First off, we’d like to acknowledge that Amazon, the preeminent online retailer, has one of the best retail websites when it comes to the relative ease of finding and buying things! The title of this article was picked to make it provocative, and, in fact, Amazon is even mentioned as a verb in this article to recognize its prowess in web selling. Note that the focus of this article is only web selling and not other areas such as logistics and fulfillment.

Just like in brick-and-mortar sales, the final purchase is where the rubber meets the road in digital sales. However, a lot of heavy lifting needs to happen in customer engagement and selling before that final purchase. When smart, effective and consistent, this engagement quickly results in a purchase transaction and fulfillment follows.

While most websites have been paying attention to the transactional part of the purchase such as shopping cart and payment processing (although we see some gaps here as well), they could do far better in the upfront engaging and selling that enable the sale. In fact, according to industry stats, web purchase abandonment is upwards of 80%, even at the point when consumers have put something in the shopping cart.

While Amazon is one of the better sites in online selling, other web retailers can “out-amazon” Amazon and even Amazon can out-amazon itself in online selling with the innovations mentioned in this article! Drawn from the brick-and-mortar retail world, these innovations can be leveraged in the digital world thanks to advancements in customer engagement technologies. Without further ado, here they are—you might want to consider using them within the context of your own online business.
The Digital Walmart Greeter

Much-maligned, the Walmart greeter was not such a bad idea. Legend has it that Sam Walton was a really big fan of the greeter and he meant the greeter to be a friendly person that would make shoppers feel welcome and comfortable as they entered the store. However, when the friendly greeter was asked to be a Jekyll and Hyde multitasker, where he had to play concierge on one hand and security guard on the other (in order to reduce shrinkage and control Black Friday crowds)—more of the latter than the former—things didn’t quite turn out the way Mr. Walton had envisioned. The greeter started to decline in popularity and he’s virtually gone or got replaced by a real security guard.

ENTER THE DIGITAL GREETER OR THE CHATBOT.

Wouldn’t it be great if Amazon and other retail websites had a virtual digital greeter or a concierge (also called chatbots, avatars and virtual assistants, you could also think of them as a business Siri) that helped customers find things on the website?

- What if the chatbot welcomed the visitor in an engaging manner, answered common questions in a natural language dialog, pushed relevant web pages to the shopper, gave website tours and even transitioned the conversation with full context to a human expert, if needed?

- These chatbots never take time off, they work 24×7, they multitask like there’s no tomorrow (i.e., greet thousands of shoppers at the same time), and are even multilingual!

- They can live on mobile devices and social networks, and communicate via text or speech.

- Moreover, when aligned with the personality of the business, chatbots become digital brand ambassadors.

Sorry, the chatbot can’t control crowds or watch for shoplifters!

The Digital Home Depot Associate

Home Depot’s associates are considered experts, and in Home Depot’s own words, critical to their competitive advantage.

RETAILERS CAN DEPLOY DIGITAL SELF-SERVICE VERSIONS OF THESE ASSOCIATES on their websites or make that expertise available to their contact center sales agents. For example, Case-Based Reasoning (CBR), an Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology that simulates human intelligence, can be employed to drive self-service conversations with consumers to help them find and buy what they need through a
step-by-step dialog in the same way they would converse with the best home depot associate before making the purchase—a great way to help the shopper get past SKU clutter on the website. And the self-service system can multitask with hundreds of consumers at the same time—an associate on “legal steroids”! With the same technology, contact center agents can become as good as the best in-store associates.

**The Digital Nordstrom Pianist**

Nordstrom is known for creating exceptional shopping experiences with high-touch service that includes personal stylists and even live pianists (although there seem to be far fewer pianists of late). The service differentiation comes from being memorable and high-touch.

*THE SAME KINDS OF HIGH-TOUCH EXPERIENCES CAN BE CREATED DIGITALLY.* For instance, retailers can deploy text and video chat as well as cobrowse-aided phone conversations, where the sales agent can help the shopper find things and information, assist them in filling forms and help complete online purchases (and perhaps even play some piano for the shopper while at it!). The retailer can also mimic the Nordstrom personal stylist through CBR guided help and combine it with contextual content or coupon offers similar to the service offered by the personal stylist, who “soft-sells” products, while sharing information and ideas.

**The Digital Avon Lady**

Avon ladies are known around the world for friendly door-to-door sales. They sell where the consumer literally lives in the physical world.

*RETAILERS CAN DEPLOY A DIGITAL AVON LADY-APPROACH TO ENGAGE WITH AND SELL TO CONSUMERS WHERE THEY LIVE IN THE DIGITAL WORLD,* that is, the web, social networks, and mobile phones. For example, you can have consumers embed your service widget within the favorite websites where they live, set up a Facebook fan page for your business, or get on Twitter. You can even deploy chatbots on Facebook for initial engagement, with seamless transition to the real “Avon lady” (your contact center or field sales associate) for 1-on-1 human engagement with the shopper.

**The Digital Tupperware Party**

Tupperware is known globally for fun parties held in the homes of “hosts,” where business is conducted with “guests.”
THE TUPPERWARE PARTY EXPERIENCE CAN BE CREATED IN THE DIGITAL WORLD WITHIN AND ACROSS COMMUNICATION CHANNELS. The retailer or the retailer’s distribution partners can do this across digital channels and touchpoints, like online communities, email, and social media. When the guest wants to buy, she can be transitioned to the appropriate digital sales agent in the retailer’s eCommerce team or the distributor’s sales team.

Conclusion
Taking great ideas from brick-and-mortar retailers and applying them to the digital world by leveraging next-generation customer engagement technologies can help web retailers create amazing customer experiences and take web sales to a new level. Are you now ready to take on the vaunted Amazon? Amazon, are you ready to go from being the gold standard in eCommerce to platinum?

About eGain


Headquartered in Sunnyvale, California, eGain has operating presence in North America, EMEA, and APAC. To find out more about eGain, visit www.eGain.com.