

Customer Momentum Preservation: Moving with the Consumer

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As you are reading this, somewhere out there in webspace, "Customer Jane" is staring glassy eyed at a search engine result. She searched for "coffee tables" at a furniture website, and the search engine returned saying, "We are unable to find the item you searched for. Please try again." Jane realizes in a silent fit of frustration that she doesn't know if that means the store doesn't have coffee tables, or if the search engine doesn't work properly.

She was doing just fine until that point. Jane had identified a need, knew what she wanted and was actively searching through the Internet for it. Jane had **momentum**. The store she visited stopped Jane's momentum with that company, depleting her movement very early in the consumer buying process. Jane will move on, her need unfulfilled by the website and in search of a company that can facilitate her needs.

Consumers have an inherent sense of movement, travelling through need identification, search, evaluation, purchase and then a host of post-purchase needs that can potentially be indefinite. Their momentum does not stop with a purchase.

Today's consumers are inundated by a market space rich in message clutter and alternatives. Should a business entice them to buy, that's just the beginning. That customer will order – then wait too long for their order, try to track it, receive the wrong color and attempt a return, refer friends, order catalogs or updates, and so on.

I submit a concept called **Customer Momentum Preservation (CMP)**, a set of elements and a mode of thought that if followed permit the retention of customers. They will want simplicity, control, sincerity, presence, and innovation – the five elements of CMP, what consumers require to keep moving with your business.

1. **Simplicity** Make it easy to find info, buy, return, contact you, etc. Don't make them shop and communicate a certain way because it's easier for you.
2. **Control** Let them do it their way. Don't herd or force them. Provide alternative ways of searching, buying, returning, refunding, and contacting you.
3. **Sincerity** Tell them everything up front. Don't surprise them – avoid shock or unknowns at all points. Be fair. Say what you mean, mean what you say, and do what you say.
4. **Presence** Be personable. Introduce yourself nicely and quickly and be at their side while they're "in" your store (but don't smother). Be available at all times. Thank them, learn about them, and remember them. Return to them, thank them again, and offer to extend or continue your relationship.
5. **Innovation** Find ways to execute all of this in a manner unique to your business, industry, etc. Don't follow the pack – brainstorm about how you can facilitate things in a new, interesting way. But beware, don't "innovate" another bizarre way of doing things with a learning curve the size of Earth's orbit.

In CMP, there are two major concepts. First, **consumers are always in motion** and want to do business with a company that can keep up with them. They have a list of demands that must be met in any order and at any time, and they will only do business with those that can handle that list.

The second concept is to **be able to facilitate that motion**. Make sure your company is aware of that list, and has arranged itself to meet those demands. This requires a great deal of thought, examination and contemplation about the consumer and how to anticipate their every list item.

Business competition has created a breed of consumer that wants it for half the price, with free extras, delivered yesterday, and with a smile on your face while they exchange it three times or else they'll tell 6,000 others with the single stroke of a "Send" button. They are always in motion and in a constant state of evaluation. Whether or not you realize it, they are presenting the first few demands on their list and seeing if your company is up to the challenge.

Customer Jane is walking through the park of purchasing. Are you sitting on the bench as she passes by, waving to get her attention? Or are you the trustworthy and responsive companion walking alongside her, throwing your raincoat over the puddle for her? Jane is walking, moving, and she will not stop for you. Travel with her momentum, and she will be a loyal friend. It will be near impossible for competitors to distract Jane if she is so engaged.