

Abracadabra! Turn shoppers into buyers

Consumer behavior expert Paco Underhill shares a few tips with retailers

Paco Underhill, consumer behavior expert and author of “Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping” and “Call of the Mall: The Geography of Shopping,” says successful retailers should recognize some of the barriers to purchasing — such as shoppers asking themselves, “Should I shop somewhere else? Is this going to accomplish what I want to accomplish? Why is this camera \$129 and this one is \$259?”

A key issue, Underhill says, particularly for the brick-and-mortar industry, is realizing the Web offers a very effective method of educating customers before they come to the store.

“Retailers can take advantage of their websites and the opportunities they provide to inform and educate, as opposed to sell,” he says. “Educate customers online and close the sale in the store.”

Some of that education is with clear messaging in the store. “You also want to have sales help who demographically match the audience the store serves. If you’re a photo dealer, it’s very important all your sales associates are not 22-year-old men,” he notes.

“It’s also important to recognize one way to build your ticket price is to price the camera aggressively, and then make sure customers buy accessories that have better margins. Sell the complete outfit. Sell the camera, case, memory sticks, and spare batteries.”

While it’s a good idea to increase the amount of time consumers spend in a store, Underhill points out it’s only good

as long as that time is spent being engaged, rather than being frustrated or lost.

“If you have someone wandering around asking for directions, that’s a frustrated person,” he says. “Having people waiting to see a customer service agent is not a great idea. Long waits at checkout are really poisonous; however positive an interaction the customer has, it can be dissipated at the cash register.

“If you want to hold the person in the store, fine — but make sure they’re being held for the right reasons.”

Good signage, Underhill notes, is very important.

“You want to put the appropriate message in the appropriate place,” he explains. “It’s very disconcerting when people have a 20-second message in a 3-second window.

“You have to understand what information customers want, the nature of the opportunity you have, how much time you have, and what someone is doing while they’re looking at your sign.”

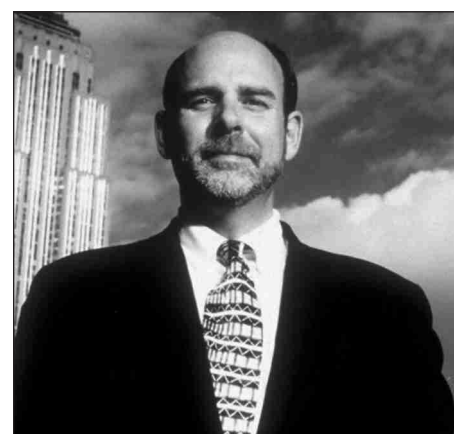
Assistance from a sales associate can affect the average amount consumers spend — and for a technology purchase, it’s critical, Underhill states.

“A good salesperson matches the customer with the appropriate product. A good salesperson can trade somebody up or just make sure somebody closes,” he says.

“When there is no sales assistance, it’s the difference between a conversion rate of 22 percent and a conversion rate that’s a more appropriate 50 to 60 percent. For every person who’s there buying technology who doesn’t need any help, there are three others who do.”

Underhill has seen some common mistakes in retailing. First is misunderstanding the role of storefront windows.

“There are many people who put too



Paco Underhill

much stuff in the front windows, or use them to show people they’re in stock,” he explains. “You want a single, simple message in your window, and frequent changes.”

A second mistake is not establishing a clear circulation route — a logical pathway the customer takes.

“I want customers to circulate to the right in a counterclockwise fashion, which puts their shopping hand closer to the product,” he says. “Controlling that is a store design issue.”

Retailers also sometimes don’t recognize appropriate adjacencies — what products to put next to what.

“Another big mistake is not recognizing it is just as important to communicate with the customer going from the back of the store to the front as it is from the front of the store to the back,” he says.

And finally, checkout is a critical part of the customer experience. “Your job is to make it as pleasant and painless as possible.”

Paco Underhill will speak at the PMA 2005 Official Business Session, 7:30 a.m., Wednesday, Feb. 23, in Orlando, Fla. ▲

“A man buys a camera and a woman buys an archive of memories.”

— Paco Underhill

Brainstorm!

Tips from Tony Miresse of Art's Cameras Plus

Tony Miresse, president of **Art's Cameras Plus**, West Allis, Wis., put the following questions to his staff of CPCs in the company newsletter, and asked them to jot down suggestions.

"I'm sure we can find some areas where we can improve our systems," he wrote. "We'd like to act on anything that can make us more efficient, serve our customers better, make our work environment more comfortable, our jobs easier to do, etc."

This was Miresse's list. Brainstorm with your staff and co-workers, ask searching questions, look at your store and the way things are done with fresh eyes, and see what bright ideas you come up with to take you sailing through 2005 with the utmost sales success.

