

Questions Customers Ask Before Buying

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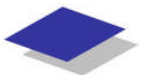




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Seven Questions

Customers buy from you because they expect to get something more valuable to them than the money they pay for it. You can assure them of getting that value by answering seven important questions¹. Prospective buyers usually don't ask these questions. They may not even think of them. But they won't buy from you until all seven questions are answered in their mind.

Question 1 - Exactly What Are You Proposing?

Prospects won't buy unless they know exactly what you're offering them. Make your proposition simple and easy to understand.

Question 2 - What's In It For Me?

Prospective customers don't really care about you or your company. They only care about how they can personally benefit by using your product or service. Tell them what they want to know. Describe in detail how their life will improve when they buy your product or service - and why it's worth the price.

Question 3 - How Fast Can I Get It?

The faster you can deliver your product or service the more sales you'll get. Consider offering an option for overnight delivery if you sell something that cannot be delivered immediately after being purchased. One Internet marketer found that her orders increased almost 30% when she added the option for overnight delivery - even though she charged the additional cost to the customer.

Question 4 - What If I Don't Like It?

People are reluctant to risk the chance of not getting what they expect after buying your product or service. Offer the most liberal guarantee you can afford. An unconditional, money back guarantee will produce the most sales because it completely eliminates all of the customer's risk. State your guarantee prominently and in detail. Clearly reveal any conditions that apply.

Question 5 - Why Should I Believe You?

A prospective customer will not buy from you until you remove all doubt in his or her mind that you can and will deliver exactly what you promise. Testimonials are a powerful tool you can use to accomplish this. They provide proof you've already delivered satisfaction to other customers.

TIP: Avoid using any claim that sounds exaggerated ...even if it's true. A bold claim creates doubt in your prospect's mind and jeopardizes the sale. Reduce any bold claims to a more believable level.

Question 6 - Is My Decision To Buy A Good One?

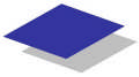
Customers usually make an emotional decision to buy. Then they look for logical reasons to prove their decision was a wise one. That's the time for you to talk about how long you've been in business, how experienced you are or how much research went into developing your product or service. It provides the logical reasons your customer needs to justify their emotional decision.

Question 7 - How Do I Get It?

Did you ever walk out of a store empty handed instead of waiting in a long line for somebody to take your money? I have. Many buyers abandon their orders at online shopping carts instead of trying to figure out the confusing instructions.

It's a total waste to lose sales from ready buyers because the buying process is too complicated or lengthy. Don't let that happen to you. Make sure your buying process is simple, easy and fast.

A prospective customer won't buy from you until all seven of these questions are answered in his or her mind. Take some time now to review your web site and other sales tools. Do they clearly answer all of these questions? If not, revise them so they do. You'll see an immediate increase in the number of sales you get.



Keeping the Customer Happy

The Consumer Minister has launched some innovative tools designed to help a business satisfy its customers and improve the service delivered. The tools - a CD-ROM step-by-step guide for business to improve customer service; and a new customer service module for the Small Business Service's Benchmark Index database - have been designed in partnership with business and consumer groups - such as the NCC, the Small Business Service and businesses, including John Lewis and ASDA.

With research showing business spends six times as much to recruit a new customer than to retain an existing one, good customer service is an essential component of a successful business.

Getting it right first time is obviously the secret of good customer service, but where mistakes happen, research shows that a well-handled complaint makes all the difference to customer loyalty.

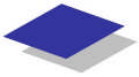
What Angers Customers?

- Being kept on hold for excessive lengths of time, while being told repeatedly how much the organisation values their custom;
- Organisations which ignore basic consumer rights, eg, taking back faulty goods and being refused a refund and told to change it for another product;
- Battling bureaucracy to resolve a problem. Staff should be empowered to tackle complaints immediately;
- Rude or over-friendly staff - both extremes can make customers feel uncomfortable;
- Anonymous staff who refuse to give their names;
- Broken promises - businesses should not make promises to customers which they cannot honour;
- Inflexible delivery times - businesses which refuse to deliver beyond a narrow, fixed time, or at weekends when most customers are at home;
- Lack of customer-friendly complaints handling systems - if it is difficult to complain, most people will not bother. They will simply take their business elsewhere;

- Premium rate advice lines. It would be better customer service to provide freephone or lo-call numbers;
- No human voices on the telephone - mechanised systems will fail to connect to which take customers through a lengthy process only to deliver them back to the beginning.

