

EDUCATION / in their shoes

What is your biggest pet peeve as a customer?

Ever wonder what your customers are thinking? Each issue, we'll ask three "real" customers what their thoughts are about shopping independent boutiques. Our hope? That you will really listen to what they have to say and see how you can apply some of their experiences to help your store thrive.



Lauren Tinerella

Age: 21
Profession: Student
Location: Chicago, IL

My biggest pet peeve is the inconsistency I find with customer service. I never seem to find a happy medium between the levels of service I receive – either I'm hardly helped, or I can't get the employee to leave my side. Even though it is annoying to feel suffocated by an employee, having no help is just as bad.

I've walked into stores and had to wait at least a full minute before being greeted (and not because the employee was with another customer). This makes me feel unimportant immediately. But, aside from feeling like the employees don't care about me, it gives me the opportunity to just walk out. Why would I stay if the employee can't even greet me? When employees aren't helpful I assume it's because they think I'm not going to buy anything or that I can't afford things in their store. Since employees never know "who" they're helping, treating all customers equally is important. Customers know when they're being treated differently than others. For me, great customer service is the key to keeping me as a customer!



Amy Knebel

Age: 40
Profession: Freelance Writer & Dog Mom
Location: Washington, DC

Where are the dresses? Does this come in another color? Why am I in a yoga pose in order to see the merchandise? Of all my shopping pet peeves, disorganized merchandise tops my list. Nowadays, I'm a last minute shopper always in a rush... So when I enter a store I need to quickly ascertain what's there.

Recently, I walked into a local accessories boutique to buy a clutch for that evening and was overwhelmed immediately. Some effort had been made to group items by color, but it was clear that this system wasn't consistently utilized. Merchandise was heaped on very low tables, which made picking through the items very uncomfortable. Making matters worse, the wall shelving ran floor to ceiling, making some items visually and physically inaccessible. Needless to say, my last minute shopping trip failed. I got frustrated before I even saw everything and left clutchless... with a headache! A well-merchandised store beckon shoppers to explore, touch, try and eventually buy; just don't make me work for it.



Linda Johnson

Age: 73
Profession: Custom Drapery Sales, Ret.
Location: Quaker City, OH

I actually have two pet peeves when it comes to shopping. First, I don't want to be ignored when I go into a store. If the employees are busy, at least say hello, or something to acknowledge me being there. I am happy to wait if the employee says they will be with me in a minute or even if they simply smile and make eye contact.

My second pet peeve is being treated poorly because of the way I am dressed or the way I look. I remember going into a store one day when I wasn't feeling well because I wanted to buy perfume as a last-minute gift for my sister. When I told the store employee what I wanted she asked me if I knew how expensive the perfume was...like I couldn't afford it!

I worked retail for years and learned that you never know who has money to spend. The person with the worst looking outfit and no makeup lots of times has more money in their pocket than someone who is dressed up and made up!