1. Did we disappoint any customers? What can we do differently to make sure it doesn't happen again?

2. Are we jumping through hoops to accomplish certain tasks? How can we simplify the way we do them to improve our efficiency?

3. Do you have any suggestions on how to cut down on waste or better manage our costs?

4. How can we improve sales of certain products or services, such as online ordering, greeting cards, printer accessories (ink, paper, etc.)? ▲



CPC-certified staff at Art's Cameras Plus work together and brainstorm ideas to keep things running smoothly and effectively to best serve customers. Jim Tate (left) and Dan Mueller are shown serving customers.

In Focus

PMA 2005 starts soon!

February is here! This is your last chance to join an estimated 29,500 attendees (and estimated 775 exhibitors) at **PMA 2005** — "Imaging at its most innovative" — set for Feb. 20-23, in Orlando, Fla. The Convention will provide extensive educational and networking opportunities, and is a launching pad for new products, groundbreaking technologies, and unique digital imaging accessories.

There will be new programming specifically for photo specialty retailers. Visit <http://pma2005.pmai.org> and check out what's on tap, then make plans to meet your fellow CPCs in Florida.

Here are a few sessions of particular interest to CPCs: "Avoiding the Scanning Blues," Sunday, Feb. 20; "Making Sense of Color Management," Monday, Feb. 21; and "Digital Darkroom Techniques," Tuesday, Feb. 22, all from 8:15 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.

Three more good ones would be: "Demystifying Digital Cameras," Sunday, Feb. 20; "Tips for Selling Digital Hardgoods and Accessories," Monday, Feb. 21; and "K.I.S.S. Approach to Selling," Tuesday, Feb. 22, all at 2:00 p.m., and repeated at 3:10 p.m.

Flower power

New digital camera buyers often put their camera exposure mode on "P" for Program exposure and go about their picture taking, ignoring the control icons that indicate special subject exposure modes.

So, make sure your customers know what flowers, moons, stars, running men, woman with hat, beach, snow, etc. all mean, and why and when to use them.

Put those scissors down!

The Wall Street Journal offered tips Dec. 23 in "The Puncture Wound I Got for Christmas," on how to open packages without suffering injuries. Hard-to-open packaging is an increasing frustration. Market-research firm **Envisioneering Group**, Seaford, N.Y., has seen a doubling of customer complaints that electronics gear is too frustrating and time consuming to open, compared to a year ago. Last year, "unintentional cut/pierce" ranked No. 5 in a list of the most common reasons for visiting an emergency room, and packaging is often the culprit.

Some companies are starting to redesign their packages, *WSJ* says. **Hewlett-Packard Co.** rolled out new packaging for some inkjet cartridges made of thinner plastic that is easier to

open with scissors. **Sony Corp.** plans to move its hard-drive and memory-chip devices from cardboard boxes to what it calls "easy open" plastic packaging. **Concord Camera Corp.**, Hollywood, Fla., announced new consumer-friendly clamshell blister pack packaging that makes it easier for consumers to purchase higher-end cameras at more affordable prices without waiting for sales staff, the company says.

But, tough-to-open plastic packaging is popular among manufacturers and retailers. One reason is the unwieldy packages make it harder to steal the ever-smaller electronic gadgets.

Get creative

Artocracy, Spokane, Wash., is looking for photographers to create and sell digital prints; 75 percent of a sale goes to the artist, Artocracy retains 25 percent for website operations. After sending sample works to <http://artocracy.org> and being accepted, photographers submit three to 10 pieces in PDF format to be posted on a personal gallery page for buyers to view and buy. Through the site, computer art is sold much like an MP3 — an unlimited supply of art, making the artist money through duplication. Computer artwork is sold for \$20 to \$50. ▲

So what?!

It's not really about features and price – find out what your customer needs

When you help a customer buy a digital camera and accessories, it's easy to talk about features and price, without connecting features to the customer's needs.

If you're lucky, the customer will ask, "So what?" or "Why is that important?" If not, they'll just think it and may go elsewhere to buy their camera.

If you just talk about features and the customer answers with, "Yes, but . . .," then you have lost an opportunity to connect. And, the emotional power of "but" cancels out what you just said.

So, first find out your customer's needs – before you start talking about features! Then, if the customer asks (or thinks), "So what?" you can give them an answer that speaks to their real needs.

The more you resonate with the customer, the greater the chance they'll buy from you. And, every time you miss the mark, you take a step backwards in their buying process.

