TurnTo Case Study:
Adorama.com

BACKGROUND

Adorama is one of the leading ecommerce sites in the photography and electronics industry and is also a major producer of original content for photo enthusiasts and professionals. "There are a slew of options—both online and offline—for consumers looking to buy photography gear. But there are far fewer options when consumers seek expert advice," says Glen Homan, who manages Adorama's new website. Glen felt that the next step in providing the richest possible resources to photo gear buyers was to enable customers to share their expertise alongside Adorama's in-house experts.

"Customer reviews are simply not enough"

Adorama was an early pioneer in the use of customer reviews, which have proven to be a valuable source of information. However, Adorama recognized that reviews can require a shopper to search in hopes that his question is answered, and sometimes the answer just isn't there. Unfortunately, this sometimes left customers with unanswered questions. "The last thing that an ecommerce vendor wants is for a curious yet motivated customer to need to go elsewhere," says Glen. "The gap between customer reviews and our phone sales team led us to seek a complementary product."

"How to make sure customers get the right product"

Because consumers often have questions when they look to purchase photography equipment, the retailer decided it should add a question-and-answer tool. "We want to ensure that people get the right product," he says. The only problem was Adorama didn't think it could keep up with the volume of questions it was likely to receive.

"Until TurnTo, we couldn't find a solution that allowed us to respond to customers' direct questions without hiring an army of writers "

Glen thought that a customer question-and-answer system could address their needs, but he had tried them in past and found that either too many questions went unanswered or else store staff ended up providing most of the answers. That failed to deliver the social value he was looking for, and it created additional customer support workload.

contact@turnto.com, www.TurnToNetworks.com

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THE SOLUTION

Finally, Adorama found TurnTo's "Ask Owners" product, a social model for ecommerce Q&A. Unlike other Q&A systems, TurnTo's Q&A product ensures that shoppers get real answers from real customers, and that the answers come fast and often – typically within the hour. That delivered a broad range of tangible benefits: higher conversion rates, engagement of past customers, and a mountain of UGC.

The key to success lies in TurnTo's message-based approach. According to Glen, "Sending questions to people who actually own the item gets fast, credible answers. Because these answers come from consumers who have bought the product, the quality of the responses is high. They're often the expert because they own the product."

A consumer can access the tool to pose a question on any of the site's product pages by clicking on a button that says "Ask a Question". When a consumer clicks the button a window appears that features a box where he can type a question. Typical questions include "I'm trying to decide what to get. Why did you pick this one?" and "How well did it work? Were you happy with it?"

RESULTS

Adorama ran a 3-month trial with TurnTo to see the results before committing. At the end of the period, there was unanimous agreement among the management team to move ahead.

Adorama was confident from the beginning that social Q&A would have a positive impact on conversion rates and on SEO. "That was never a question for us. We understood the value of this sort of UGC before we met TurnTo. Our question was, 'Can we make social Q&A work on an ecommerce site?' TurnTo significantly beat our expectations."

- On average, each question on a popular item at Adorama receives 6 social answers, and 95% of these questions receive at least 1 social answer.

- The median time from when a shopper submits a question until they receive their first social answer is under an hour (including moderation).

- Adorama's AskOwners e-mails had a 12% click through rate and an 8% answer rate.

- The number of questions asked daily is more than 2X greater than the number of customer reviews received.

- Including answers, in the short period of time since Adorama started to use TurnTo, customers have submitted almost 20,000 pieces of user-generated content.

"We were very impressed by the high response rates to the Q&A emails, especially without an incentive," Glen says. "TurnTo simply provides our customers an opportunity to share their expertise, and they're happy to do it. We're very proud to have earned that sort of loyalty, and TurnTo enables us to tap into it."

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