

EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AWARDS

PRESENTED BY **MULTICHANNELMERCHANT**



Bonobos' Customer Service Ninjas

How the Excellence in Customer Experience Awards winners wow buyers and create loyalty



JUNE 2015
WWW.MULTICHANNELMERCHANT.COM

Diamond Sponsor



Gold Sponsors



Delivering a Winning Customer Experience

BY DONNA DEVAUL

The retail industry has come a long way from worrying about customer service alone in its relationship with customers. Service is just one part of the overall customer experience—how the customer is treated from the first touch point to the last—from placing the order to a return or exchange, if that is necessary.

This year, Multichannel Merchant set out to identify and recognize the leaders in customer experience—the companies that routinely excel at every phase of the e-commerce sales experience. We turned to third-party logistics provider Innotrac, which routinely places test orders to inform its SmartHub benchmarking tool, for the hard data needed to find the best performers.

The result was the first Excellence in Customer Experience Awards, presented at the 2015 Operations Summit on April 16 in Louisville, KY. (See sidebars for details.) In analyzing the data for the awards, it became clear that these companies have much in common. These are their secrets to success:

Be your brand from beginning to end

What is your brand all about? What do you stand for? How can you express that at every touch point? An electronics retailer may want to express how tech-savvy it is with multiple opportunities for a customer to talk to a tech expert to determine the right product to order or for help with set-up after delivery. A luxury goods company will want to communicate with class in the language and design of customer communications as well as in its packaging to reinforce that it delivers high-end goods with a high-end experience.

Be consistent in your language

The messages that you send to your customers must be consistent with your brand's face and voice—and with previous messages. There also has to be consistency across channels. It shouldn't matter to the customer how they shop with you or who they speak with. The way you talk

Category: Best Packaging Winner: Bath & Body Works

The Best Packaging category looked at many elements of the package, including internal and external branding, use of the packing slip for marketing and promotional messages, how well the recipient can identify the shipper, and how appropriate the packaging was for the item ordered.

WHY BATH & BODY WORKS WON: The Bath & Body Works package is not only functional but also exciting. It takes every advantage to give customers the message that their business is welcome. It is instantly recognizable and builds customer excitement upon receipt. The box and its contents are marketing tools for the company as well as containers for an order.

The package itself had bright, full-color pictures of product on the outside. It is clear which company has sent the package and it practically begs to be opened. Inside, the packing slip is also well-branded and colorful. The packaging on the candles in the orders provided perfect protection from breakage and reinforced the brand.

IDEA TO STEAL: Full-color photos of product on the packaging are an excellent way to build customer anticipation upon receipt and suggest new product for them to try. The box itself is another way to market to customers—and everyone who sees the package along the way.



The Scorecard

How were the first annual Excellence in Customer Experience Awards winners selected? Data from Innotrac's SmartHub benchmarking study was used to identify the top performers in each of the award categories. Here's a look at what the criteria direct-to-customer merchants were judged on for the 2015 Excellence in Customer Experience Awards.

Best Packaging Experience

External Branding: Multi color printing on the box with branded tape

Internal Branding: Multi color printing inside the box, branded tissue and/or sticker

Packing Slip Type: Printing in full color maybe in a nice sleeve

Packing Slip Marketing: Any promotion codes, such as QR codes

Shipping Label Clear: Not interesting

Liquid Cube: Was the box the appropriate size for the product

Bad Packaging:

- Poor liquid cube (big box, small package)
- Peanuts (or other packing materials that won't go away.)
- Packaging that is difficult to open or could cause damage to the product when opened

BCBGMAXAZRIA

Category: Best Shipping & Delivery Experience

Winner: BCBG Max Azria

The Best Shipping & Delivery Experience award was determined by evaluating shipping fees, how quickly the package shipped, and how long it took to arrive via standard shipping. The choice of shipping container and dunnage also went into the scoring for this category. Another consideration was the condition of the package when it arrived—a well-packed box that is the correct size and with the correct amount of dunnage can withstand the rigors of travel and give the customer a much better impression than one that arrives damaged.

