

Customers Rule;
Especially in Tough Times



By: Bill Southwick, VP of Marketing, On-Line Technologies, Inc.

While nobody embraces the thought of increased customer complaints, smart retailers understand that the lessons to survival are often hidden in those complaints.

Consumer complaints are on the rise for a variety of reasons. The economic downturn has touched nearly everyone in one way or another and the symptoms often show themselves as dissatisfaction and frustration from customers. While nobody embraces the thought of increased customer complaints, smart retailers understand that the lessons to survival are often hidden in those complaints.

By accepting customers' complaints as an opportunity to save the customer we also get some free advice on how to avoid additional complaints on the same issues. From this knowledge we can make enlightened decisions about pricing, packaging, shipping, payment options, and scripting changes to improve customer expectations and avoid future complaints.

After the sale, consumers often have an increased level of awareness and interest in the product they just ordered. They will be more sensitive to competitive offers, additional features, payment options, and other value perception factors. It is during these periods that consumers often call back to cancel orders in the belief that there is a better deal out there for them with one of your competitors. Your customer service representatives need to be prepared to re-sell these customers with the features and benefits that led them to purchase originally. You need to have 'Save -a-Sale' tools in place that arm your C/S personnel with the rebuttal tools and 'step down' pricing and/or payment terms that reinforce how serious you are about satisfying them. They need to feel that you value them and their business and that you are willing to go that 'extra mile' for them.

A growing cause for customer complaints is 'failure to deliver on time' and/or 'failure to deliver, period'. These customers are less likely to be looking for a better deal, but instead, angry that their expectations of delivery have not been met. While there are lessons to be learned from these customers as well, it is far more difficult to save these customers or the sale. A far better step would be to make sure that delivery expectations are realistic and that sales people are setting those expectations properly. One great tool is to make sure everyone in your organization knows the FTC's Mail Order Rules.

These rules apply to mail order, telephone and internet sales and set minimum standards for Direct Response companies. You can download a free copy of '[A Business Guide to the Federal Trade Commission's Mail or Telephone Order Merchandise Rule](http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/business/adv/bus02.shtm)' at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/business/adv/bus02.shtm>
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We spend a huge amount of money to attract each customer and make that first sale. We need to understand that each customer's value is far greater than the value of one sale. The real value is in the lifetime purchase potential that each customer offers us if we treat them properly. Losing a sale after the close is avoidable in many cases if you have the right tools in place to know the status of a customer's order as well as the 'Save-a-Sale' capabilities provided to the customer service staff. On-Line Technologies offers an Order Management solution that allows you or your staff to know the status of the customer's order immediately, provides the ability to change the price or package offer on the fly, including giving a partial refund if needed, while the customer is on the phone. Continuity offers are fully customizable so you never need to worry about losing a customer because of product accumulation, price, or package size. While there are other order management products on the market, On-Line Technologies' solution allows you to manage and make immediate changes, in-house, to meet your customer's needs.

Call and let us show you how the power of information and the flexibility of our Order Management System can make you a hero to your customers and your sales teams.

Call, 1-888-280-3303 / e-mail: sales@on-linetechnologies.com

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