**Catering to Online Customers**

Making dinner reservations, booking vacations and buying anything and everything online — from cars to clothes — is the norm in today’s highly digital world. And as the Web continues to grow and change, so do customer expectations. So how can publishers ensure they’re catering to customers effectively across all channels? We’ve gathered some tips to help you exceed your online customers’ expectations.

**Make it Personal**Piquing and keeping an online customer’s interest is substantially more complex than doing so with an in-person customer. After all, it only takes a split second to lose interest and close out of a website. So it’s important to always be engaging your visitors through not only [valuable content](http://www.ebaypartnernetworkblog.com/en/2013/05/three-tips-for-creating-compelling-content/) and images, but by bringing something to the table. Always be thinking about who your customer is and what *you* can offer *them.* Just like the Cheers gang, website visitors want to go where everybody knows their names (or at least is always glad they came and want to give them a good deal), so [promotions](http://www.ebaypartnernetworkblog.com/en/2014/01/epn-tv-liz-morris-discusses-seasonal-events-holiday-promotions-bonus-campaigns/) and special incentives for, say, first-time buyers, can go a long way in making them want to return. Likewise, ensuring that you’re using the most effective [landing pages](http://www.ebaypartnernetworkblog.com/en/2014/01/choose-right-landing-page-user/) based on where the user is the purchasing cycle can help drive even more sales.

**Make it Easy**  
Remember the “Easy” button? Suffice to say, people like no-brainers, whether they’re in a store making a purchase or on the couch with a tablet in one hand and a pint of ice cream in the other. So why not make the shopping experience as [simple as possible](http://www.ebaypartnernetworkblog.com/en/2014/02/make-choosing-easier/)? Since online customers lack the ability to touch or smell or even see firsthand the item they’re purchasing, give them as much detail as possible about their options — and be as transparent as possible about important details like pricing and shipping.

Being helpful to the customer is also crucial. For example, if your site is focused on books and DVDs, offering well thought out reviews adds credibility to your site, and more importantly, is useful information customers will appreciate. Simply posting link after link of products with the hope that someone clicks on it is a poor strategy that customers can oftentimes see right through.

Finally, make it painless for someone to learn how to reach you via email, phone or chat. If a customer has to exude massive effort to find what they need — especially your contact details — chances are they’ll take their business someplace they don’t.

**Make it Mobile**According to [practicalecommerce.com](http://www.practicalecommerce.com/articles/62685-5-Keys-to-Mobile-Ecommerce-Optimization-in-2014), mobile internet traffic will surpass both desktop and laptop traffic this year, making it clear that mobile site optimization is key for websites and online retailers. Evidence also points to consumers preferring to use mobile devices over desktop computers to browse. Needless to say, [delighting mobile visitors](http://www.ebaypartnernetworkblog.com/en/2013/11/using-mobile-trends-to-optimize-your-sites/) by taking a multi-channel approach is a must, especially since it’s often the initial point of contact for both individual and business customers.

For an optimal mobile experience, it’s important to make interacting with your brand consistent across all channels. Applying key functions and features of your website to your mobile site is a good start, as is incorporating social network and video capabilities. And since there’s nothing more frustrating — and nothing more likely to lead visitors astray — than long load times, using [appropriately sized images](http://mobile.smashingmagazine.com/2013/04/03/build-fast-loading-mobile-website/) is also key to a seamless mobile experience.

Catering to online customers is a trend that will only continue to become more important as today’s digital capabilities — and customer expectations — are heightened. Do you have any tips to share? Feel free to leave questions or comments below.