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3 ways to deliver a mobile customer experience that converts

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Almost every person who buys in-store has also been active online. These are not different shoppers, and their behavior and conversion should not be measured in a silo.

According to Salesforce, on Thanksgiving 2016, while 56 percent of consumers shopped via smartphone, only 37 percent of sales took place on mobile. At the same time, desktops and laptops contributed to 35 percent of traffic, but garnered 51 percent of online sales making the gap between mobile traffic and sales look like a lack of mobile conversions.

However, bricks-and-mortar, desktop and mobile are interrelated aspects of a unified customer experience.

"To acquire someone on my site and not convert isn't a failure if the customer converts in my store," said Joe Megibow, president of Joyus, and former senior vice president and chief digital officer of American Eagle Outfitters. "Measuring only online sales could damage the health of my business."

Mobile is too often the point of first impression. If you neglect the customer experience on mobile, you are negatively affecting sales across channels and the profitability of your entire business.

Here are three fundamental strategies for delivering a great mobile experience that increases mobile commerce profitability:

1. Invest in your internal mobile team

According to Buildfire, a mobile application builder for iOS and Android, 67 percent of consumers said mobile-friendly sites make them more likely to buy a product or use a service, and 40 percent of consumers have turned to a competitor after having an awful mobile experience.

Investing in the right talent to create a great mobile experience is an investment in the business overall.

Too often, retailers put a less experienced team on mobile as an afterthought. This "B" team will not perform as well as the more experienced talent working on bricks-and-mortar or online sales, and when the "B" team fails, it appears

that mobile has failed.

"I can build out as many processes and tools as I want, but I need top talent to make the shopping process fulfilling," said Lisa Kueffel, vice president of client service at Sephora.

When building your "A" team responsible for your mobile site and mobile app, be sure that your talent acquisition department is looking for people who are analytical, know how to create a great user experience, and can test and learn quickly.

Candidates should also have experience developing and measuring an array of key performance indicators (KPIs).

2. Learn and adapt to how customers are using mobile

If you cannot beat a competitor head-to-head on price, speed or otherwise, the way to win is to provide a better customer experience (CX), whether in-store or online.

So, build a relationship with your customers, creating an attachment to your brand, and delivering what they are looking for before they even realize what they need.

That extra level of efficiency and relevance yields an extra emotional connection.

Forrester Research explains that a key part of a great customer experience is context.

Users want distinct experiences on mobile devices versus desktop.

On desktop computers, they expect to browse, search and compare. On mobile, they are less interested in searching and simply want what they are looking for to be there waiting.

The growing options among mobile commerce technologies can help your company match the customer mindset.

For example, personalization tools provide customers with unique product recommendations and add-ons based on location, preferences and purchase history with your brand.

Site search tools that auto-complete as the user types and deliver the right results make the mobile experience faster and more relevant.

Also, make sure that store hours and location functions are visible and intuitive, so they can drive in-store traffic and sales.

By quickly presenting relevant products to individual consumers, you reduce the number of actions and decisions required, and deliver an easier path to purchase that increases sales.

3. Weave user feedback into the digital experience

Consumers can tell you exactly what they want if you ask and listen.

It can be hard to understand how customers are using mobile as part of their shopping process, but the information you need is actually readily available.

While analytics demonstrates what consumers are doing on a mobile site or app, user research reveals why consumers behave in certain ways.

An increasing number of retailers are leveraging user research methods such as customer interviews and user testing to gain a deeper understanding of customer behavior across their channels.

User research lets your digital experience team trace specific customer journeys, such as finding a specific item with a smartphone or buy-online, pickup-in-store (BOPIS).

Giving users tasks and then collecting their thoughts or watching their experiences reveals areas of friction, sentiment about your brand and opportunities to improve. It eliminates the guesswork so that your A team can incorporate the customer voice into decisions across the organization, increasing the likelihood that the customer will buy from you, whether on mobile or another medium.

THE MOBILE SHOPPING process needs to be smooth to satisfy customers and boost conversion across channels.

It is the death of a thousand cuts each time a user struggles to research or complete a purchase on mobile because the mobile Web site or app are poorly designed.

By taking mobile seriously with a unified strategy that puts the customer first, you will increase satisfaction and sales that could easily have been lost to competitors.

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