Social Media Customer Service Faces A High Bar

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Almost half of online customers expect brands to provide customer service on Facebook

You can add customer service to the growing litany of shopping experiences affected by social media. Customers headed online to shop are bringing with them high expectations about the kind of customer service theyâ€™ll get once there, especially on social networks.

In a Q4 2011 survey of worldwide online consumers, Oracle found that online users valued having a number of pathways to customer service support, including through social media, click-to-call services and instant messaging.

Given Facebookâ€™s dominance of the social media landscape, it should surprise no one that 46% of those polled anticipated that companies would provide customer support through the social network. Expectations for Twitter were significantly lower; only 17% of respondents thought brands would provide support and information via Twitter accounts.

But customers desired quick responses when communicating on social networksâ€”just over half of Facebook users and more than eight in 10 Twitter users expected to receive responses to questions or concerns posted on the social networks in a day or less. The â€œalways onâ€• nature of social media requires that brands with a presence on those channels remain constantly engaged with customers.

Although respondents most often connected to a brand on a social network to find out news about products, one-to-one customer service was also of significant importance to consumers. Almost one-third linked up with a brand to gain access to a customer service representative or product expert. And 43% connected with companies to get a direct response to their questions.

The potential return for brands that stay engaged on social networks is significant. Customers who have a great experience on social media can easily become brand advocates, and are already in the right place to spread the word.

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