

BTS Négociation et Digitalisation de la Relation Client

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Low prices becoming more important for shoppers

Six out of ten consumers say low prices will become more influential when choosing where to shop and what to buy in the next two years, a survey has suggested.

But businesses need to offer more than just discounts to customers, according to the Institute of Customer Service.

- 5 The organisation, which surveyed 10,000 people, said firms should offer value and a choice of ways to pay.

About a third of those asked were still prepared to pay more to guarantee good service.

- 10 Jo Causon, the institute's chief executive, said customers did not want products and services that were "just cheap" - so businesses needed to be flexible and transparent about what they were offering their customers. That could include being upfront about products and when they were available if the supply was held up.

Staff needed to be understanding of the financial pressures their customers faced and offer a range of payment options, she said.

- 15 And they should also consider giving advice on budgeting or getting the most value out of products.

The institute questioned consumers as part of a regular review of customer service, at a time when prices are rising at their fastest rate for 40 years and the costs of energy, fuel and food continue to climb.

- 20 A shortage of skills and staff, problems with supplies from around the world, and the economic environment were all putting pressure on businesses to deliver a consistent service for customers, the institute said.

"Organisations cannot avoid these issues. They will need to develop service strategies that are responsive to evolving customer needs but also protect short and long-term business performance," Ms Causon said.

- 25 More than 17% of those surveyed were experiencing a product or service problem, the highest overall level since records began in 2008. The quality and reliability of goods and services, in particular, was a growing problem, the survey suggested.

The cost of dealing with poor service added to ongoing expenses for businesses. The institute estimated the collective cost to be £9.24bn a month in staff hours.

- 30 Ms Causon said UK firms had got much better at dealing with, and resolving, complaints, but more work was required to prevent the problems in the first place.

By Kevin Peachey, personal finance correspondent, BBC News – 5 July 2022