WHY BCBGMAXAZRIA WON: BCBG Max Azria never charges for shipping, and the test orders placed were all shipped the same day

as the order. The company's packages consistently arrived quickly, even under standard shipping, and every one arrived in pristine condition. The boxes were well-packed with appropriate dunnage and withstood the rigors of travel.

According to Alex Golshan, VP, global e-commerce and omnichannel of BCBG Max Azria Group, the shipping and delivery experience is designed to mirror the in-store experience of the apparel brand. The presentation of the package reflects the luxury nature of the brand with tissue, stickers and the general presentation of the product in the box.

IDEA TO STEAL: Look for elements to add to your package that reflect your brand and make a great impression on your customer. It may be something as small as a note from the person who packed the box or silver tissue around the item that adds to the customer experience.

The Scorecard

How were the first annual Excellence in Customer Experience Awards winners selected? Data from Innotrac's SmartHub benchmarking study was used to identify the top performers in each of the award categories. Using SmartHub, all finalists were chosen based on data collected during Innotrac's test ordering process.

Here's a look at what the criteria direct-to-customer merchants were judged on for the 2015 Excellence in Customer Experience Awards.

Great Email Communication Experience

Order and Confirmation Email Time: Was it received in 1 minute or less?

Confirmation Email Type: Was it a branded marketing message?

Shipping Confirmation Email Type: Again, was it a branded marketing messages?

Additional Email Received: For example, did the merchant send a delivery notification email? How was the customer kept in the loop?

Bad Email Communication Experience

- Broken images
- Late or no order confirmation email
- HTML plain text emails
- No color, images, or special fonts

The Scorecard

How were the first annual Excellence in Customer Experience Awards winners selected? Data from Innotrac's SmartHub benchmarking study was used to identify the top performers in each of the award categories. Using SmartHub, all finalists were chosen based on data collected during Innotrac's test ordering process.

Here's a look at what the criteria direct-to-customer merchants were judged on for the 2015 Excellence in Customer Experience Awards.

Best Shipping Experience

Days to Ship: Did they ship same day

Free Shipping Price Point: Free, of course

External Package condition: Pristine (No dents or holes, tape and label were carefully placed straight on the package)

Package Appropriate: Was the package type appropriate for the items being shipped (A picture frame in a Mylar bag not appropriate)

Dunnage Appropriate: Was the use of dunnage or lack of dunnage appropriate for the product

Bad Shipping Experience

- More than 2 days to ship
- Inappropriate packaging and dunnage

L.L.Bean

Category: Excellence in Brand Communication

Winner: L.L. Bean

This category is all about how the merchant communicates with the customer from the time the order is placed to delivery and beyond. The stream of email communications was evaluated for how timely they were, how informative, and how well they reflected the brand.

WHY L.L. BEAN WON: The apparel and outdoor products retailer sent four email communications—order confirmation, shipping confirmation, delivery confirmation, and a follow-up email post-delivery. All were timely and well-branded, with appropriate informational and marketing messages.

L.L. Bean is a master of brand communication, having worked for 100 years on building its face and voice. According to Steve Fuller, chief marketing officer for L.L. Bean, the customer service, creative, marketing and advertising teams work together to make sure they are sending consistent messages each and every day. "There's no silver bullet," Fuller says. "It is the result of a lot of hard work by a lot of smart people."

IDEA TO STEAL: Don't stop communicating after delivery. Take the extra step and ask for a product review or send a coupon or promotional offer after the sale.

EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AWARDS

PRESENTED BY MULTICHANNELMERCHANT



Category: Customer Experience Leader Winner: Bonobos

What makes a customer experience leader? Superior performance at all touch points. In this category, 95 data points were evaluated and summed to discover the overall top performer in the SmartHub study.

WHY BONOBOB WON: As an e-commerce retailer, the package at the customer door is the first tangible experience the customer has with the company, according to Angela Goldstein, senior manager of operations at Bonobos. It is important that the box itself be instantly recognizable—like a shopping bag

spotted on the street. So instead of brown kraft, Bonobos's box is a highly recognizable blue. The interior components, such as the packing slip and dunnage, are also consistent with the brand aesthetic, says Goldstein.

