

Consumer Corner

Customer Service Key To Business Success

(NAPSA)—Going holiday shopping at the mall used to be as traditional as hanging mistletoe and drinking eggnog. But the abundance of easy-to-use catalog and online shopping options has many consumers picking out the perfect gift from the comfort of their own homes. So what does this mean for retailers?

Well, if their contact centers make Santa's "nice" list instead of his "naughty" one, it's likely to mean less coal and more revenue in their stockings. That's because, in what is predicted to be a slow shopping season, consumers will opt to do more business with retailers that provide the highest levels of service.

As consumers holiday shop this year—particularly online or through catalogs—there are certain traits that can be found with retailers providing exceptional service. According to a recent Contact Center Satisfaction Index of European and North American consumers conducted by market research firm, Leo J. Shapiro and Associates, consumers who have an exceptional experience are 33 percent more likely to do more business with that company in the future.

Yet the survey found that company interactions are generally failing to meet consumers' expectations. So how will this affect retailers during the holiday season? By potentially impacting profitability. Nearly 75 percent of consumers who had a bad experience say they will conduct less business with a company and 60 percent say they will do much less business.

The good news is, retailers' contact centers can do a number of things to significantly improve satisfaction. Consumers should be demanding that retailers:



For many consumers, the choice of where to shop is decided based on retailers who provide exceptional customer service.

- Quickly respond to inquiries or issues;
- Provide accurate and detailed product and service information;
- Set expectations for what will transpire after an interaction; and
- Transfer knowledge to consumers to enable them to make informed decisions.

Retailers can easily improve their tools and training processes, send consumers to self-service systems only when they can address their issues and, when the time is right, provide the most appropriate customer service representative with the right skills and resources to help consumers meet their shopping objectives.

If consumers only do business with retailers that provide high levels of customer service, retailers will need to sit up and take notice or else they will potentially risk losing valuable business. And who can afford to do that?

For more information about how retailers can improve customer service or to read the Contact Center Satisfaction Index in its entirety, visit www.aspectindex.com.