

Easy Does It

Boost sales by simplifying processes and offering an experience your competitors can't.

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In today's marketplace, being a consumer is easier than ever. Online marketing and technology have revolutionized the way business is conducted and customer expectations. Understanding the new paradigm and incorporating it into your sales model is critical for success.

In the new sales arena, high quality, low prices and quick turnaround times no longer are enough to set your business apart because consumers expect them. In today's convenience-oriented marketplace, the real opportunity for competitive differentiation

lies in making it as easy as possible for customers to do business with you.

Consumers expect transactions to be simple, streamlined and fast. They are busy, have short attention spans and don't have a lot of time to dedicate to sourcing and buying. They tend to assume they'll get the best quality and lowest price.

As a decorator, you must evaluate at the consumer decision-making process and ask yourself what you can do differently to smoothly offer a hassle-free experience. From searching for products and getting

questions answered to purchasing, it's still about service. But using tools such as websites and apps can help you better meet customer expectations for quick service. Your goal should be to remove barriers and make the process as automated and simplified as possible.

An e-commerce website enables you to provide a self-service portal. To maximize the convenience it offers your customers, evaluate self-service components, and assess the things you want to accomplish using the site and ways it can do them.

Immediate communication. Can visitors engage with you through your site? Customers appreciate not having to call, text or email to learn about products and specifics such as general pricing information or even a custom quote. Self-service components like online catalogs and quote generators provide immediate responses.

Online catalogs. Most of the industry's top wholesalers now offer full downloadable catalogs complete with professional photos and product descriptions. You simply choose the styles you want to offer on your website and set the prices.

Make products easy to find. Having an online catalog goes hand-in-hand with answering the following questions: Can customers easily browse your products and services? Are your products organized in logical, easy-to-understand format?

Also, does each product have a complete description with a photo to answer questions about sizes, colors and fashion details? Shrinkage is one example of a frequently asked question that often is not included in apparel descriptions, but is critical to many people shopping online.

Videos. A fast and easy way to educate customers about your products and build trust is to offer a short video about a specific product. This may be a one-minute presentation that focuses on a specific T-shirt brand. Talk about the performance characteristics, sizing, color availability and why you recommend that brand.

Google My Business

One easy, fast way to raise your online presence is to invest in an online tool called "Google My Business."

By registering, it puts all of your information in one place and will put you in front of more people looking for what you sell when they are on Google search, Google Maps or Google+. Customers who follow your business page can post reviews and give you feedback.

You also can track engagement for Google+ pages and posts, and much more. Go check it out at google.com/business.

An important capability of making it easy for customers to do business for you is having a mobile-friendly website.





How can we improve your Shopping Cart experience?

If you have found something confusing or have any suggestions to improve our shopping cart, please let us know. If you would like a response, please provide your contact information.

Feedback (required)

Email Address (optional)

Phone Number (optional)

Send Feedback

Above
The more feedback you can solicit from customers, the better job you can do of improving their experience.

Right
Identify the top 20 questions people ask and create an FAQ area on your website with responses.

FAQ & Help Continue Shopping

Home

- I need help in the design studio.

Shipping

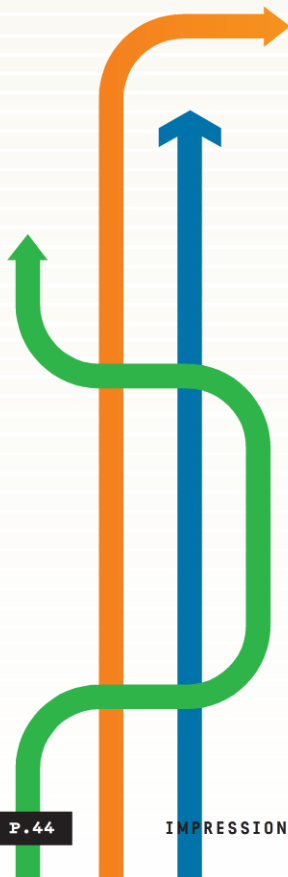
- Will you ship my order without payment?
- Do you accept special shipping requests?
- Can I ship my order internationally?
- When will I receive my order?

Payment

- Will you ship my order without payment?
- Can I use a credit card to pay for my order?

Orders

- Will you ship my order without payment?
- Why does my order status say 'Pending Auth'?
- Can I reorder a design I have previously ordered?
- How do I add notes to my order?
- Can I add more garments once my order has been placed?



Information about decorating processes. Your customers want to know this, as well as information about which processes are best for what type of jobs.

This is another area where videos can play a vital role in educating your potential clients about screen printing, embroidery, digital direct-to garment printing, digital transfers, etc., and which applications are best for each. Don't assume that everyone knows what screen printing is and what a minimum order will be.

Live chat capability. This is an excellent way to ensure you don't lose a customer who does not want to wait for an answer. Customers can ask quick questions without making a phone call. It's also good for getting direct input from them.

Depending on the system you use, you can respond from your smartphone, laptop, tablet or take a message if necessary. There are hundreds of live chat providers, some of which are free and some of which offer premium features. A live chat button can be activated when there is someone to monitor it and deactivated when not.

