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### Make Consumer Purchases Frictionless And "Heat Up" Your Sales

What is *frictionless purchasing*? It's a happy place where shopper expectations are met, buying rules are articulated succinctly and customers walk away satisfied, in a seamless fashion -- quickly. It's also about loyalty and honesty -- being true to your customers. And whether you deal in the online, call-in, or brick-and-mortar world, it's taking hold.

#### The Friction-free Purchase

The Apple Store lets visitors buy anything by scanning it with an iPhone, then walk out with the goods. No waiting in line. No "please scan your credit card...and sign here...let me see your license..." Online retailer Amazon.com offers users 1-click, a convenient way to pay for purchases on the web. No need to enter a full name, home address, credit card number along with the three digit backside code and expiration date. It truly lives up to its name -- one click. A global telecommunications company lets phone-in payers select any of 7 languages for voice-based menu commands. Transactions happen fast -- and customers are happy.

Why does it matter? Studies show it costs ten times more to generate a new customer than to keep those you have. If you are working with a small client base, lose a few and you lose a lot. And if you benefit from a large clientele even a small increase in retention can increase your profits. In *The Loyalty Effect*, Fred Reichheld wrote that "a 5% improvement in customer retention rates will yield between a 25 to 100% increase in profits across a wide range of industries." And the recent Janrain and Blue Research study indicated that customers -- 86% of them, find the need to register or create new accounts bothersome enough that they will change their purchasing and payment habits. In short, they might not come back.

To retain customers today, it's paramount to make the purchasing and interface experience easy -- frictionless. Here are some suggestions to consider.

1. **Look at your customer demographic when you set-up and deploy your system.** Are your buyers young adults who spend a lot of time on the go during the day? Look at a web-based or mobile application set-up to enhance the purchasing experience. Are your consumers adept at using technology? If not, find a work-around, an easy way to pay, by phone, or in person.
2. **Make the customer interface easy to use and don't require registration.** Hindering the purchasing process, even on a most basic level, can discourage a would-be buyer from ever returning. Work hard to avoid collecting too much user information. Buyers have grown more wary of relinquishing their privacy lately.

3. **Enhance value by offering notification options to suit your users.** Text message and email a buyer notification of a purchase on its way. Offer automated phone calls for a less technology adept demographic if necessary. Include links to facilitate a response or follow-up inquiry from the recipient.
4. **Accommodate customers based on the payment preference they select and explore new purchasing methods.** Offer different payment methods: in person, web, over the phone, along with mobile check-out, and regular post because some buyers shift payment methods month to month -- cash strapped buyers often do. For a real world example, check out the SBAM member Lake Michigan Mailers Facebook page which allows purchases using a system developed by [www.Payment.com](http://www.Payment.com). Alternatively, customers can buy using the traditional route -- via the data, document and distribution firm's website.

New technology will continue to emerge making for easier and more cost-effective ways to connect buyers and sellers. Today we have smart phone barcode readers allowing for "click, grab and go" shopping. And we have QR Codes, those funny looking abstract graphics created in Japan around 1994, offering discounts and information to would-be buyers.



Business owners are wise to embrace opportunities to connect with buyers in every way they can. Why? Because whether someone purchases from you, or your competitor, today's sale really is just "one-click" away.