roses

Roses sell all year long and if you want to keep selling them and even sell more of them they need to last for a week or more. The most important thing you can do for rose longevity is to condition them immediately when they arrive in your shop. Prepare buckets first and then cut the stems and place them in the solution as quickly as possible. Use cold water and be sure to get the dose of solution correct as you prepare the holding buckets.

Be sure that your buckets are clean. Scrub them once with a stiff brush and again with a softer one. Leave in the anti-bacterial solution. It will add more protection for the flowers when they're placed in the buckets again.

Remove only the foliage that will fall below the solution level. Keep as much foliage on the stem as you can because it makes flowers more attractive and helps them stay fresh longer. Leave the guard petals on. They also assist in longevity. The only time you should remove them is when they're blemished. Flowers need leaves to get flower food into them, so retain about 35 percent for them to feed.

Allow bunches of roses with wrap intact to sit out of the cooler for at least 30 minutes to allow condensation to evaporate off the blooms and leaves.

The same premise applies to all flowers. Dry-packed flowers can and should be stored dry. Cut their stems and place them in buckets only a few hours before you use them in designs.

Be a Clean Machine

For flowers to flourish, you have to battle bacteria by keeping surfaces clean. Clean the inside of your cooler monthly, using a

horticulture detergent and a disinfectant solution. Wipe everything thoroughly, including mechanical components and drip

Don't use misters or foggers in your cooler because they will raise the humidity in your cooler and cause bacteria to thrive. Use a hygrometer to check for humidity levels of 90 to 95 percent.

Clean your design area throughout the day rather than once in the morning and again after you close. Make it easy by mixing bottles of ready-to-use floral cleaner and setting them in easy reach. Spray surfaces,



tools, and buckets several times a day or after big orders for weddings and funerals. Don't just sweep – wipe down the surfaces. Sanitation is an inexpensive way to reduce spoilage and increase flower longevity

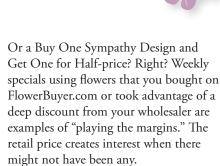
Sending out flowers that last longer than your customers expected them to is the best way to keep and grow your business. The good news is that this outcome is achievable. It's just a matter of practicing good habits.

NOTE: For an updated and current list of presentations and Teleflora in-person Academy classes visit the Teleflora Industry Relations Facebook page.



Playing the Margins

If you use discounts as a "last resort" tactic to liquidate merchandise, you have some good news coming. Sure, they work when you've run out of time and marketing ideas, but they can also be used to draw in more customers and actually bump up your sales of multiple items. Discounts don't have to erode your bottom line. They can make it grow! Here's how:



lovalty. Weddings, events, sympathy orders, and special occasion arrangements should be immune to discounting because customers don't expect price cuts on them. Who has a 50 Percent Off on Weddings sale?

's there ever a time when discounting

merchandise can encourage more

Marketing experts refer to this practice as

"marginal pricing" which basically means

discounting a few items to spur interest

and thus increase sales and/or customer

sales and profit? You bet there is!

A good rule of thumb is to use 50 percent as the direct cost of any plant, arrangement, or gift item. For marginal sales, don't discount more than 50 percent - hopefully more like 20 or 30 percent."

Find the Revenue

Even when you're working smaller margins, you should profit from them. Flower holidays don't need a boost. You shouldn't promote or even stock discounted merchandise during holidays, such as Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, or your Holiday Open House.

Offer a gift-with-purchase for early ordering, hold contests for gift cards or a free flower arrangement as a promotion instead of discounting merchandise.

You have a finite number of holidays in which to make the lion's share of your profit, so don't "marginalize" them by rolling back prices on anything. During flower holidays, your goal should be to sell more to each customer, not to discount.

Pricing Theory

Any marginal business needs to cover all direct costs, which includes floral

supplies, fresh product, and design labor. A good rule of thumb is to use 50 percent as the direct cost of any plant, arrangement, or gift item. For marginal sales, don't discount more than 50 percent - hopefully more like 20 or 30 percent.

There are exceptions. You could go up to a 50 percent discount for strategic purposes. For instance, this could be a "carrot" you offer to get your foot in the door of a hotel that you'd like as a corporate customer.