Online design availability. Do customers have the option of creating custom designs?

Can they pick a layout, font and clip art, and design what they want without having to talk to an artist? In most cases, customers are happier with the artwork when they have created it themselves, and you don't have to invest time doing mockups that have to be sent for approval.

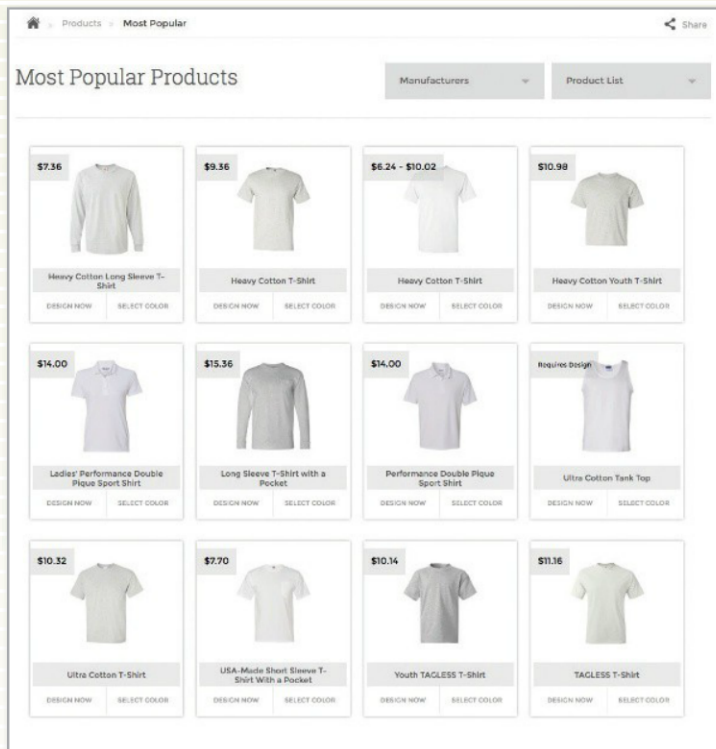
Basic information. Does your homepage include your phone number, address, directions and hours of operation? If not, it definitely should.

FAQs. How easy is it for visitors to get answers to their questions? Identify the top 20 things people ask when they call, then automate the answers. This way, consumers get the quick responses they expect and you can focus on running your business.

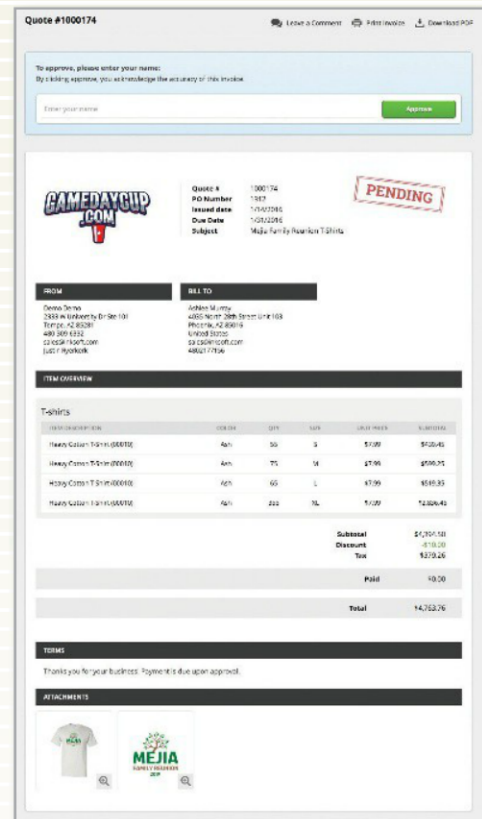
Establish consistency. Your site needs to make a statement about your brand and company identity through content and design. Customers automatically will assume that the quality of your site reflects that of your work and service. The entire website should be consistent with your company's business philosophy, products, target audience and image in all its marketing efforts.

Gather feedback. Another aspect of customer responsiveness involves tracking

The more information you can provide on your website that answers customers' questions, the more time and money you can save.



Your online catalog should always have a high-quality photo and a complete description of the product.



By offering instant online quotes, customers may choose to purchase immediately from you vs. going to other websites and finding a good price elsewhere.

user feedback. Systems that allow you to do this enable you to see where and how you can make the consumer experience better. Feedback can be obtained using a contact form or by integrating it into the checkout process.

The more information you can provide on your website that answers customers' questions, the more time and money you can save. It often will eliminate phone calls that interrupt production and the risk that a customer will immediately call a competitor if he gets your voice mail. And staff can spend time doing more productive work than answering the phone.

These are just a few ideas that, if incorporated, will make it easier for your customers to do business with you. There are many others. Your website should constantly be reviewed with an eye toward improvement. Customer feedback should be collected, evaluated

and implemented as much as possible. This way you ensure you are not losing customers due to a poor online experience. ☐

J.P. Hunt is one of the founders of InkSoft, which offers a comprehensive business suite including an online designer, e-commerce platform and other business tools. He also is the vice president of sales and marketing. For more information or to comment on this article, email Hunt at jphunt@inksoft.com or visit inksoft.com.