

Create Your Own “Zappos” Experience on a Limited Budget

Ok, so you may not have Zappos money, but Zappos didn't have "Zappos money" either at the beginning. There are ways for you to create an experience for your organization that will set you apart from all of your competitors while allowing you to differentiate your business and set fair profit margins.

1. Think about your customers

Create detailed **personas** for each of your customers. Define what questions or needs they have about each of your products. What are their concerns and how can you fulfill their vision of what it is like to own that product. Help them to envision your product as the ONLY solution to fill their needs.

Example: What if you are a specialty store that only sells saw blades? Saw blades are pretty boring. Some people might get jazzed up by saw blades but my guess is that many do not. With so many etailers and retailers selling saw blades how do you stand apart?

Look at your competitors and think about the experience of their customers when visiting their website or store. There are no videos of a diamond cutting blade slipping through a piece of granite like butter on the isles of Home Depot. My guess is that most etailers selling saw blades don't give it much thought either. So, do whatever you can to make the experience on your site unique.

2. Look at your competitors

After your personas are created, ask yourself, what is lacking from their **experience**? It is not necessarily about adding more features and



functions but about your policies, product descriptions, photos and layout of your website. Order products from your competitors and evaluate the delivery and overall experience. Strive to create a relationship with your

customers before you ever sell a single item. Think of this as the warm greeting you get when you walk into your local clothing store that is still competing against Walmart. Next implement your ideas into your website. Throw in a hand written thank you note or a priceless gift like tips and tricks or alternative uses for the product.

3. Create an experience beyond your eCommerce website

Scrutinize every aspect of your customer experience outside of your website, such as shipping, packaging, return policies and customer support. Do you correspond with your customers after purchase? Have you ever called them to ask if they have any questions or how the product is working? Is their only correspondence from you an email soliciting more sales?

I know a guy that drove two hours to deliver a product to a customer because the customer could not wait 24 hours for shipping. That customer was in a bind and now that etailer has a customer for life.

4. Find alternative value

What if your product is ho hum and is simply a commodity where everyone buys based on best price? If you are in this business you may look at finding an **alternative value** that you can offer in combination with that product to your customers to offer more value than your competitors. An example of this is the etailer that sells a critical but relatively boring component of your lawn mower, the lawn mower air filter. How do you attract all of the lawn maintenance companies in America to purchase air filters from your estore.



One idea is to provide them with a free tool that allows them to enter the model and year of all of their lawn mowers and when routine maintenance is suggested, the site sends out alerts with maintenance instructions and links to the products your equipment needs.

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