There are also times when discounts are part of getting the business. In many parts of the country, it's standard business practice to pay funeral homes a 20 percent commission on sales they book. In this case, it's good business because you would not have gotten the sale otherwise, and at 80 percent of retail, a sympathy order can be nicely profitable.

Discounting that Hurts

The biggest mistake florists make with discounting is they mistakenly believe that it's a weapon against bigger retailers. It's not. Any time you try to compete with a large discount giant, you're going to lose. Big time.



You may do a brisk business on discounted cash-and-carry wrapped flowers. It "feels" good to have some activity, but that time-intensive business could be siphoning away profit.

Assuming that your enthusiastic cash-and-carry flower customers will also call you to order full-price birthday bouquets and other special occasion gifts is erroneous thinking. These customers are buying "cheap," so the odds of them placing an \$85 order aren't in your favor. Keep in mind what supports your shop is arranged flowers bought over the phone or your website and priced in the \$79 to \$129 range.

How It Works

When deciding to discount something, be careful you don't undercut your high-margin business. If you primarily promote \$59.99 arrangements, you're discouraging customers to spend more. Customers who would spend more won't because your "most popular" arrangement seems to be \$60 instead of \$80 or \$125. In effect, by promoting a low-end arrangement, either through marketing or actual sales clerks pushing them, you're lowering customer expectations.

Always open the sales conversation by asking if your customers want a

recommendation. If they do, describe a beautiful arrangement that costs \$79 or higher and let the customer respond. Of course, never ask how much they want to spend or state that your arrangements start at a certain price.

In a perfect retail world, every product would have a healthy margin of profit. However, conditions are rarely ideal and that's when a few marginally profitable items or deals can tip the balance back in your favor.

Discounts work best selectively. You don't want consumers to view your shop as a place for bargains or deep discounts. That's not the crowd a florist wants to attract.

Marginal sales don't always pack a profit punch. They do help draw impulse sales, attract new customers, and keep your staff busier. They shouldn't be looked upon as anything but an extra dollop of icing – never as anything resembling your bread and butter.

Instead of investing time into how to attract customers with discounts, invest in ways to help customers see the value in your better products.

Effective Discount Strategies

Take a little time to think carefully about your objectives. You can craft a discount plan that helps your business grow in addition to moving out unwanted or seasonal merchandise. Here are some ideas:

- Gain new customers. A small discount, such as 10 percent, can turn browsers into buyers. This is an incentive often used by online stores for first-time buyers, but could also be implemented in your brick-and-mortar store.
- Bundle discounts for more impact. If you lower the price of a group of items bought together, as opposed to offering a discounted price on one product or service, it is possible to increase the average transaction size. Pair a less popular product with a proven best-seller to move out merchandise that is selling at a slower pace.
- **Reward customer loyalty.** Use discounts to build your reward program for faithful customers.
- Promote events and increase post-event sales. Anytime your shop hosts a workshop or demonstration event, you could offer a discount on some of the products used.
- **Drive a sense of urgency.**Discounts offered for a limited time may influence customers to buy now instead of later.
- Increase referrals. Offer a discount to customers who refer their friends, and offer the friend a discount on their first purchase.
- Celebrate with your customers. Give your customers a discount on their birthday. You may already have this information in your database for your regular customers, but you could ask newer customers the date of their birthday when they are at the check out counter.

Potpourri



Certain behavior can poison staff morale. Here are examples of managerial toxic habits you should avoid:

- Silence is not always golden. Just because no one speaks up after you issue an order, request, or challenge doesn't mean everyone is on board. Encourage feedback.
- Don't postpone certain topics. Air out grievances, mistakes, and misunderstandings and get them over with. Don't keep putting them off in hopes they'll go away or resolve themselves.
- Never dismiss ideas. Nothing kills enthusiasm quicker than having your suggestions shot down over and over again. Listen and be flexible.
- Don't give preferential treatment. Don't allow an employee to miss deadlines and break rules without consequences. Treat everyone the same and expect them to respect your wishes.
- Don't put off decisions. It's prudent to think through important decisions, but don't let it go too far. You want to avoid endless ideas and planning without any executing. Your staff will lose confidence in you.

