

Have You Checked Your Copy Lately?

By Bob Osgoodby

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Common Courtesy
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Have you ever gone into a store and wasn't able to find anyone to help you? If you walk into some of your major discount chains, you might see something that is of interest, but trying to get information about the product however, is impossible sometimes.

While you might save a few bucks by purchasing from these chains, is it worth the risk to buy something that may not meet your needs? If you are frustrated with their approach to doing business, it can even be worse in the online arena.

It seems that some entrepreneurs either don't know how, or don't care if they are responsive to their customers needs. Well folks, I got news. I'm the customer, and if you want me to buy from you, you had better give me the courtesy and attention needed to get my business.

How many times have you sent an email to someone requesting more information and never gotten a response? This is simply being unresponsive. This would be like a salesperson in a "brick and mortar" store walking away and ignoring you if asked a question.

If you are going to succeed in an online business, you must be responsive to your customers. A timely response to emails is critical. Many people use auto-responders and send a reply immediately. This is fine if the response that is sent answers the question. But even if it doesn't, you have shown that you are responsive with your immediate reply. You must however get back to them in a reasonable time.

While I like a waiting time of no more than 24 hours, realistically it could be longer. If it will be longer, let them know that with your auto-response. If you say it will be two days, and get back with the answer sooner, all the better.

But many times you can either eliminate the need to respond, or reduce it significantly by trying to answer questions before they are even asked. Your web site is the perfect place to do this. People trying to make a decision to purchase from you want information on what you are selling.

This is one case where brevity is not the best approach. Your ads should be brief, or they won't be read. Your web site however is another story (no pun intended) - here is where you want to give as complete information as possible.

If you try to answer all the questions people might have up front, two things happen. First, they are not going to send you an email which takes up your time to answer. Second, and more importantly, you are not giving them a chance to "cool off". They are in the mood to buy now, and if they have to wait for a few days to get the information they want, they may rethink their decision and not buy.

One of the best ways is to have a FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) page on your web site. Here you can list customer questions you received in the past, and your answers. If someone has a question, the odds are others will as well, but are just not asking them - did I mention they are probably also not buying.

Do you have a guest book? If you capture nothing else, you should try to get their email address and first name. If they fill it out, have an auto-responder, which thanks them for their note. Then, add them to your mailing list. This is one of the surest ways to keep in contact with them. People will sometimes buy months or even years later if you keep in touch.

Many people, while they are interested in your product or service, are simply not ready to buy. There are "tight" times of the year when the finances of some are limited. Buying new school outfits at the start of the school year; recovering from an over generous holiday season; can all add to a cash shortage. Above all, you should be patient.

Like you want to be treated properly because it is your money you are spending, and you are the customer, have the same concern for your potential clients. It boils down to common courtesy, and if you want my business, remember - I'm the Customer.

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