



Powered by Passion

RevZilla has created a new dynamic in online customer service

by LEN LEWIS

Anthony Bucci bought his first motorcycle at the age of 26, and he's been throttling up ever since. Bucci, a dedicated motorcycle enthusiast and software developer, is co-founder of RevZilla, an online seller of apparel, accessories and parts for all motorsports.

The award-winning company has created a new dynamic in online customer service by focusing on intense training for reps, instructional videos and reviews, all powered by an internally developed, proprietary e-commerce platform.

"I was living in Philly and wanted a Ducati ... and when I had it picked out, I went looking for really cool parts, accessories and apparel online,"

he says. "I couldn't find any companies that were supporting customers the way they should."

RevZilla is the direct result of Bucci's background. He started writing code at 13 and moved into software development at 22. "I was in college during the first tech boom and I didn't want to write code anymore. I wanted to be in the part of the business where software meets people. I went to the agency side during a time when smaller brands were learning how to sell direct to consumers online," he says.

"Our job was to build customer experiences for brands using a technology platform that would help them integrate with catalogs, merchandise fulfillment and order management."

Bucci brought that thinking to motorcycles, where a high-touch, premium, emotionally driven site was a rarity. He says riders were underserved when it came to customer service and breadth of selection in harder to find, premium products.

"We were very influenced by companies like Zappos ... [that] looked at customer service as a driver of the brand and not just a cost center."

RevZilla aligns its interests "with consumers and the brands we carry. Our Gear Geeks are really inside sales consultants — they are heavily trained for 90 days before they are allowed to get on the phone with a customer because they are trained to solve problems and are not paid commission based on their sales volumes," Bucci says. "Someone may be looking for a tire. But the right product for them may be a patch kit that enables them to get another season with the tire they have."

The endgame is to build loyalty and trust. "If you center on that," he says, "you build a long-term following that believes we are not just trying to maximize every transaction."

ACTING ON FEEDBACK

Selling expensive motorcycle components and accessories online can be a challenge.

"The motorcycle dealer base does a good job creating an environment where people can go to try something on," Bucci says. "We're filling in the gaps where people don't have access to them and the best option they have is the online space."

This is underscored by an active blog and social media presence along with RevZilla TV, a YouTube series hosted by Bucci that includes product reviews and gives customers the chance to see products in action.

"With an item like a helmet you can create enough of a virtual environment where someone can see how it will fit, how adjustable it is, and basically de-risk the purchase," Bucci says. "Additionally, we find customers are

happier when they have fewer choices. So part of our job is to help them narrow the choices and not spend time looking at 600 helmets just to get down to the five that meet their needs for function and price.”

RevZilla TV was started in 2009 and now has close to 5,000 online videos seen by an estimated 18 million people globally. “The reason we’ve been able to grow so quickly is that we’ve done a good job of giving consumers mechanisms for providing feedback. We review those comments very carefully.

“In the pre-Internet days, retailers dictated the consumer experience,” Bucci says. “At this stage of the game, if you want to be relevant and meet consumer demand you have to listen to their feedback,” and many of RevZilla’s features and videos are the result of requests by customers looking to solve a problem.

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SERVING MORE SEGMENTS

RevZilla’s unique technology platform is also a reason for the company’s success, Bucci says. “The entire integrated enterprise platform is developed by our internal development team. We outsource accounting ... but the rest of it — merchandising, fulfillment and customer service — is tailored to our needs and I believe that

gives us a competitive advantage.”

Moving forward, the company is working on integrating content and commerce within the site to make it more personalized. It has been doing about \$75 million in annual sales — with double-digit growth in the past couple of years — from its distribution centers in Las Vegas and Philadelphia.

“We’re growing in a few ways by serving more segments of riders,” Bucci says. “We started business in the sport and adventure-focused genre. But we’re looking at the U.S. as a whole from the standpoint of segment expansion. We want to support different riders in different ways while our competitors might only cater to one segment.” **STORES**

Len Lewis is a veteran journalist and author covering the retail industry in the U.S., Canada, Europe and South America.