

Q What will make the biggest difference in improving consumer perceptions of our customer service?

A Software provider Sterling Commerce has examined shopper behaviour across all channels among consumers in the UK, France and Germany. In all three countries, it has found that shopping experiences would be most improved if staff can process customer orders on the spot, even if the product is not available there and then.

In a nutshell, customers want store staff to be able to locate out-of-stock products in other stores or online and arrange for them to be delivered to their home or that store.

In the UK, 54% of consumers said it was very or fairly important that staff were able to locate a product at another store and reserve for home delivery. Sterling Commerce says this highlights that retailers are missing a trick if they are not able to 'save the sale' when the customer turns up to buy and the product they want is not available.

Despite the increasing prevalence of consumers researching products online, they still want staff who are knowledgeable in stores too. In fact,



Customers want staff to 'save the sale' and locate out-of-stock items

50% of UK consumers surveyed rated more staff to assist with product knowledge as important to the overall shopping experience. These figures were mirrored in the French and German research too.

In addition, 64% of UK consumers expect shops to have an exact

view of their stock availability.

Sterling Commerce retail industry executive David Hogg says: "Lack of internal inventory visibility means they cannot easily save the sale of customers who still experience a stubborn percentage of out of stocks."