Delivery Fee Checkup

Are you charging less than \$9.95 for local deliveries? If you are, then you're below the national average. Many shops are at \$14.95 and above. No matter how small your shop or your community, you can – and should – charge a fair price for this valuable service.

Studies have shown that delivery fees are one of the least noticed charges by floral consumers. Your customers are used to paying delivery and service fees. They obviously feel the service is worth it. Many shop owners are reluctant to raise delivery fees in fear you would lose customers. In tests by the TeamFloral consulting group with hundreds of shops, delivery fee increases negatively affects one or two customers out of a hundred!

Still skeptical? You can easily test it for yourself. Raise your fees today. Pay careful attention to each call as orders are placed. If anyone encounters resistance, you can immediately drop the fee and no one except the few callers will have ever known.

Don't Sell Price this Holiday

Big box and grocery stores sell tons of flowers and plants, but with little if any creativity, imagination, or professional expertise (unless you count generic care tags attached to plants). Price is the driving force for these outlets.

While fair pricing is part of any equation for success, it shouldn't be your primary consideration. Consumers go to florists not for the most inexpensive plant or floral arrangement available, but for something more. More service, more selection, more quality, more ...well, a lot more than these retailers can deliver. They want the best available and someone knowledgeable to help them make their selections.

That's one of the key reasons why Teleflora creates exclusive containers. Like you, Teleflora is setting the bar for higher standards and superior products. They are driving consumers to your shops by advertising quality - not price.

The florists who focus on product and expertise – rather than price – earn success for their shops. At the Society of American Florists convention, flower shop owners are given awards every year for innovation and success. There's no award for the shop with the lowest prices.

Retail studies and practical wisdom bear out that a business's image has a direct correlation to the price consumers are willing to pay for its goods and services. Based on websites, branding or advertised services, the consumer perceives that one florist is better than another. That florist has probably demonstrated a unique flair for creativity, a storehouse of knowledge, or a desire to provide excellent service.

Never undervalue the expertise and service you provide. Your knowledge of botanical care and handling and your ability to create designs that are unique and artistic elevates your shop's offerings and consumers' perception. Use that to your benefit by focusing on your service and products – not on low prices.



Just Between Us . . . Creating a Holiday Cheat Sheet

Almost every shop owner has the concept of keeping a holiday diary, but almost no one really does it. Here's this month's advice: actually do it!

Holidays are a big production for every florist. Shop owners who are more prepared seem to experience less stress and more profit. And who would say "no" to less stress?

In sessions leading up to holidays, TeamFloral meetings are abuzz with members sharing operational schemes, tips and tricks, and marketing ideas. Everyone has his or her own method for taming the holiday tiger.

Having listened to many owners share their methods and techniques for organizing the work, one specific tool stands out – a tool every user swears by. And it is so simple, that its importance may have slipped past you. That advantage is a simple daily diary of holiday events.

Longtime readers of Flowers and Profits have read about this tip for years, but it was only after working with hundreds of florists in TeamFloral that I discovered that very few actually do it. If you don't, put the idea of maintaining a daily diary during the holidays back on your list. For an investment of a few minutes per day, you'll save yourself hours of work in future years.

The hardest part of keeping a holiday diary is getting started. Make it easy on yourself and grab a spiral notebook the next time you're shopping. On Monday Nov. 15, make your initial entry, "Day 1 of my diary. Here is a list of things I've finished and some things I wish we had accomplished by now". Jot down anything that comes to mind. If there is nothing, celebrate by writing "nothing!" That's it. You're done for the day. The most important part is that you have started your journal. From here you can grow and develop it into an important tool.

The next step is to follow up each day by making an entry, however small, noting anything you would like to remember on that day and date next year. Also include items that you wish you had known about. Note the weather, the product that arrived and if it was early or late. List who was working and whether you had the right number of employees that day. Capture anything that comes to mind as being useful. The faster you can finish, the better. The goal is to get into the habit - not create a perfect record. If you miss a day, no worries! Catch up the following day.

Within a few weeks, you will have a developed the habit and have a powerful tool to help you for many years. You will also have a lot of notes to use for the holiday season in 2024.

