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What Online Shoppers Want in Customer Service

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Online shoppers expect a lot from their [ecommerce](#) companies today. No longer will they tolerate 48-hour delays in responses to email, or a 30-minute wait time to reach the call center. Their idea of what customer service should be like can be summed up by the common phrase "the right product at the right time to the right place at the right price." But more specifically, their top expectations from retailers are:

Fast turnaround on calls and emails. One frequently cited complaint of consumers is that companies take too long to reply to their queries. It's no longer acceptable to take 48 hours to reply to an email or return a phone call, nor do they tolerate being passed from agent to agent or put on hold for long periods. They expect to be helped quickly, or they'll move to the retailer's social media presence to get help there. It's not smart to teach consumers to crowd your Facebook page with help requests, especially when most of those queries will have to be dealt with offline anyhow. Should you also happen to be slow in responding to their Facebook post, you also risk destroying your social media reputation. Work harder to ensure rapid replies to [customer service](#) phone calls and emails.

Flexible delivery options. Free and overnight shipping are common consumer expectations today, and virtually no consumer is willing to wait long for an order. With the

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increasing number of delivery services available from outsourcers, there's no reason a retailer can't provide fast, inexpensive delivery services that fit each customer's needs. Some providers will offer scheduled delivery windows so the consumer can plan to be home when the package comes, or will deliver to a post box or alternate address for a more convenient pickup. No excuses for slow or inconvenient deliveries.

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Easy self-service. Sometimes customers want your help, but often they just want to help themselves without having to talk to an agent. One feature all retailers ought to provide is online account information, which usually includes information on their order, shipping status, updates such as if it's back ordered, and the ability to edit their own details. Another important self-service feature is an FAQ or knowledgebase with all commonly asked questions and answers. It should be easy to locate and use, with clear, concise information. While some companies use their self-help section as a barrier to prevent customers from reaching live customer service, that is not its proper role. Every self-help page should include information on how to contact a live agent as well as the company's phone and mailing address. An online retailer without that contact data will appear to customers as a shady business that isn't what it claims to be.

Omnichannel integration. Multichannel commerce is a hot topic today. In reality, though, customers don't want multiple channels for customer service. They want one, unified channel, not a jumble of disconnected silos. So regardless of where and how a customer purchased a product, all of your employees from call center rep to shop floor clerk must be capable of assisting that customer and have access to the same customer data. A shop should be able to accept returns and exchanges of products bought online, help customers order online if the shop doesn't carry the product and trouble shoot account issues. Online agents should know which of their [retail](#) outlets are nearby and be able to deliver a product to a shop, as well as offer all of the same terms and specials that the brick and mortar outlets offer. No customer should encounter a sale in a store that isn't also available online. Bottom line: Retailers must act as one unified company that values all of its customers whether online or off.



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