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Santa's coming, but so is next Christmas

David Wilson
January 6, 2012

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Some online orders failed to arrive in time for Christmas, sparking a barrage of complaints.

Online shopping hit record highs this Christmas, but some have been left with an empty space under the tree.

Did you order goods online that did not arrive in time? Add your comment below

Touted as a super-convenient way to avoid the Christmas crowds, the online shopping bonanza also unfortunately left some with nothing to give.

Online shopping club Ozsale was one of a number of businesses to attract a raft of online complaints on website productreview.com.au, with many still waiting for gifts purchased well before December 25.

In a December 28 post, reviewer "Jewels52" complained about ordering items from Ozsale on November 19, expecting that they would arrive by Christmas, "and they are still not here".

Ozsale sells fashion, accessories, cosmetics and homewares.

"Hopefully sometime soon I will receive what I ordered, maybe in time for next Christmas," Jewels52 sniped.

Another customer in the same December thread complained that Ozsale were "uncontactable". Another said that the firm sold "imaginary items".

A public relations representative for Ozsale, Steve Riethoff, said there were a range of reasons for the "heartfelt" complaints.

Riethoff said Ozsale just moved its distribution centre to a new quarters in Smithfield, Sydney on December 18 "in order to cope with huge growth".

Some customers failed to realise that Ozsale's delivery terms were 21 days and expected items before they were due, Riethoff added. But he acknowledged there had been problems.

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"Ozsale have realised that there's been an issue and moved to rectify that," he said, adding that complaints in the thread had received responses.

Customers who complained were in a minority, he said.

Over Christmas, productreview.com.au hosted complaints against a range of companies. Reviewers lashed out against firms including bookstore Fishpond.com.au ("The Grinch That Stole Christmas"), florist Ready Flowers, TNT Express couriers, Allied Express couriers, and bookshop Booktopia.

Brisbane-based swimming instructor Elizabeth Kajewski had trouble with Bigpond Shopping. Kajewski placed an order for a mixer on December 7, which she said the site had guaranteed would arrive before Christmas.

When she checked to see when it was coming, the customer service representative said there was no chance of delivery before Christmas.

The delivery date was switched to December 28. Again, no joy.

She kept emailing and phoning. Finally, the item arrived on January 3, badly disrupting her Christmas.

Kajewski said she was "very disappointed and frustrated" and would probably not buy from the company again.

"They say if something is good, you tell one or two people, if it is bad, you tell everyone, and I did," she told Fairfax.

One Fairfax staff member ordered \$320 worth of Christmas presents from online giant Amazon on December 3. But despite promises it would arrive on December 19 or 20 the goods failed to materialise before Christmas.

However Amazon did issue a refund for the full amount and an apology.

"I realize a refund can't fully make up for the late arrival of this order. Please accept this refund as an apology for the inconvenience," an email from Amazon said.

Last minute orders – how businesses can get it right

1. Establish a process for last minute or urgent orders

Every business should have a process for last-minute and urgent orders because such orders will be managed differently. The process will rely heavily on a manual system, so ensure the process is documented and timeframes agreed in advance by each section of your business.

2. Confirm stock level

Before accepting a last-minute order, ensure you have enough stock or that it can be sourced in time for the delivery deadline. If stock cannot be assured, it's best to reject the order.

3. Clarify extra fees and payment terms

Last-minute orders may attract an added fee. The fee should be clearly communicated and agreed before the order is accepted. If usual payment terms require payment upfront, special payment terms may need to be negotiated for the rush order.

4. Ramp up communication

Last-minute orders require extra attention to ensure each order is correct and delivered on time. Assign an individual the responsibility of coordinating and tracking last-minute orders, to minimise errors and delays. Double-check orders with customers, agreeing payment terms and additional charges - preferably in writing. Then confirm dispatch.

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5. Confirm payment has been received

After the satisfied customer has received the rush order delivery, ensure all items have been invoiced and payment terms are met. Double-check the invoices issued and payments received to ensure all revenue from last-minute orders is collected.

Source: www.handlemycomplaint.com.au

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