Now, let's look at two examples around the focal length feature:

You tell a customer a camera has an 8x zoom range, and the customer asks, "So what?" You reply it means they can zoom in on distant objects like kids playing sports. The customer says, "Yes, but my kids don't play sports. I want to take portraits of

Meet Jim Everett

Jim Everett, president of **Think180**, Hermosa Beach, Calif., has trained and advised on consumer learning, sales and support with leading technology companies and has a depth of experience as a corporate manager, strategist and presenter for channel sales, and product and user training. He has been a serious photographer for 25 years, taking pictures in more than 20 countries, and exhibits and sells his work through his online gallery. He has worked commercially in Australia with weddings, school photography, and portraits. He is the PMA media contact for consumer digital imaging, and has created and hosted video materials for PMA on making the most of digital cameras through prints. ▲



Continued on page 4

Pop quiz

Take the pop quiz, and then check the answers on page 4.

1. What is the most important question you should ask a customer who is shopping for a digital camera?
 - a. What will you do with the pictures, and what type of photos do you take (stills, action, etc.)?
 - b. What type of computer do you use?
 - c. What type of software will you use?
 - d. What price range do you have in mind?
2. The screen on the camera that allows you to see the image just taken is called a/an:
 - a. CRT (cathode ray tube).
 - b. LED (light emitting diode).
 - c. LCD (liquid crystal display).
 - d. API (active plasma imager).
3. In bright daylight, to stop rapid motion without blur in the picture:
 - a. Place the camera on a tripod.
 - b. Select a high shutter speed.
 - c. Pan the camera with the motion.
 - d. Illuminate the moving object with electronic flash.
4. Noise can appear in dark areas of a digital image because the signal strength has a low signal-to-noise ratio:
 - a. True.
 - b. False.
5. Electronic flash is exceptionally good at stopping rapid motion because:
 - a. It is very intense.
 - b. Its firing is synchronized with the shutter motion.
 - c. It fires for the same length of time the shutter is open.
 - d. It fires for a very brief time.
6. There is never a need to use flash in bright sunlight:
 - a. True.
 - b. False.
7. A digital frame must be connected to a computer to show pictures:
 - a. True.
 - b. False. ▲



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So what?! *Continued from page 3*

my daughter playing her violin.”

Oops! You can still recapture the customer by explaining how a zoom gives a very intimate feel to portraits. Even so, it would have been better to find out the customer's needs first.

By first asking what they want to photograph, you are able to introduce a feature, and follow it with how it meets the picture-taking needs of that customer, using a reply starting with, “This means...”

You already found out your customer is an interior designer and wants to take lots of shots of rooms and building interiors. An ultra-wide angle will probably be just what they want. So you tell your

customer: “This new camera has an ultra-wide angle view. This means you can take interior shots that include much more of a room in one picture.”

That feature alone may be the key selling point. On the other hand, if your customer had wanted to take lots of portrait-style pictures of individuals and couples, then an ultra-wide angle may be exactly what they don't need.

Features mean something only if they meet a need for the customer. Features a customer feels are “wrong” or surplus may put them off purchasing a product – and buying from you!

Key Point: Before talking about any feature, it's important to find out what the customer wants to photograph. And be ready to answer the “So what?” question!

– By Jim Everett

Think180

www.think180.com

Everett will be a guest speaker at PMA 2005, where he will present, “Selling Digital Hardgoods, and Accessories,” on Sunday, Feb. 20, at 2:00 p.m. and 3:10 p.m. He will also chair the DIMA Session, “Creating Loyalty and Profits through Digital Photo Classes,” at 1:15 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 19. ▲

Pop quiz answers

1. A. The most important (and first) question should be, “How will you use the pictures?” This will establish picture quality, software and computer requirements. When added to price considerations, customer satisfaction is likely.

2. C. Many cameras are manufactured with an active display that allows users to see an image just taken, as well as a viewing screen to compose the picture. These are commonly liquid crystal displays (LCD).

3. B. Putting a camera on a tripod will

reduce camera vibration, but not reduce the effects of subject motion. If there is enough light to make the photo without extra lighting, then shutter speed is the controlling factor in stopping the action.

4. A. Since digital imaging is an electronic capture, when an image is taken in low light, there is a potential to have noise in the picture if the signal strength is not high in comparison to the noise created by the electronics — a low signal-to-noise ratio. Noise appears as lighter random pixels in otherwise evenly dark tones.

5. D. Electronic flash fires for a very brief time, which enables it to capture rapid motion by illuminating the subject for only an instant.

6. B. Fill flash is needed to illuminate shadow areas (under a hat, under the subject's chin, etc.) and to balance the lighting of the main subject with the bright sunlight.

7. B. Digital frames can take images from a number of sources. They need no computer support to exhibit pictures. ▲

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