

THE RETAIL observer

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2026 BATH
AWARD WINNERS

SPEED, PRICE, CONVENIENCE, SERVICE

FOUR LEGS OF THE SUCCESS STOOL

If you're looking for ways to drive your organization's success – and you should be – it's critical that you add speed, price, convenience, and service to your arsenal. Many e-commerce companies know this, but many others think e-commerce is synonymous with self-service. It is not.

Consumers turn to online shopping because they value its speed, prices, and convenience – but they also want the service that is associated with traditional shopping. That means they want to be acknowledged, treated courteously and fairly, given fair prices, and provided superior customer service.

We've come a long way from competing with companies that are a few blocks or a few miles away. Thanks to technology, your competitors are around the globe. The good news is that so are your customers.

Global e-commerce sales in 2014 were approximately \$1.3 trillion. That figure is expected to grow to \$7.89 trillion by next year, and up to 22.5% of total retail sales.

The foundation of e-commerce is technology, and the foundation of e-service is people. That means you must hire, train, and retain people who can drive the kind of service that will keep your current customers and attract new customers.

Because e-service lacks face-to-face interactions, you must do everything in your power to give your website, products, and services a human identity. In doing so, you will drive your company's bottom line to great heights.

Convenience is a major factor in e-commerce. Customers can search and purchase your products and services 24 hours a day. There is no need to get dressed and drive to your location; it's right there at their fingertips. The expectations of those customers are high. They want you to offer a myriad of items at competitive prices.

They want to complete their transactions quickly. They want to be able to contact you easily – and to have you acknowledge their questions and concerns within a matter of minutes, not hours. Finally, they want the option to communicate with you either through your website or by telephone. Jeff Bezos, Amazon's founder, says that if you want more of something, you must reduce the friction – and that's exactly what Bezos has done.

Amazon has set the standard for service and has reaped the rewards to become the world's largest company by revenue in 2025

with more than \$717 billion in sales, a 12.38 percent increase over the previous year. Its relentless customer-centric focus on convenience, vast product selections, competitive pricing, and fast service drives its success.

Amazon's success is based on the fact that everything it does prioritizes the customer experience. That includes easy ordering, fast delivery, and hassle-free returns. The company also goes above and beyond in its connections with customers. It confirms customer orders within seconds, and it alerts consumers when a price drops on something they have in their shopping cart.

Amazon also alerts consumers when a product they're interested in purchasing is often returned. It includes customer ratings and comments about the products they've ordered. It lets consumers know when their products will arrive and alerts them once they're delivered. It also makes searching for products easy. For example, consumers can enter "books for teenage girl athletes" or "gifts for men who love to cook," and within seconds Amazon pulls up a list of suggested items.

Most companies don't understand the power of service, and they certainly don't recognize the power of speed. When you combine speed with service, you have a winning combination. Amazon understands this better than any other company in the world. Customers are busy; they want what they want, when they want it. They value speed.

If you need further proof of the power of e-commerce that focuses on the needs and wants of its customers, consider this: Amazon attracts more than 2.8 billion visitors every month in the U.S. alone. You would do well to use Amazon and its focus on consumers' need for speed, price, and convenience as a roadmap to your own success.

John Tschohl is the founder and president of Service Quality Institute, a global leader in customer service. He is considered one of the world's foremost authorities on all aspects of customer service, and is the author of several books including Moving Up: A Step-by-Step Guide to Create--Success. His monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no cost at www.customer-service.com.

