

Understanding Changing Consumer Expectations

By Ann Gatty, Ph.D.



Can you imagine finding your next car on Facebook? If you can't, it might come as a surprise that nearly one quarter of current car buyers use Facebook to conduct research before buying. This is just one example of how consumers are changing the way they shop, and what they expect when making purchases. Are you keeping current with changing consumer expectations? Let's talk about how things are evolving.

Dave Carmany, who is the CEO of Online Labels, thinks that the number one challenge our business leaders face is the changing expectations of consumers. He states that Amazon's business model has forever changed the way in which consumers shop. The e-biz giant has trained its customers to expect their orders to be processed and delivered in record time.

We also know that for the first time ever, shoppers making purchases from the web have outnumbered purchases made at brick and mortar stores. According to survey results, shoppers in 2016 made 51% of their purchases online, compared to 48% in 2015 and 47% in 2014.

Another major change in consumer expectations is that information available about products is readily available online. Let's return to the car buying example. Today's auto shoppers have all the information they need to research their next vehicle purchase—whenever and wherever they want, because of online research tools. And consumers want honest and transparent content. They look for an advertising message that answers their questions. They want unbiased reviews from a trustworthy source that will guide them in the right direction. In other words, they value authenticity. This is why so many retailers with online stores include testimonials from their customers.

Long gone are the days when consumers came to stores looking for products and expecting the sales team to provide the wealth of information. It is not unusual for people visiting retail outlets, to refer to their smartphones for additional online information which then influences their buying decision. In other words, what we are finding is that our marketing efforts increasingly serve as the education function of the buying cycle. The sales conversion is more about the final decision making aspect. Back to the car buyer, the customer still enjoys the test drive for a true driving experience, but in many instances this is a way of validating what was already seen online or in product reviews.



Consumers today expect convenience, and immediacy. How are you training your employees to recognize changing consumer buying expectations? Quality customer service is an important ingredient in a company's recipe for success. Here at Strategic People Solutions, we are creating an online course on **Communicating your Company Brand through Excellent Customer Service**. We'd love to hear from you if you would like more information about joining our beta version of this course. Feel free to contact us at strategicpeoplesolutions.com and let's build businesses to work brilliantly.

About the Author: Dr. Ann Gatty is a partner at Strategic People Solutions, a business consulting firm, providing business implementation strategy, leadership mentoring and HR employment solutions. Dr. Ann created [The Business Sphere of Excellence](#)[®] a strategic business implementation model used to construct annual and long range business plans to help businesses run more efficiently and profitably. Dr. Ann is an expert in understanding and improving the workplace culture which is foundational for implementing any successful strategic initiatives. In order to better explain the importance of employee engagement, Dr. Ann partners with Beretta, her Great Dane therapy dog to present her key findings. They have recently authored [Leadership Unleashed: A Great Dane's Wisdom for the Business World](#).