Once the habit is part of your routine, you can work to refine and improve your diary. Keep making entries well through the holidays. It's important to include post-holiday events leading up to mid-January to make next year's seasonal breakdown easier. You will soon discover what is helpful and what you can leave unrecorded. Over time, your journal will improve and grow.

Now it's decision time. Will you pick up a pen and paper or shelve this as another idea that you'll get around to at some point. Maybe an analogy will help you get started. Think about how much effort it takes to push a parked car compared with the energy it takes to keep a rolling car moving. The difference is enormous. Getting started is the hard part. From there, it's just keeping the process going.

Wan Mc Manus

Flowers and Profits publisher Dan McManus gives the inside scoop – lessons he's learned from working with some of the smartest florists in America.

dollars & scents

How Do You Sound?

Speaking to customers on the phone is something you do every day. But have you



ever paused to consider how you sound? The tone of your voice can tell customers you're having a bad day or that you're in hurry. Your tone, pitch, and inflection can relay confidence, care, and attention to detail. Your goal? Make your customers feel that you're glad they phoned.

How do you accomplish this? Since your emotions are so transparently reflected in your voice, take these five steps to make sure you sound relaxed and pleasant when you answer the

- 1. Smile. Believe it or not, the shape of your mouth also shapes the sound of your voice. People can actually hear when you smile. Try keeping a mirror next to the phone to remind yourself to smile.
- 2. Think. Before you answer the phone, think about how you want to sound. Find a key word that makes you feel friendly or happy, such as "neighbor," or "sunshine." Repeat it internally as you answer the phone.
- **3. Imagine.** Instead of answering the phone to a stranger, imagine that a friend or relative is on the other end of the line. This will automatically add warmth to your voice.
- **4. Relax.** Take a deep breath and let it out slowly. Flex your shoulders to relieve tension. If it helps, sit down and be comfortable before you answer the phone.
- **5. Focus.** If you are multi-tasking when you answer the phone, you may sound distracted, giving a disorganized or flustered impression. Focus on the call you are answering and let other tasks wait a few minutes.



"If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else."

- Booker T. Washington

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Tips, tricks, and strategies to make it easier for your shop to become visible to online shoppers.

I received an email report from a marketing company showing that our shop gets a "D" in SEO. Should I be concerned?

Many marketing firms use reports to scare small business owners into a phone consultation. Sometimes the reports are valid but most of the time they are inaccurate or do not even show real data for your shop. It is important to know how Google ranks your shop because almost 60 percent of the shoppers looking online pick one of the three businesses listed in the Google "Map Pack" next to the map on a search page. You want to be one of the shops listed.

You can get a comprehensive Google ranking score for a small fee from the ranking tool most used by SEO experts at <u>localfalcon.com</u>. It will show how Google ranks your shop in relation to the other shops in town.

A free ranking tool that is less comprehensive is also available at https://teamfloral.com/local-search.

Our sales are down over last year. How do I tell if this is something we caused, if it is down due to the economy or if is a post-COVID condition?

Good question. The best way to gauge your growth is always compared to the same month of the previous year because of the cyclical nature of flower sales. This means that you want to compare October this year to October last year. COVID does make this method less accurate. The best way to measure your growth this year is to look at several past years – beginning with 2019.

When you are trying to determine a cause for changes in sales, you want to look at more than just sales totals. The information you need is probably in the details. If you are down mostly in weddings that is different than being down in sympathy business, for example. Also measure your website conversion rate for those years. Check for differences in your online advertising. All those aspects of your business are needed to identify the issue.

We are considering raising our delivery fee. Will that hurt sales?

It is very unlikely. At TeamFloral we've seen hundreds of shops raise delivery fees and have never experienced the shop owner reverse the increase. One florist did experience some issues when he announced the price increase to each caller and justified it with an explanation of the costs that had risen. Once he stopped mentioning it, there were no further issues.

Most of your customers do not know what your delivery fee is and do not use that as a factor in

ordering. It is like sales tax, just part of the process.

Send your questions to seo@teamfloral.com

Dan McManus is the founder of TeamFloral, the largest online marketing firm for florists.

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