I need to vent here about customer service.

Posted by ScottSherman - 06 Oct 2012 10:39

First some good stuff and there is much good. I have watched most if not all of the many Youtube demonstrations made by Clay and despite having never met him, I feel almost as if I know him and he seems like a very likable guy. He clearly knows what he is talking about when it comes to the Wicked Edge System and is balanced in his presentations and claims for his products, acknowledging problems or short comings where they exist and he clearly wants to make this the best product it can be as issues emerge, they are addressed and I hear from others that if they have a problem with the product they purchase, Clay and WE will make it right. I have spoken to Clay, Kay and Kyle on the phone a couple of times when I ordered my WEP system and was very pleasantly impressed with the very pleasant and helpful demeanor of each of them. So we have here a great company making a great product and backing it with great customer service, so what in the world could I possibly have to complain or vent about?

Well here is my problem; I have ordered a WE Pro Pack 2 and several other accessories not included in the PP2, a pretty sizable purchase. I ordered it 6 weeks ago and I get that there have been a number of very reasonable delays for improvements and manufacturing problems some of which were out of the control of WE. I am not complaining about the delays, I get that and appreciate that they did not send me an inferior product with a better version about to emerge even though it is cutting into their bottom line profit, I assume.

What I want to complain about is that in the six weeks of delays, I have not received one single response to any of my emails. I have not wanted to bug them by phone because I know how busy they are selling and filling orders, so when nothing was happening for extended periods I sent an email asking for an update, but nothing ever comes back. I don't even know if they are getting my emails. I assume that there are many emails with all the delays which again I understand, but a very important part of the buying experience and customer service is keeping an open communication with customers. I have been told that my order would ship on a certain date when I first ordered it and it was not. I called in to see what the delay was and was told of the problems and also told that my item would "probably" ship within a specific period, but it did not and I sent emails to find out when it might ship, but nothing. Silence. No reply of any kind even an acknowledgment of the email request. Again, I am not complaining about the delays, just lack of response to me as a customer. I don't know when the $900 charge is going to hit my credit card and I don't know when I need to be home to accept the delivery so it doesn't sit idly on my porch or when I will have the satisfaction of actually seeing something I have wanted and waited for, for quite a long time.

I think this forum is brilliant and I give Clay high praise for having this forum and not screening negative comments, but it is not a place to deal with customers or problems one on one. I know others have been waiting longer than me and if I am out of line, so be it, I will apologize publicly, but I am frustrated and I don't know how else to express it. I like Clay and kay and Kyle and don't want to bug them with a bunch of phone calls, but I need to know what is going on with my order which has been hanging for over 6 weeks now. It is important to be updated of unexpected changes with a high priced purchase and in this day and age, emails serve an important part in internet purchases. So please, answer me when I send an email, that is not a lot to ask. If you stay on top of it, it would not overwhelm you and there can not be

so many that you can not respond at some point even if you need to get a high school kid to do it for you.

Again, I am just frustrated and venting in a place where I sense I am not alone and will strike a chord with others who understand my frustration. I will continue to wait for my new WE System and I am sure it will be great when I finally get it,but I hate this sitting in the dark and not knowing what is going on.

So that is my rant and I appreciate the podium on which I am allowed to do so. Sorry if I have upset any of the many very loyal fans and friends of Clay and WE (I am actually one). It is my hope that by airing my complaint here that I may help others not to be as frustrated as I am and perhaps to help WE improve their already exemplary customer service.

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Re: I need to vent here about customer service.

Posted by Staze - 06 Oct 2012 12:53

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I found calling to be extremely reliable, and resulted in very quick, and courteous answers from Kay.

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Re: I need to vent here about customer service.

Posted by Ayglass - 06 Oct 2012 13:05

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Hey Scott,

I'm in much the same boat. I ordered almost 6 weeks ago and at that time I told Kay that I was interested in ordering a PP2, but only if it would be shipping soon. I explained that I didn't want to wait months for something that's a relatively large purchase and that if it was going to be a long time that I would hold my order until they were in stock. I was encouraged to put in the order and told that (at that time) they expected to ship by the following Monday when the new arms would be in.

I've been following the forum looking for updates and it appears that they have had some unavoidable delays and have wisely chosen to wait until the new degree arms were created. I called Kyle Thursday for an update on my order and he told me that they would start shipping as soon as Friday and at the latest I would get a tracking number on Wednesday. If all goes well and they meet this second deadline, I'll be satisfied and get on with learning to use the WE. If they don't ship, then I will call to cancel. Every customer is different and the balance between customer expectations and service level is a delicate one.

I vote with my dollars 'cause that's the only vote I get

- Andy

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Re: I need to vent here about customer service.

