

What's next



Enterprise

Don't fa la la la la lose your customers this holiday season

If you're like me, you have made your list, checked it twice and are running around feverishly to grab gifts for those in your life who are nice. Although this is the season of "peace on Earth," dealing with people, places and things can be stressful. This is a wonderful time for retailers to make a great impression on their customers by making experiences as seamless and pleasant as possible.

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The Black Friday/Cyber Monday results are in and they are impressive. According to

the [National Retail Federation \(NRF\)](#) total revenues exceeded the expected \$8B in the US, representing growth of approximately 11%. Perhaps some of the most impressive data points I read following this massive retail event is that, according to [Adobe Analytics](#), 33.5% of all transactions took place on mobile devices. The convenience of anytime, anywhere access is changing spending behaviors and it's only expected to grow.

As I reflect on these impressive statistics, I would be remiss in not sharing my own personal shopping experience that weekend. It illustrates how important truly consistent, well-executed, multi-channel customer engagement is.

A shopper's dilemma

Several years ago, when my daughter was a tween, we really enjoyed our Black Friday adventures. We would set our alarm clocks for 4a.m., run to Starbucks for a sugar-laden hot chocolate and engage in what can only be described as "Hunger Games for Shopping." This included strategic line queuing, divide and conquer running to our "door buster" favorites and extensive research to determine the absolute lowest price available on our attack list.

Eventually people began to head out on Thanksgiving Day and that is where I drew the line and didn't want to forfeit precious family time. Since then, these traditions have evolved to an occasional shop on Black Friday, to a more vigorous Cyber Monday approach.

This year I had my eye on a drone (the actual gift has been changed to protect Christmas morning surprises). Having done my research, I narrowed it down to two retailers. Although the prices were very similar, the question that remained was primarily around assembly. Would this large "drone" come fully assembled? Were there additional delays in pick-up due to this assembly, and was there an associated fee with this assembly? I scoured the web from my mobile phone (my first channel in this omni-channel experience) and didn't find the answers I sought. I picked up the phone (second channel) to the actual brick and mortar stores, and at one retailer I got a very terse response of "no, you have to put it together yourself." The second retailer didn't have a working phone system and it immediately hung up. Now I'm irritated and more resolved to get my answers and decided to engage Twitter. Yep, you guessed it, my third channel was social media, and it is a channel that demands deference as 22% of all people on Twitter use this platform to engage with retailers and 7% of all transactions were socially referred.

Although the store in question responded to my tweets, the responses about assembly were unclear, so I engaged my fourth channel; chat on the web. The information shared with chat was again inconsistent with what had been told to me prior, so I decided to call corporate. The contact center agent was sharp, he understood immediately my issue and worked diligently to engage directly with my store around assembly of my drone. This agent told me he had been with this particular retailer for over 10 years, and before we hung up he texted me my confirmation/case number and told me my item was already assembled and that Tina would be

my contact in the store.

After it was all said and done, I engaged on six different channels, went through the five stages of grief, and ultimately got what I wanted but suffered quite a bit to get there.

What can retailers learn from my experience?

Over-communicate – consistently: Having a full service omni-channel experience is paramount in this digital age, but if the channels are not in lockstep, many opportunities can be lost.

Technology can do the heavy lifting: Allowing consumers to self-serve or leveraging for simple, every day questions can serve many purposes. It frees up the contact center agent to resolve greater, more complicated problems, but it also allows the consumer to move quickly about their day. This spring I wrote a [blog post](#) about cleaning up the contact center, that illustrates the importance of keeping our contact center agents happy with this technology, to retain talent.

People matter: Never underestimate the power of a strong, human engagement. While we all understand how vital technology is in putting our best brand forward, we cannot overlook the impact of having skilled contact center agents who are empowered to resolve issues. Had I been connected to someone new, who struggled to answer my questions, without hesitation I would have given up.

With over \$8B on the line, retailers need to ensure all their channels and bases are covered. As not all consumers will go to any length to get what they need, a smart retailer needs to make it easy to do business.

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About Selena Castellanos

Selena Castellanos joined Nuance in March 2014 focused on business development and marketing for Voicemail to Text and has taken on several roles including managing a global field marketing team in the mobile division. Recently joining the Enterprise team, she leverages her 20+ years of telecommunications sales and marketing experience to support the Nuance Telco Vertical as well as looking after DragonTV from a Product Marketing perspective. Selena holds a bachelor's degree in Psychology and an MBA from Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida.

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