

"Vision is the art of seeing the invisible. Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality."

QUALIFY INTERNET SHOPPERS: MAKE 'EM YOURS

Lotsa words on this topic over lotsa years from lotsa guys. That said here is my most recent two dollars, twenty two cents on the topic. It would be splendid if Internet pricing was managed by all of the suppliers who let their brands be purchased by consumers on the Internet. It would also be nice if I was born rich, BUT...

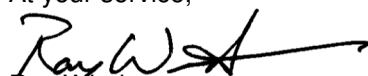
Now then, I contend that your approach (attitude), to the consumer over the phone or in the store, can make or break what MIGHT be able to be converted into a good sale and I suggest more importantly, a good long term customer relationship. DIG THIS...

Price, I mean lower price is a charming feature of many Internet transactions. We all know it. Most of the consumers know it as well. It should therefore, not be a surprise to us when a consumer injects this topic in the conversation. Many of us have a prepared response to this inquiry. Some good, some not so. Worse if we are surprised to see a customer return to our store three days after we made a presentation to him, with an arm load of product purchased from the Internet wanting us to install it. We MUST take the initiative and QUALIFY the consumer in order to learn his Internet intentions. UNFORTUNATELY too often, when the Internet becomes a part of the discussion we "cop an Internet attitude. A heavy sigh and a sour face. That attitude prevents the customer from hearing what we are saying. We therefore waste time and grow even more frustrated. Do yourself a favor and don't immediately think "not me". Rather, take an introspective and honest look at your last three conversations with consumers which contained an Internet component in the discussion. Then follow this... As frustrating as the Internet has made many of our relations with suppliers, distributors, sales reps and other retailers; we are not entitled to share that frustration with our consumers. When consumers, or anyone else for that matter, detect frustration in your demeanor, they sense you have lost control. Most consumers don't trust, respect or buy from retailers who are not in control. Therefore...

You, all of us, should constantly train to improve our skills in not allowing the frustration we may actually be feeling, to be showered all over the customer. Tall order? Absolutely. Necessary skill to successfully manage conversations with customers? MOST DEFINITELY. I do it by immediately switching into the **QUALIFY & EDUCATE** mode. "You sure can find lotsa stuff at lotsa prices on the Internet. We are expert at providing an even better value right here in our store. We are happy to install your Internet purchased products. Indeed no matter where you buy, we should be your choice for installation." For the most part, if a consumer is aware that he can purchase the same products on the Internet he is seriously considering doing just that. For the most part if we, the sales people, are terrified of the Internet subject, and avoid the subject pretending the consumer isn't really considering the Internet; we should not be surprised when that consumer shows up in three days with an arm load of stuff. A good way to break the "Internet ice" is to ask the consumer how long he has been thinking about the purchase and where has gathered most of his education. If you inquire in a civil fashion most will tell you. Then deal with price accordingly. Don't walk the sale.

Drop the Internet attitude. Educate the customer. Demonstrate the value. Secure the business relationship. When the car is delivered be sure to instruct the customer (with a SMILE) to tell all of their friends about the value they secured by buying IN YOUR STORE. It works. Not all of the time. But certainly often enough to make the effort with every customer, every time, pay off at the end of the month.

At your service,


Ray Windsor