



## the e-tailing group press release

### 8 Retailers Attain the e-tailing group's Annual Customer Service Excellence Award

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### THE FACTS

Results of the e-tailing group's 2015 Mystery Shopping Study, conducted during 4Q'15, recognizes eight retailers, out of the 100 benchmarked (EG100), as excelling at online customer service. In today's omnichannel climate, amid heightened consumer expectations, customer service is core to delivering differentiated shopping experiences. These retailers have invested in customer service excellence and we commend their performances.

"Service today means unprecedented access via every channel and every device where access and efficiency are both expectations. Creating a culture across one's enterprise is no small feat but nonetheless required to achieve the high standards set by shoppers," emphasizes Lauren Freedman, President, the e-tailing group.

#### Top Performers (alpha order)

B&H  
CPO  
Kay  
Lands' End  
Pottery Barn  
REI  
The Home Depot\*  
Zappos\*

\* Repeat winner 2014/2015

### METHODOLOGY

To qualify as "top performing," each of the 100 merchants was ranked using benchmarking extrapolated directly from results of the e-tailing group's 4Q'15 Mystery shopping study. Winners were revealed via a process whereby sites were systematically eliminated for not possessing "must have" features in the following rank order:

1. Accessibility of 800# via home page
2. Overall customer service destination page score of 2.0 or higher (on a scale of 3)
3. 3 or fewer days to receive package
4. 5 or fewer clicks to checkout or if greater than 5 clicks has 1-click checkout capability
5. Having the ability to move an item from the cart to a saved list for future access
6. Overall customer service experience on customer service call was 2.0 or higher (on a scale of 3)
7. Satisfactorily answer e-mail question within 24 hours

Winning merchant scores in 5 critical areas are analyzed below.

MERCHANTS	Accessibility of 800# 3 = Most Visible	Customer Service Destination Page Index Score	Business Days to Receive Item	# Clicks to Check Out	One Click Checkout
B&H	3.00	2.25	3	5	Yes
CPO	3.00	2.00	2	3	Yes
Kay	3.00	2.50	1	4	No
Lands' End	2.50	2.75	3	5	Yes
Pottery Barn	2.50	2.25	3	6	Yes
REI	2.50	2.25	3	5	No
The Home Depot	2.50	2.75	2	4	Yes
Zappos	3.00	2.50	1	3	Yes
<b>EG100 Average</b>	<b>2.46</b>	<b>2.21</b>	<b>3.45</b>	<b>4.96</b>	<b>52%</b>

## NOTABLE FINDINGS

### Help Destinations in Demand

Shoppers gravitate towards the designated help section on a retailer's website and 7 retailers served up perfect destinations. A perfect score is given when the retailer's layout is both accessible to shoppers and facilitates finding information fast.

Perfect Destination on Demand			
Ann Taylor	Aveda	Bass Pro Shops	DICKS Sporting Goods
Gap	Lane Bryant	Office Depot	

Retailers must make their help link available via navigation and contact information must be visibly present rather than a click away. FAQs are a time-saver for shoppers and were found on 90% of sites. Self-service shoppers prefer they be searchable, which were found on 27% of those sites. Top level information was analyzed for its comprehensiveness and layouts that minimize clicking were noted. Imagery was seen as a value add with icons, store and customer service personnel imagery all serving to support a strong service culture.

### Cross-Channel Access Compelling

As customers continue to shop all available channels, capabilities that facilitate cross channel shopping surge in importance. Two out of three retailers facilitate the sharing of consumer wish lists.

Feature Or Functionality	e-tailing 100 4Q15	e-tailing 100 4Q14
	% Penetration	% Penetration
Shopping List/Wish Lists	88%	82%
Ability to Move Items To Wish List	60%*	65%*
Ability to Share Wish List	67%*	N/A

\*Subset of 100 sites

### Speed Top-of-Mind for Shoppers

Retailers make small strides to ensure faster checkout by removing obstacles in the process. PayPal, a favorite among shoppers and an efficiency tool for mobile, sees the greatest gains.

