

Five Reasons Why Online Retailers Lose Customers

by

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Customer Service has steadily plummeted and it's beginning to show amongst the retailers, especially those who offer their products, goods, or services online. I am an avid online shopper, whom has experienced the most incompetent to the most wonderfully positive in customer service online. If you are an online retailer whose sole business is selling online, you should always expect to offer your customers more than they expect to receive if you wish to stay in business.

Consumers shop online for convenience, better prices, and having their packages delivered directly to their front doors. Some consumers also prefer to talk to or deal with customer service representatives via phone or by email. When a consumer encounters an online retailer who can't offer that convenience, or a retailer who can't deliver what it promises to its customers, they leave and it's very simple to move right along to the next online retailer. It's just a Skip, Hop, and a Click! Here are five reasons why online retailers lose customers.

Incompetence – I can't write or speak enough on this topic. Incompetence is the number one reason online retailers lose customers. In my own experiences, the customer service representatives, nor the managers and supervisors, are knowledgeable enough to assist the customers with their issues and concerns. So why would we continue to buy from people who know nothing about the products that they are selling? It wouldn't make any sense whatsoever! Some online companies just hire bodies to warm seats, give them a script, and instruct these people on reading exactly what the script states to all customers; no matter what the customer's issue may be! This is frustrating to no end, especially when there's a necessity to obtain a refund, return an item, or heaven forbid.....inquire about your order status! There is no excuse or reason why an online consumer, who has spent their money with an online retailer, be subjected to such unprofessional behavior. After all, the consumers are keeping the online retailers in business! Online retailers *must* invest in the proper training for all of their employees if they wish to remain in business; as improper communications and having no knowledge of the product you're offering, is a definite and surefire way to lose customers.

Untimely Responses – If an online retailer has a “store or company policy” on their websites – and they very well should – it is imperative that they adhere to it and detrimental to them if they don't! If your policy states that you respond to customers concerns and questions within a 24 hour period through whatever method you state is available (email, phone, mail, etc.,) you need to respond in a timely fashion within that 24 hour period specified on your website. There is no excuse for your untimeliness as an online retailer and business owner. Your business can only survive with the customers you can obtain and retain. If an online retailer can't do something as simple as provide a prompt response to a customer's concerns....they shouldn't be operating a business where customer contact is required. If you can't adhere to your own company's policy....there are other online retailers who would love to have your customers!

Rude Customer Service Representatives – It does not matter to me if you are the only online retailer who sells the cheapest shoes (*and I love shoes!!!!*) on the web planet, if your customer service representatives are rude to me; I would love to conduct business with the online retailer who has the same products, for twice the prices. I don't have the time and I'm sure most consumers feel the exact same way. Why subject ourselves to the rudeness of those who do not want to work that day, and so they take being miserable out on the consumer. And that one day of rude behavior from the customer service rep, has caused the online retailer a regular life-long customer. Who is more valuable in this situation? It's very simple to just hang-up on these people and move on to the customer service representative who wants to assist the consumer at the *Other Online Retailer*. Most companies utilized "Quality Control" methods in the past to ensure their customers received superior customer service by monitoring their phone calls, emails, etc. Of course, that was then....I'm not so sure those methods exist anymore or someone isn't properly doing their jobs!

Inaccurate Product Listings – If it happened *once* where an item was listed as "in stock" and it really wasn't, but the customer had no way of knowing this and placed an order for the item anyway....maybe you'll retain this customer if you can rectify this situation immediately. It will probably just be viewed as a minor oversight. If an item is listed as "in stock" and you – the online retailer - *know* that it is a "back ordered" item and the customer doesn't know this, but the customer places the order anyway- expecting to receive it in the time your website stated; this is unethical selling! I recently ordered a couple pairs of shoes from an online retailer I had never used before. I received a confirmation email later in the week that my order had shipped. When the shipment arrived, there was only one pair of shoes! I immediately called this company, after eight (8) attempts to get through I might add, to inquire about the other pair. The email shipment confirmation had both pair listed as "shipped." I talked to this girl who looked up my account only to tell me: "*Oh that item was "back ordered."*" Okay people that wasn't the incompetent part! I asked her when did she expect the shoe to arrive? Her response: "*I don't know.*" I immediately requested a refund! First of all, an online retailer should never charge a customer for any "back ordered" items until they have indeed shipped from your store or warehouse. Secondly...you as a business owner are responsible for keeping accurate inventory of your own products. And Lastly..all content on your website must be kept up-to-date and accurate at all times...no exceptions! It is your company...who knows it better than you! There wasn't any reason for me to talk any further with the girl nor even think about purchasing from this online retailer ever again. "*I don't know*" is never an acceptable response if online retailers wish to obtain and retain customers. You'll never get a second chance when blatant incompetence and unprofessional behavior has presented itself.

Unprofessional Management – When a customer has a problem that can't be resolved with the customer service representative, it is normal and correct protocol to request to speak to a manager or supervisor. There is nothing worse than an incompetent manager or supervisor, who has no knowledge of anything, proceeding to feed you the same scripted lines as their subordinates are required to read, and they have the audacity to even think that the customer is foolish enough to listen! In these types of situations, I realize that I'm not going to receive the assistance that I require. So...If it is a rather large company with a CEO/President, board of directors, investor relations, corporate offices, and so on and so forth.....I gather all the names of everyone who couldn't assist me – customer service reps and managers – and I write a "Formal Complaint." This letter goes to each of these people and their offices.

If the online retailer is a small company...I contact the Online Better Business Bureau and U.S. Consumer Affairs. I have always received a satisfactory response from either method of contact. There isn't a rule that states "*A consumer does not have the right to go over incompetent people heads for resolutions to their problems!*" That rule does not exist nor will it ever!

As an online retailer, your first and most important priority every single day you are in business, is to keep your customers satisfied; as your business can't survive without your customers. It is impossible! We are all in business to make a living which means, it is necessary to charge fees for the goods and services that we offer. However, if your only reason for operating a business is just for the money alone, you are contributing to your own demise.

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