Bonobos's secret sauce, though, just might be its Customer Experience Ninjas (pictured above). These are not ordinary customer service representatives. The Ninjas are autonomous problem-solvers. They don't use canned responses and they are free to do whatever is necessary to delight the customer. That in-

cludes things like sending a bottle of champagne to a customer who just bought a suit for his upcoming wedding. The Ninjas are in the company's New York City headquarters, and they have access to marketing, promotions and the executives to give feedback to these groups on what the customers are saying.

IDEA TO STEAL: Encourage your CSRs to think outside the box to satisfy and inspire loyalty in your customers. Make them into great problem-solvers and your customers will provide a great return on investment.

**Category: Best Customer Returns Experience
Winner: Bonobos**

BONOBOS

A number of considerations go into having a great customer returns experience. The generosity of the retailer's return policy is important, as is the ease and speed of the return and refund or exchange. It follows that the more generous the return policy and the easier the return, the better the customer experience.

WHY BONOBOS WON: Bonobos believes in making the return experience frictionless for the customer, according to Angela Goldstein, senior manager of operations at Bonobos. Because

Bonobos started out online, it needed to remove all obstacles to shopping with the company. It has a 365-day return policy, return shipping is always free and the packing slip includes a peel-and-stick label for the return. Goldstein believes that the company has reduced the barriers to ordering and increased customer loyalty. In SmartHub's test orders, Bonobos was the one of the quickest to give credit for a return and always sent a return confirmation email.

IDEA TO STEAL: Don't look at returns as a cost center. An easy returns process can be a real plus and drive future sales.

to your customers should remain the same from start to finish. This goes beyond the obvious, like using brand colors and logo-type. Brands have personalities that are expressed in word choice and terminology. Make sure your people and your email and mail communications talk about things in the same way all the time.

Break down silos

If you get your own people talking to each other, they will quickly discover where any inconsistency lies. Cross-functional meetings or even cross training of your customer-facing associates will increase the flow of information and improve everyone's understanding of the customers and their needs. Your call center associates likely have insight that will inform marketing or operations, such as a high incidence of questions about sizing, return policies, or product defects.

Get personal

Many customer experience leaders have systems for personalizing their interaction with customers. It is as simple as recommending the perfect sweater to

go with the skirt that the customer placed in the shopping cart, or allowing the customer to request notification when an item comes back in stock. Apparel merchants, for example, have a great deal of information about their customers, such as sizes, designer preferences, and so on, that can be turned into positive—even anticipated—connections with customers.

Empower your people

Canned responses from a company—either in an email or from a CSR—can be experience killers. Customers will appreciate and remember when an associate goes above and beyond to help them with an issue. Yes, some issues can be addressed with auto-responders, but allowing your employees leeway in how they handle customer problems will not only make your customers happy, but your associates, too.

The customer experience is the sum of many touch points, from the order to the return. Each touch point is an opportunity to solidify the customer relationship, engendering loyalty that leads to increased sales through repeat business and referrals. Delighting the customer is particu-

The Scorecard

How were the first annual Excellence in Customer Experience Awards winners selected? Data from Innotrac's SmartHub benchmarking study was used to identify the top performers in each of the award categories. Using SmartHub, all finalists were chosen based on data collected during Innotrac's test ordering process.

Here's a look at what the criteria direct-to-customer merchants were judged on for the 2015 Excellence in Customer Experience Awards.

Great Returns Experience

Return Program: Free returns, with a shipping label in the box

Call for Return Merchandise Authorization: No call required to return the merchandise

Returns window: 60 days, unlimited

Return credit timing: The number of days between the date the merchant received the return and the day the refund is issued back to the credit card

Credit disposition: Was a full credit accurate credit issued back to the method of payment? (This should always be yes)

Return confirmation email: It should always be sent, along with refund amount, and when to expect credit

Bad Returns Experience

- No return label provided
- Difficult to fill out pack slip, long item numbers that need to be transferred from front to back
- A 15 day return policy

larly important in this era of social media, where customers can immediately express their satisfaction or frustration with friends and friends of friends. Consistency is key—in how the brand is expressed, how customers are communicated with, how employees view their role in the overall customer experience, and more. ■

Innotrac, our Diamond sponsor, Global Response and Norton Shopping Guarantee sponsored the 2015 awards.

Diamond Sponsor



Gold Sponsors