Top Ten Tips for Good Customer Service

- Talk to your customers - carry out surveys. Ask customers what they want and make it easy for them to give you feedback;
- Listen to your customers - listen to complaints and compliments. Don't be defensive - accept criticisms as they will highlight areas for improvement. Let customers know if you are acting on their suggestions;
- Build trust Keep your promises. Deliver when you say you will. If things go wrong put them right quickly;
- Take complaints seriously - don't be dismissive or patronising. Have a customer friendly system for dealing with complaints so that if things go wrong, staff are easily accessible to put things right;
- Get it right first time - it saves you time and money if customers are handled well from the outset;
- Make the most of your staff - invest in training. Value them. Empower them to deal quickly with complaints. This will build morale and happy staff lead to happy customers;
- Go the extra mile - a willingness to delight customers is what separates the best from the rest;
- Do not make assumptions - your last customer service survey (last years) is probably out of date now - keep talking to your customers. The most successful companies know they cannot afford to rest on their laurels and are always willing to try something new and learn from others;
- Learn from your mistakes - and put them right;
- Put yourself in your customer's shoes - would you be delighted by the service you receive? Would you do business with you?






The Customer Service Module

The customer service module has been developed by DTI and the Small Business Service (SBS) as part of the SBS' Benchmark Index. The Index is run by the SBS and delivered using 700 trained advisors from Business Link operators, trade associations, and private business support organisations. It holds the financial data of over 156,000 companies and has a growing database of benchmarked performance data for a further 5,000.

The benchmark process uses the advisors to guide businesses through in-depth questionnaires, aimed at gathering key information about a businesses' performance.

Benchmarking has helped business to:

-  Improve productivity;
-  Improve competitiveness;
-  Overcome competitive threats;
-  Address growth issues;
-  Gain a complete picture of the business.

The module helps organisations to demonstrate how a balanced approach to customer service reaps rewards, while poor service results in loss of profit.

The CD-Rom is part of the Small Business Service's CONNECT series of best practice programmes, available through local Business Link operators. Made up of real-life documentary case studies, each CD in the series of 32 is designed to stimulate small businesses to adopt best practice and undertake change. The series includes the following topics: leadership, markets, e-commerce, products and processes, finance, exporting, applied benchmarking, the Euro, minimum wage, partnership with people, the

business excellence model, applied benchmarking, business and schools in partnership, supply chain and programmes specifically for the farming industry, construction industry, tourism, hospitality and leisure, and customer service.

More information about Benchmarking can be found at: www.benchmarkindex.com or call the Benchmark Index hotline on 08700 111143.

For information about the CONNECT series, call their hotline on 08700 111 142 or visit: www.connectbestpractice.com.

You can also contact local Business Link operators on 0845 600 9006 or visit: www.businesslink.org.

Further Information

If you would like to receive further information about this subject or other publications, please call us – see our contact details on the next page.

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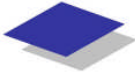
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Publication issued or updated on: 25 July 2007

Ref: 453

Acknowledgement:

¹ The "Seven Questions" text is copyright to Bob Leduc - © Copyright 2001, Bob Leduc. After a 30-year career of recruiting sales personnel and developing sales leads, he is now a Sales Consultant. Bob recently wrote a manual for small business owners titled "How to Build Your Small Business Fast With Simple Postcards" and several other publications to help small businesses grow and prosper. For more information, contact him by e-mail at BobLeduc@aol.com (Subject: "Postcards") or by telephone: (001) 702 658-1707 (After 10 AM Pacific time), or write: Bob Leduc, PO Box 33628, Las Vegas, NV 89133,USA



Aaron Wallis

Sales Recruitment

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- Advanced Skills Testing
- Contract and Interim
- Response Management
- Executive Research

Aaron Wallis also offer Added Value Services that include:

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- Coaching & Mentoring
- Sales Training, Sales Training Needs Analysis
- Occupational Psychologists

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Aaron Wallis is a committed independent recruiter that is based from their HQ in Central Milton Keynes. Aaron Wallis are members of the REC (the industry regulatory body), the AER (Association of Executive Recruiters) and various local Chambers and focus groups.

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