Posted by ScottSherman - 06 Oct 2012 14:05

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Andy, I suppose I am very OCD about my email and have always responded in some way to any email that needed or wanted a response. I consider it a responsibility and common courtesy to reply to an email sent to me from anyone soliciting information or whatever. I don't have a small business, so this is not that difficult for me. However, it seems that a small startup company would be even more inclined to put into effect some effective means of responding to customers. I know how difficult it can be to deal with the public and customer service is usually the greatest challenge of any small business, but it is because of their customers that they exist at all.

I am a very frequent user of Amazon.com and Apple for purchases since I live on an island and don't have a lot of retail stores convenient to my location to shop at. Predictably there have been some problems with purchases because of the shear volume of transactions I complete. However, in every case without exception, when I send an email inquiry to these companies, I get an immediate acknowledgment that an email was received and in every case a response with a resolution the same day or worst case within 24 hours.

I get that WE is not Amazon or Apple with the maga millions of dollars in resources etc., but by scale those companies must get a much larger volume of email than WE and again, WE is a startup, so it is hard to just say, oh well no big deal. They are too busy or there is too much email to bother with or blow it off entirely.

Forgetting the importance of customer communications, how about it's just a common courtesy and sign of respect from one person to another. I know as I write and read these words that some will interpret that I am a totally disgruntled unhappy person with too much time on my hands ands a propensity to complain and should get a life. I am non of these. I have a very happy life with a wife, kids and dogs and cats, I am active in the community and enjoy every day. I only complain when my expectations are not met, but like to keep my expectations reasonable.

I suppose there in lies the problem. WE, et.al. are a great bunch of folks and with the exception noted here, are doing a fantastic job. I have and do continue to endorse their products on knife forums etc. I just suppose that they have raised the bar in so many ways that this has been a bit of a disappointment.

And lastly, my hope is that if in fact this is a bigger problem than just me, lets find out and bring it to their attention in a meaningful way and perhaps we will get some better communications going on.

Again, sorry to be a wet blanket here, it goes against my nature to complain, but it is also against my nature to stand by and do nothing where it seems something should be done.

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Re: I need to vent here about customer service.

Posted by iamtwon - 06 Oct 2012 14:44

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I too sent an E-Mail enquiring about stuff that was left unanswered, but I got all the information that I needed from the forum. If there wasn't information readily available, I'd probably be weary. Inevitably some sales will require an E-Mail reply, so I'd be willing to bet that it's on the list. Some people won't be willing and/or able to dig through forums or make a phone call or two.

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Re: I need to vent here about customer service.

Posted by leomitch - 06 Oct 2012 16:10

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Hi Scott

I am sorry to hear of your frustrations. You say you don't want to bug them by phoning but I will tell you from my experience that calling is the best way to get what you want and they don't mind you calling one bit.

And now a word about e-mails...they are inundated with e-mails every hour of every day. To read and respond to them all would be the best thing but this would keep one person busy all day...who shall that person be? Someone who is privy to all information and be up-to-date every second of the way and know all there is to know about the WE and accessories! Hmm! Who would that be? Clay first, Kay next....They are a small company on the horns of a dilemma...hire more people who know what they are doing, but there business is in transition so the hiring has to take place thoughtfully plus there are not that many people around with the know how to answer all queries without interrupting the principals who are busy answering the phone, filling out orders,checking with machinists about problems blah, blah,bla...it is not a great transition point yet where they can hire in the way really necessary. So what I am really saying through my take on what is going on there...phone! They want to do right by you but they are swamped...not excuse, just the way it is IMHO!

Leo

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Re: I need to vent here about customer service.

Posted by MichaelCraft - 06 Oct 2012 16:58

I too am in the same boat, but I have either relied on the forums, and i have called three time (once to order, once to check on my order as the previous ETA had passed and I wanted to add more stuff, the third time double checking the math on the final bill, which I had screwed up, but Kay helped me in about 2 sec on where i went wrong, and no sense of impatience). Every time, someone answered the phone (which is a miracle IMO, there aren't that many people that work there), and every time I got what I needed. The rest of the time I read the forums for updates, and got what I needed based on the delays (where I too prefer to wait than get a defective product, so I appreciate their QA).

Email is one of the worst forms of communication unfortunately (especially with a few employees and the fact that they always answer the phone, and in the forum one update takes care of MANY people, but email queues, you get behind, and there is never enough time :/).

