

"You'd Better Shop Around"

Good news! People know what you do. They know what you sell. They know how to use it. They know how much they are willing to pay. They know if they want to buy what you're selling. And they know whether they want to buy it from you. And all this before you've ever even had a chance to meet them.

As business owners we forget how educated and informed our customers are. Long before they walk through your door or pick up the phone to call you they probably have more information than you do on product specifications, price, and your competition. Depending on your business they may also have reviewed the opinions of tens, if not hundreds, of users of your product or service.

I once worked for a company that had a typical corporate website. The website had an overview of our services, background on the company, some friendly looking photos, and other usual corporate website stuff. However, when I went on sales calls I found that for many of my prospects checking out our website was just the first step. Ninety-percent also talked to their friends, went to blogs to see what others had to say about us, and "googled" us to see if we were real players in our industry.

Your customers are doing the same thing. Long before they walk through your door they have done their homework. Some may arrive looking like shoppers who pretend to know nothing and wait to see what you have to say. Or they may show up armed with web page printouts ready to drive their hardest bargain. Either way you need to be ready.

Have you "googled" yourself lately? How about your competition? Have you spent time actually buying something from yourself online? Is it easy or are orders disappearing into cyberspace? What about your customer service? Have you tried calling, or having a friend or relative call, into your company to see how courteously issues are being handled?

If you are in business and your goal is to maximize profits the only way to succeed is by focusing on, understanding and pleasing your customers. Daily. Sure there are lots of other things that need your time and attention but without satisfied customers all of those other responsibilities could become non-issues. Without happy customers none of that other stuff matters. So, tomorrow, take 15 minutes and shop your store, shop a competitors store, call your toll-free line and spend some time in your customer's shoes. I guarantee you'll be glad you did.