

Hello, Goodbye

Online Shopping and Abandoned Carts

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According to KISSMetric's nifty shopping cart abandonment infographic, [**Edit:** original embedded link points to <http://blog.kissmetrics.com/shopping-cart-abandonment/?wide=1>] e-commerce sales totaled \$25 billion in 2010. More surprisingly, 88% of consumers have completely abandoned an online shopping cart without completing a transaction. They don't include figures about how often shopping carts are abandoned in brick and mortar stores but I'm sure you'd bet your rent money that it's considerably lower. Why? Blame the very same convenience that makes online purchasing quick and easy.

One obvious advantage brick and mortar stores have over online retailers is the customer's ability to inspect the product up close and in person. By the time customers get to the cash register, they are essentially committed to buying the product. Barring a forgotten wallet or a lack of funds, rarely do you see customers ditch their goods at the checkout and walk away. Since very little time was committed to the purchase, it is extremely easy to simply ditch a cart in the online world. People can just as easily open up a new browser tab and look elsewhere for a better deal or for a retailer that provides a better buying experience.

There are ways to improve this experience, ranging from major site overhauls to a simple removal or addition of a field in a checkout form. Above all, customers must be sufficiently confident about the product they will purchase - a confidence that can be built surprisingly easily.

When customers are presented with large, clear images coupled with loads of information, reviews, ratings, and other important information they need to make a purchase, they will head to the checkout page confidently and they are much less likely to abandon their cart. Inevitably, some customers will abandon their cart to rummage the net for a better deal but price isn't usually the deal breaker for confident customers. Zappos, for example, doesn't always have the best prices but they do provide a top-notch buying experience and customer support - and they're certainly not struggling to make a buck.

At the checkout page, customers are essentially faced with a decision whether or not to commit to something. Anything that reduces the anxiety about making that commitment will increase the chances the customer will continue with the purchase. Displaying payment options, support and contact information, and security tags in plain view will reassure customers. It's important to note, also, that customers are more likely to make a subscription purchase if they are presented with clear instructions on how to cancel. Once they're sure they can cancel painlessly, they will be more likely to go ahead and subscribe. Even seemingly minor things such as removing unnecessary entry fields or reducing the number of steps a customer is required to go through will improve your chances of closing the sale.

You know your own customers better than anyone and you should know what they think of your buying experience. You should also ask yourself what you think about your buying experience. Are you convinced that you're presenting the optimal experience to your customers? Would you buy a product from your store? Think about those things and always remember that it is absurdly easier to

walk away from an online store than a brick and mortar one. Still, brick and mortar stores would rather chase down empty carts in the parking lot than full carts left behind in the store. As an online retailer, you don't have to put the items back on the shelf but it hurts just the same. These experiences are what drove our development of the Plimus *BuyAnyware*[™] API and the one click shopping experience it can deliver for our vendors. Experience shows this capability, along our customizable order pages, make for increased conversions and sales.