In my business we have the same problem running projects where of course our stakeholders want to be informed on the status of their projects, etc., millions of $ and lives are at stake with our projects. SO what we do is 1) create a constantly updated project sight/forum and distribution list for every project including all of the stakeholders and interested parties, and send out regular(daily, weekly, etc., depends on project criticality or when we have just happened to hit a milestone or a bump) links to the update summaries on the project site and another link to the project site details to address most questions, and 2) set our out of office messages to go off almost all of the time saying if you are requesting information for A, B, or C, then please request to be added to X project's project site and contact list (we call them DLs aka Distribution lists). IN WEs case they could just send a link to the forums and the phone number, in our case we have to set permissions since our project sites are locked down. We HAVE to do that or we would be emailing all day and never actually get any work done . We run a tight staffing ship too.

Perhaps WE could try the same thing? Build a list of DLs for back-ordered items, and then just type up a quick email to send to the whole list once a week with a short update, or even just a link to the update posted in the forum (which will help train the clients to go to the forums, this has worked well for us). Also, on the email, have an auto response to say check the forums "here" for questions, send an email "here" to ask to be added to the DL if you are inquiring about a back-ordered item, call "here" if this is a time sensitive issue, otherwise you may expect a response to this email in "x" days, weeks, etc.

Email is a great communication medium, but it is also a time vampire if you don't manage it . And unlike forums and using DLs, email only addresses one client/customer at a time, hence isn't the most efficient communication mechanism, vs. these forum, which IMO are the most efficient for everyone.

And when it comes to your very valid concern (when is that big charge gonna hit my credit card, I feel

you there ☺
), call vs. email to get an update on the shipping ETA for YOUR order, as that is definitely time sensitive. In my case, I have stopped using that CC and there is plenty of room, because I know how hard predictability is on the manufacturing of new things. I have probably 8 CCs, but most don't carry a balance, I have them because of all of these new programs that change every quarter (5% off of gas for Q4, etc.), so that I always have a CC that gives me at least 5% cash back on EVERYTHING I purchase. If you don't have that luxury to stop using the card, and don't balance it like a check book so you always know your REAL available balance, then calling is your only option I think.

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Re: I need to vent here about customer service.

Posted by ScottSherman - 06 Oct 2012 17:35

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Hey Leo,

You make some valid points re: hiring and having a new employee in a new business especially while in transition, which I understand is the case. Non the less, I need to be kept informed of status changes of an order like this as far in advance as is reasonable or possible since the fulfillment and delivery of the system effects what I do and when I do it.

I don't want an unexpected very large charge on my credit card the day before the billing period rolls over for example, or if it is delivered and I need to be out of town, I don't want it sitting on my porch, or if life changes suddenly change my financial situation and the charge unexpectedly after a couple of months of no contact suddenly comes in... I could go on with examples of why it is important a company which changes and delays fulfillment needs to keep it's customers informed but I think I have made my point.

I must say to be fair, they have been very friendly and responsive by phone, but they have repeatedly given me dates when the order would be filled and the dates come and go and there is no charge on my card and no phone calls or emails letting me know of delays or new expected delivery dates. I have started a couple of threads here asking for updates and Clay has popped in with info, but it is generic and vague as to my order or yours if you have been waiting. It almost seems easier to just put the names of everyone waiting for a new order on an email blast list and one email will be delivered to everyone at the same time that the factory had a delay or something. This has got to be less time consuming than taking calls from dozens or more people waiting and being frustrated for their new system or upgrade.

I will simply say at this point that Clay really has been doing great updating, correcting and modifying the WEP System but from the business side, I can still see some room for improvements. I'll call in again on Tuesday and see what I can, but sheesh, what a frustrating experience this has been.

I think they need to remove the email contact link from the website and make it clear that they just can not respond to emails and suggest that inquiries be by phone only. That might be hard for some since email is very convenient and dependable when used effectively.

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Re: I need to vent here about customer service.

Posted by wickededge - 06 Oct 2012 19:58

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Hi guys,

Thanks for taking the time to write about your frustrations. While I hate to hear it, I also really appreciate the opportunity to improve it. I'm really grateful that you've been kind enough to let me know and didn't just walk away. I won't make any excuses for the slow communication, it's enough for me to say that I think I know what the problem is and I will jump right on fixing it. I'll make sure we get an answer out to you guys by Monday about your order status and we'll be changing some things in-house to try and prevent this kind of thing in the future. Overall, it's part of our growing pains and finding just the right amount of people to get it all done. Right now we've got two temporary people on board helping to get us out of our back order which we're almost through. They don't have the training to handle customer service so they're just filling in with production and shipping. Now that we've almost gotten everything out, we can take a harder look at staffing and see if we need to bring someone else on to help with communications.

--Clay

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Re: I need to vent here about customer service.

Posted by ScottSherman - 06 Oct 2012 20:04

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Exactly what I had hoped you might say. I hate to be the one to complain and especially in a public way, but I think you just made many who are monitoring this thread happy and of course, I look forward to a continued and improved customer relationship with Wicked Edge as both WE and I mature.

Thank you Clay. Good job!!!

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