

# Customer Pushback Response Guide

*What to say when a customer pushes back on your price*

The PRICE Quoting Worksheet tells you what an order is worth. This guide tells you what to say when a customer pushes back on that number.

*These are not scripts. They are frameworks — plain language that holds the price without being defensive, explains value without over-explaining, and keeps the relationship intact. Read them. Make them yours by using your own words to express these concepts.*

If a customer pushes back on your price, the answer is never to drop it immediately. Instant discounting signals that your original number was made up. It wasn't — you calculated it. Hold that price, at least long enough to explain once.

## “I can get it cheaper somewhere else.”

### What's really happening

They may or may not have an actual competing quote. Sometimes this is true. Often it's a test — they want to see if you'll fold. Either way, folding is the wrong move. So is arguing about the other shop. Only discuss what you will charge, what you will do. Discussing another business does not serve you or your business.

#### What to say

*“That's worth knowing. I can't speak to how another shop priced it — I don't know what's in their quote. What I can tell you is what's in mine: [briefly name 2–3 things, such as the digitizing, the two-color run, the name drops]. If their number covers all of that, it might be a fair comparison. If it doesn't, you may be looking at two different situations.”*

#### If they press further

*“I'm not in a position to match a number I can't see. If you'd like to share the other quote, I'm happy to tell you if we're comparing the same thing. If not, I understand — I'd be glad to work with you on a future order.”*

You are not chasing this order. You are being professional. That positioning matters more than the lost sale.

## “My last shop did it for less.”

### What's really happening

This is different from a competing quote. There's a ghost in the room — a number from the past that has become the customer's mental anchor. They're not shopping around; they're asking you to match a memory. The previous shop may have been underpriced, may have cut corners, or may simply have had different costs. You have no way to know. What you do know is what your work costs to produce.

#### What to say

*“I understand. Pricing varies a lot in this industry, and I can't speak to what that shop's costs were or how they built their price. What I can tell you is that my pricing is based on what this order actually costs to produce — materials, labor, and overhead — plus a margin that keeps my shop running. If you'd like to walk through what's included, I'm happy to do that.”*

#### If they push

*“I'm not able to match a price I didn't build. What I can do is make sure the work I deliver is worth what I'm asking.”*

A note on previous pricing: if a customer's last shop closed, went out of business, or stopped doing embroidery, that is sometimes the answer as to why their price was lower. Underpriced shops do not stay in business. You are still here because you price correctly.

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## “Can you do it for [lower number]?”

### What's really happening

They have a budget. They are asking if you will meet it. This is negotiation, not objection. The correct response is to evaluate whether meeting that number is possible without losing money — not to automatically agree or refuse.

#### What to say

*“Let me look at the scope of your request and see what's possible. The number I gave you is built around [what's in the order]. To bring it to [their number], I'd need to adjust something — either the quantity, the timeline, or what's included. Which of those gives you the most flexibility?”*

#### If the scope genuinely can't change

*“I've looked at it and I can't get there without cutting into something that would affect the quality or the delivery. My honest answer is that this order is priced correctly for what it is. I'd rather tell you that now than deliver something that doesn't represent my work.”*

Note what you are not doing: you are not apologizing for your price. You are explaining it once, clearly, and letting them decide.

## “That seems like a lot for just embroidery.”

### What's really happening

They don't understand what's in the price. This is the most common objection and the most fixable one. They're thinking about thread on fabric — not digitizing, setup, thread changeovers, individual name placements, sorting, packing, or the hours of labor this order actually requires.

#### What to say

*“I understand it looks like that from the outside. Let me walk you through what's actually in this order: [name 3–4 line items — the logo digitizing, the two different colors which means two separate runs, the individual names on six shirts which each have to be set up separately, and the finishing and packing for all 36 pieces]. None of that shows on the finished shirt, but all of it is real work that goes into creating this order for you.”*

#### The shorter version for lower-stakes situations

*“Embroidery looks simple once it's done. The work is in everything that happens before the machine turns on, and everything that happens after it turns off. That's what you're paying for.”*

## “I found the logo online — why are you charging for digitizing?”

### What's really happening

This is one of the most misunderstood costs in embroidery. The customer found an image online — a JPG, PNG, or PDF — and believes it is ready to sew. It is never ready to sew. A digital image and an embroidery file are two completely different things. The image tells you what something looks like. The embroidery file tells the machine exactly how to stitch it: every path, every color stop, every needle entry point. That file has to be written by someone who understands how embroidery works, every time.

