

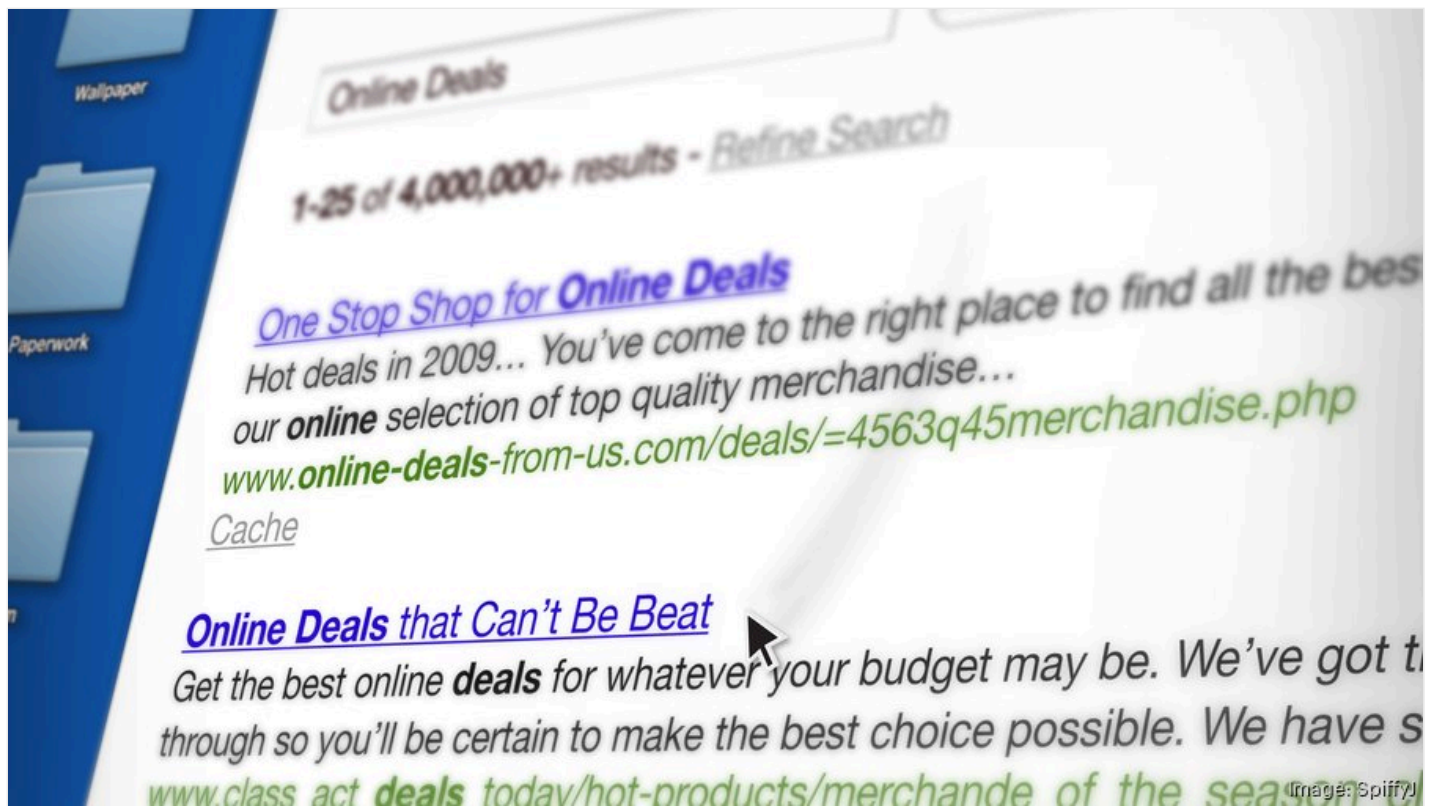
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4 steps to retail customer success



Providing a more granular search capability would make customers' decision-making easier.

SPIFFYJ



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“Customer success” is a term commonly applied to strategies and tools companies use to acquire and retain customers, to increase revenue and profitability.

Although we now have countless “customer success” experts, training companies, articles and webinars, many companies still face high customer churn and low “click-to-buy” rates.

What are the keys to gaining and retaining customers?

1. It starts with the CEO who must ask not only “How can we get and keep customers? How can we help our customers be successful?” but also “How can we make our customers’ lives easy? What steps can we take so that customers never (or rarely) have to call tech support or customer service?”
2. When company size and offerings make it possible, the CEO needs to spend time as a “mystery shopper” to experience what it feels like to be a customer, to try to find an item on the website or to deal with the chatbot.

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3. Chatbots: Ensure that customers do not find themselves in a hamster-wheel-like process facing a never-ending stream of questions that do not lead to a solution. Instead, use a model like that used by Office365 support. If the issue cannot be solved after presenting two lists of possible solutions, give the customer the ability to talk with a live person. Office365 is not perfect, but this is one thing Microsoft does exceptionally well.
4. What gets measured is what gets done. To the extent possible, companies must measure and establish target customer effort scores (CES).

What is the impact on sales when companies do not follow the above steps? Here are two examples from my own work-from-home experience in which the companies did not make my life easy.

Example 1: Over a year ago, I bought the “perfect” jacket to wear at work and recently decided to buy something similar but not identical. To accomplish that, I visited the website of UCN (undisclosed company name) where I had purchased the original jacket.

I went to the website and typed in “jacket.” What were the search results? More than 120 items: vests and jackets, waist-length, hip-length, knee-length, and ankle-length but with no way to sort by those characteristics. Too much time and effort. I did not buy.

Example 2: Recently, there was a seven-hour power outage in my neighborhood. Although I have 20 hours of back-up power for my Apple devices, I concluded that it might be wise to have more. I went to Amazon and searched under iPhone backup battery power supply. Twenty pages of items. While paging through, saw “solar” and decided to search using “solar back-up Apple approved.” Twenty pages. Too much time and effort. I did not buy.

The lesson: In both examples above, I made no purchase. If the two entities had simply realized that providing a more granular search capability would make customers’ decision-making easier, I might have purchased a new jacket and battery back-up.

How many others might have done the same?