



## ONLINE SELLERS SHOOT THEMSELVES IN THE FOOT WHEN THEY LACK INTEGRITY

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**There are 4.1 billion people on the internet going into 2019. There are 1.94 billion web sites in the world. Every hour new businesses go live. Depending on your interest and intent an internet search could be for a specific business, a product, service, information, or just surfing around for entertainment.**

Integrity online is more important than ever in this digital age. Your ability to access anything and everything 24/7 has changed the way you do business. Online business has to portray a feeling of trust in mere seconds. A customer's experience and subsequent review can make or break a small online business. If you have a negative experience with a seller, how do you deal with it? Is honesty and integrity important to you as a consumer?

### SMALL BUSINESS

There are thousands of small business owners who sell handcrafted or niche items online. Some sellers don't display integrity or honesty in their dealings.

A majority of online sellers who have handmade or unique niche products are happy to help a potential customer.

Being able to get questions answered or updates on an order has a personal feel to it.

Recently I had a less than pleasant experience with a company whose product I could stand behind and promote. Now, if I could cancel my order I would. I will NEVER do business with this company again, nor promote or recommend them. If they even come up in a feed they will get two thumbs down.

This is one of those times that I would love to hear if any readers have experienced a similar situation, or have been treated so shoddily you will never do business with a company again regardless of the quality of their product.

### CASE STUDY

Slowly building an audience for a not quite released website and auto-posting to Instagram every two days is a beginning strategy for putting a toe in the water. There is enjoyment in interacting with the people I follow and the people following me, there is so much to see and learn.

I received a comment from a company. I went and looked around their site, liked the product and LOVED that they

give a portion of their profit to nature conservation projects.

I send a DM and instantly a lady gets back to me. She says she wants to collaborate. I am excited. I would love to help a small business get exposure, try their product, give a review, and write a post on my site – you know, be a good neighbor.

I was friendly, courteous, kind, and generous. I would be happy to help other small businesses get exposure if I loved what they stood for. I believe in community, karma, and giving back.

So, she gives me a discount code, I purchased the product, thank her and ask again if she would like me to do a review for her. NO REPLY. GONE. POOF.

### MY FEELINGS

I will never, never, ever... do business with this company again. I will not review. I will not recommend, and I will not do a thing to help them.

It was a deliberate ruse to hard sell something by coercion and smoke and mirrors. Collaboration is not a straight up ruse to get a sale. Collaboration is working together for mutual benefit.

Yes, I fell for it. I feel robbed. I knew I would like to purchase the product before she even came at me. I was even thinking who else I could gift one too. She didn't have to do what she did.

This is a dishonest seller who lacks basic integrity when dealing with potential customers and repeat business. How can you even run a business without repeat business, referrals by word of mouth and online reviews?

## **WHAT ARE HONESTY AND INTEGRITY**

A quick search on the Merriam-Webster dictionary unearthed: Honesty is defined as "fairness and straightforwardness of conduct; adherence to the facts." Basically, honesty is about being truthful, fair and straightforward.

Integrity is defined as "firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values." Integrity differs because it is based on a moral code of conduct. And we all know how skewed those can become. As far as I am concerned integrity by its nature encompasses honesty.

## **WHY IS HONESTY AND INTEGRITY IMPORTANT FOR SMALL BUSINESS**

Each internet niche is filled with artisans, crafters, bakers, growers, sewers, finders, services and more. Then there's influencers, brands, affiliates, and target markets. And of course, your hand selected audience.

Each sale is important for sole proprietors, families, collectives, co-ops, small business, minority owned, non-profit, save the (insert here), and so on. Being part of a network borne of community and promotion means more exposure and traffic to your site.

## **MISTREATED CUSTOMERS**

What happens to these wonderful people if a customer feels mistreated? How much damage can negative reviews, no referrals, and losing potential repeat business or new business hurt you? It can shut you down.

If you are honest and have integrity, you will treat every customer the same. Regardless of how difficult they may be. Growing your business means getting your name and reputation out there.

Honesty and integrity is the cornerstone on which your entire brand is built on. It is the literal foundation of your success.

It blows my mind that a niche small business would treat a customer without regard. Why would a small business owner sacrifice a positive review, referrals, free advertising, and reputation over a small single sale. Stupid, stupid, stupid.

## **EMAIL LISTS, PROMISES AND UP-SELLS**

When I hand over my email address it is because I want to see updates and information that is helpful to me. The same applies to Facebook groups or Instagram.

Email lists and subscribers are so integral to building and maintaining a group of people who really want to hear from you, and eventually become customers.

## **CONSTANT HARD SELLS**

What I don't want to see is daily or weekly upsells to thousand dollar courses. Or promises to build a triple figure business in 30 days, or any other unrealistic claim attached to a way to part people from their money. You're gone.

If I get spammed, I'm going to unsubscribe. Not only is it annoying, it is not what I signed up for. But, when you get a reputation for this kind of behavior, word gets around.

A gentle and occasional reminder that there is a new course coming up it all that is needed from someone who offers insight and a great deal of value to small business.

Again, accepted practices support this kind of electronic salesmanship behavior. We all have free will to hit that unsubscribe button at any time.

Do you want to be known for quality content or disliked for your hard sell tactics?

## **MOVING FORWARD**

There is an extraordinary amount of competition on the web. While this is great for the consumer, it makes it difficult for legitimate brands and small businesses to get recognized and attract business.

What is important is building a network of like-minded people to form a community of support and encouragement.

Living a life based on core values that encourage a can-do attitude and a willingness to stand up for what you believe will allow you to stay put for the long haul.

UPDATE: I received the product, shipped from Vietnam with a customs value of 1.4 Dong, which converts to less than a few cents in US currency. The product isn't too bad. It is wearable and usable for what it is. The whole thing still leaves a bad taste in my mouth.

As much as I want to share the company and product with you, that would amount to free traffic and advertising for the company. If you really have a burning desire to know, message me.

I would love to hear from readers who have had problems with online sellers and how they solved the issues, and who you will never do business with again.

Another dilemma to consider is when you do the right thing, but you end up seemingly in the wrong. What happens? How do you process anger and blame when you made an honest attempt to do the right thing to help?

## RESOURCES:

- Success will come and go but integrity is forever: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/amyanderson/2012/11/28/success-will-come-and-go-but-integrity-is-forever/#474ea74f470f>
- Honesty and integrity in sales: <https://www.infoteam-consulting.com/blog/honesty-and-integrity-in-sales>
- 7 ways to collaborate with other bloggers: [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/aj-agrawal/7-ways-to-collaborate-wit\\_b\\_9366186.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/aj-agrawal/7-ways-to-collaborate-wit_b_9366186.html)
- Bloggers Unite! A 10 point guide for blogger collaboration: <https://www.convinceandconvert.com/content-marketing/10-point-guide-for-blogger-collaboration/>
- Web statistics: <https://hostingfacts.com/internet-facts-stats/>