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## What to say

*"I understand why it seems like that file should be ready to use — it looks like the logo you want. An image file and an embroidery file are completely different things: an image tells you what something looks like, but an embroidery file tells my machine exactly how to stitch it, what to stitch where and with what color of thread. That has to be built from scratch, even starting from a finished logo. Digitizing is the process of writing that file — a skilled step that happens before a single stitch can be created."*

## If they push back on the cost specifically

*"Digitizing is priced by the complexity of the design — color changes, level of detail, size. Your logo is [simple / moderately complex / detailed], so the cost reflects that. Once the embroidery file is built, I keep it on file for you — future orders with that same design won't need to be digitized again."*

If your shop charges a one-time digitizing fee and then waives it on repeat orders, say so. That positions the upfront cost as an investment in the ongoing relationship, not a recurring tax. If you don't have this policy yet, consider it — it's a strong retention tool.

## "I'm a small business / nonprofit / school — can you give me a deal?"

### What's really happening

They are asking you to absorb a cost that they wouldn't ask their landlord, their printer, or their accountant to absorb. The ask feels reasonable to them because embroidery seems like a craft, not a business. Your job is to be warm and to hold the line.

## What to say

*"I appreciate you sharing that, and I do want to work with you. Here's where I am: my pricing is based on the actual cost of producing the order, regardless of who the customer is. What I can do is help you modify the order so it fits your budget — a smaller quantity for now, a simpler design, or a longer timeline that gives me more scheduling flexibility. What matters most to you?"*

## If they push on a straight discount

*"I don't price by customer type, I price by the specifics of the order. It keeps things fair and it keeps my business viable. I'd be doing you a disservice if I cut corners on quality to get to a lower number."*

You can support small businesses and nonprofits. You do it by doing excellent work at a price that keeps your shop running. You cannot support anyone if your shop is not profitable.

## "We've been doing this for years and it's never cost this much."

### What's really happening

Long-term accounts are the most sensitive to price increases because any change feels like a betrayal of the relationship. The problem is that if your pricing was wrong before, a loyal customer is not a reason to keep it wrong. This is one of the hardest conversations, and one of the most important.

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## What to say

*"You're right, and I want to be honest with you about why it's different now. I've done a thorough review of what it actually costs to produce orders in my business — materials, labor, overhead — and realized my previous pricing wasn't covering everything it needed to. I'd rather tell you that directly than keep quoting a number that doesn't hold up. Your business matters to me, and I want to keep serving you well, which means I need to price this correctly."*

## If they threaten to leave

*"I understand. That's your call to make, and I respect it. If you decide to try another shop, I hope it works out well for you. If you ever want to come back, I'll be here."*

Losing an account that was never profitable is not a loss. It is a correction.

## "Can we just do fewer pieces to get the price down?"

### What's really happening

They think price scales linearly with quantity. It doesn't. Setup, digitizing, machine threading, quality checks — these costs exist whether you run 6 pieces or 60. Fewer pieces often means the per-unit cost goes up, not down.

## What to say

*"Fewer pieces will reduce the total cost of the order. The setup costs — digitizing, machine prep, threading, quality control — stay the same regardless of quantity. On a smaller run, those fixed costs get spread across fewer pieces, so the per-unit price often goes up rather than down. If budget is the concern, it's worth looking at what quantity actually gets you the best value rather than just going smaller."*

*This is also a good moment to mention your minimum order policy if you have one, or to build one if you don't. The PRICE Quoting Worksheet has a minimum order surcharge line for exactly this reason.*

**A note on discounting.** The PRICE Quoting Worksheet builds your PRICE Floor — the minimum the order should be quoted at to cover costs and hit your profit target. If you discount below the PRICE Floor, you are not giving a deal — you are paying a customer to take your order. Any adjustment below floor requires a conscious decision about what you are absorbing and why. It is not a healthy reflex to close the sale.

*"An embroidery professional's salary should not be determined by what is left in the bank at the end of the month. It should be achieved with profits from every single order." — Jennifer Cox, NNEP*