

## Online Customer Support/Demos/Chat Best Practices

1. **Talk to your customers and understand their customer support needs.** Interacting with your customers is always an opportunity to improve your relationship. Think of customers as partners and solicit their feedback. Most shoppers won't go to the trouble of leaving negative feedback but are likely to give it when asked. Look for quality feedback and view negative feedback as an opportunity. If they are disappointed, they may leave. But if you address their concerns, they may come back.
2. **Technology, if used properly, can help you understand your customers.** Real-time analytics, sophisticated rules engines, deep integration with CRMs and robust reporting have converged to make true understanding of your customers possible. This will help improve customer service by targeting customers who are ready to purchase and just need the right push. Although engaging the customer through chat, demos, click-to-call, product wizards and other technologies will help you tremendously improve most customers' experience, sometimes only a phone call will do and they will need to speak to your support staff.
3. **Provide robust information online that is easy to use and find.** Many customer support calls are questions on products, past orders, or policies. Help the customer by improving the online information. For example, make sure information such as 360 zoom photos, order history in 'my account' and clear links to static pages are easy to find and you will reduce your customer support call volume.
4. **Consider distributed customer care.** Technology advances have made distributed customer care feasible from cost, control and effectiveness points of view. This should enable your business to provide 24/7 human interactions to help the 24/7 shopper. Make sure you manage distributed customer care at the same high level as you would local customer care.
5. **Not every improvement in customer care or experience has the same value.** Prioritize those issues that will improve customer conversion and retention rates; don't waste manpower chasing after inconsequential issues.
6. **Hire an independent customer service auditor.** Independent verification using "mystery shoppers" can be a good tool to see where your customer service and web site do well and where you could improve.
7. **Target pages likely for abandonment.** The optimal moment for customer assistance comes when the customer is at the "moment of truth", between order completion and abandonment. Give them a true offer of assistance or value.
8. **Train your team in specific areas and funnel your customer service requests to the right team.** Your customer service platform must have the intelligence to route a visitor's needs to the appropriate skill set (i.e., a product specialist should not engage with a visitor who is experiencing trouble in a checkout process).
9. **Investigate new VoIP technologies.** Organizations of every size and nature are either investigating or implementing VoIP, online chat, or automated technologies. The major advantage is not cost (although they can often be less expensive than traditional service) but, rather, the vast functionality and tracking capabilities associated with web-based technologies.