

## Seeing customer experiences through customers' eyes

Nine out of 10 online consumers say they have experienced problems with a Web site in the last year, according to a Harris Interactive survey conducted for Tealeaf Technology Inc.

"That number has remained steady for the last three years," Geoff Galat, Tealeaf's vice president of marketing and product strategy, said.

"The trend is that it's not getting better. And since the number of transactions is growing, there are many more transactions at risk."

The Harris survey quantified

## In Focus

the risk: When consumers experience problems, 53% will give the customer service call center a shot, but 42% abandon the site, often switching to a competitor, usually never to be seen again. Worse yet, they may go to a review site and post a complaint. "There's a huge brand impact when they go to yelp.com, and it lives forever," Galat said.

As broadband Internet access grows, consumers have become far less tolerant of Web site "issues," Galat said. Their expectations of immediacy are nearly at the level of their expectations of a dial tone when they pick up a phone.

Yet Web site navigational problems are going, so online sellers are suffering "death by a thousand cuts," Galat said.

With so much at stake, why is there continued erosion of the cus-

tomers' experience?

"There's a disconnect between the customer experience and what happens within a company's four walls," Galat said.

A company looks at data points, technical information, response times and funnel metrics, but "nothing combines to show what the customer experiences," he said.

"It's like running a storefront and never seeing what the customer says and does."

Even a call to the customer service center can be frustrating because the agent can't see what the consumer is seeing. "The customer experience only displays in the browser."

Tealeaf plugs into a company's site and enables that experience to be replayable, screen by screen, Galat said. "You can grab any session and look at what happened."

For example, he said, a customer might complain that an air fare was higher than expected because taxes and fees were not in-

cluded in the base price. An airline or online agency can go back and determine that the total price was indeed displayed before purchase. On the other hand, if a glitch in the system made the total price unclear, an apology and refund or travel voucher may be in order.

Tealeaf also can put a session into the hands of a customer service agent, who can address the issue on the spot. "If you can see it, there's



**Geoff Galat**

no more conjecture about what happened, and no research is necessary," Galat said.

The results can be startling: A pharmaceutical company reduced the average time for an issue to be resolved from 60 minutes to 30 seconds, he said.

The system can be configured to provide alerts when specified issues exceed a certain threshold or when a set percentage of customers experience a problem. "One of our travel customers receives an alert any time a platinum member is unable to complete a transaction," Galat said. The company receives alerts if 10 gold customers or 25 silver customers experience a problem.

Client companies can decide how long to retain the captured information. Typically, travel companies store it for 14 to 30 days, Galat said.

"It's not as much data as you might think," he said. "Each page has a logo, other images and photos. We take all that out. You don't have to recapture a million images of your Dallas hotel."