Feature Or Functionality	e-tailing 1004Q15	e-tailing 1004Q14
	% Penetration	% Penetration
Delineated/Stepped Checkout	96%	94%
Collapsible Cart	26%	21%
Pre-Populated Customer Information	99%	98%
One-Click Checkout	52%	51%
Average Number of Clicks to Checkout	4.96	5.04
PayPal	74%	67%

### Delivery Can be a Differentiator

As same day delivery emerges as a reality for more retailers, consumer expectations are heightened. Investments in logistics are seen as a handful of the EG100 delivered the goods in 1 business day based on an order placed for ground delivery. Delivery times overall in 2015 were 3.45 days, on par with 3.42 in 2014. Competing with Amazon and other aggressive retailers will require reduced delivery times.

One Day Delivery is a Differentiator				
Abt	Best Buy	Kay	Lenovo	Lowe's
Lululemon	Office Depot	Sears	Target	Zappos

### Responsiveness to Customer Queries Disappoint

Customers desire choices and will contact retailers in a variety of means. 2015 numbers are troubling as response times decline for email and more importantly the quality of the experience in call center contacts and, especially live chat, failed to meet prior year performances. Many of our interactions found excessive lag times and customer service reps who were not knowledgeable about products being sold. Setting and achieving standards should be a priority in 2016.

	% Offering	Response Time 2015	Response Time 2014	Experience 1-3 where 3 is best 2015	Experience 1-3 where 3 is best 2014
Email	94%	26 hours 30 minutes	21 hours 2 minutes	N/A	N/A
Call Center	100%	5.88 minutes	5.84 minutes*	2.47	2.51*
Live Chat	76%	10.26 minutes*	10.76 minutes	2.33*	2.44*
Proactive Chat	24%	9.83 minutes*	10.18 minutes*	2.38*	2.52*

\*Subset of 100 retailers

Providing comprehensive information to shoppers in a timely manner can drive conversion. 8 retailers should be called out for providing accurate answers to emailed questions with response

times under 20 minutes.

MERCHANTS	# of Minutes Between Auto Email or Personalized Response
ALDO	2
Garnet Hill	3
CPO	5
Golfsmith	10
Cabela's	13
title Nine	14
B&H	15
Under Armour	19

### Flexibility in Returns

According to the National Retail Federation, holiday returns account for about 8% of all holiday sales and they estimate that total annual returns will reach \$260.5 billion for 2015. While some retailers make it challenging for customers to process a return, just over 1 in 3 (37%) have adopted online return processing. From a convenience standpoint, 34% allow the shopper to secure a prepaid label via an online return center or email. The 30% of retailers that include this label in the package provide an important and convenient alternative for their customers.

Feature Or Functionality	e-tailing 100 4Q15	e-tailing 100 4Q14
	% Penetration	% Penetration
Return Authorization Required	12%*	13%
Online Return Processing	37%*	38%
Free Online Returns	20%*	22%
Conditional Free Returns	6%*	N/A
Store Returns	90%*	80%*

\*Subset of 100 retailers

## IN SUMMARY

An investment in customer service will reap rewards for retailers as shopper satisfaction will be elevated and bottom line performance bolstered.

## THE COMPANY

The e-tailing group, inc. serves as the multi-channel merchant's eye, bringing a merchant's sensibility to evolving the multi-channel shopping experience. A Chicago-based consultancy, they provide practical strategic perspectives and actionable merchandising solutions to merchants selling across channel as well as to enabling technology firms.

For more background about this research study, to benchmark your brand, or for additional information on the e-tailing group, inc. please contact Lauren Freedman at [LF@e-tailing.com](mailto:LF@e-tailing.com) or visit the e-tailing group website [www.e-tailing.com](http://www.e-tailing.com).



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