

Module 7

Setting Your Store Policies

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Or - What Could Possibly Go Wrong?

Update Your Store Policies.

Most customers are really nice people!

They love your product when they order it, they love it when they receive it - sometimes they come back for more - but that's usually the end of the story. -
and everyone is happy.

But - you will get the occasional issue, and this is where your store policies become important.

However "Your Store Policies" are not Law.

An actual problem with the item, or the packaging, or it not really matching the item description, or it not be fit for purpose, cannot be overcome by a 'store policy'.

These are the fault of the seller not the buyer and should be dealt with accordingly.

If there is a dispute that the customer takes to Etsy - Etsy will usually take the customer side - so try not to let anything go that far if you can.

Anything You **Don't Say** May Be Used Against You.

So how can your store policies help?

By setting the groundwork for the sale - informing the customer of any possible variations - color not what they saw on their screen - not exact image if hand-made, possible postage delays, or the reason you set order date cut-offs before Christmas, and your other policies.

This will;

- reduce some disputes as the customer understands before the order is placed,
- calm some disputes because you can re-iterate that you warned about this before the order was placed (show them the policy on the listing)
- bring possible problems to the customer's attention before the order is placed and they can then decide if they want to allow for that possibility.

Will telling them possible problems put them off ordering?

Yes possibly - but an order you don't even know you might have had, is much better than an order that turned into a serious "issue" and ended up with a one-star review and a very nasty comment, for all your other possible customers to see.

You can word many of your store policies in a nice way rather than being aggressive about it.

Some store policies can go into the Etsy Store setup page and will be shown in the Deliveries and Return Policies that Etsy puts into the listing.

Other policies should go into your listings product description because they don't apply to all of your items.

So have a template of your policies that you can just copy and paste to add to your listing when you first make it.

You can adjust it to suit the product for anything that may not apply.

Non-returns policy - Etsy has that covered nicely in their standard template

Returns & Exchanges - Not accepted. But please contact me if you have problems with your order. This covers "everything" but allows you to take a full range of actions (or non-actions).

But that is not the end of it at all.

If you worry that the colors they see on their screen might not be exactly the same as on the product image - say something like - "Colors may vary with different browsers and screen settings."

If you don't refund if there is a delay in postage - say so - "Please note that sometimes USPS are overloaded or delayed - once your parcel has been posted I am no longer responsible for postage delays."

This is actually not enforceable. As the sender, it is you who have the "contract" with the carrier and it is you who should be following up on delays with postage.

Once the parcel has been marked as delivered then it is legally up to the customer to follow up on a "lost" package - but you can be a bit helpful if you can.

You can both ask the Post Office or courier to track a missing package - sometimes it turns up.

You can consider re-sending the item or refunding if that's what you or your customer prefer - this is likely to change a "problem" into a happy customer.

OR if you suspect that the customer is not telling the truth, ask them for a copy of the Police Report of the stolen package - that will usually end any fraudulent claims

If you don't refund once you have started to make the article - say so " As these items are made to order, I cannot cancel an order once production has started"

If you don't refund simply on a change of mind - say so. "I can cancel an order if you change your mind within 12 hours of placing the order - after that - as these items are made to order, I cannot cancel an order because production will have started"

If the item is fully hand made and the finished product may not be exactly the same as the one on the listing - say so. "Please note that each item is individually hand-crafted so there may be some variation between the sample item in the images and the finished item you receive - Your (item) is unique because it is hand made and I am very sure you will love the one I make for you!"

What else might YOUR difficult customer have a "problem with?"

If you can make a "policy" to cover any other issues, then many (but not all) of your problems can be reduced.

Some customers will still be a problem.

So what choices do you have to solve the issue?

Sometimes the customer is actually right - if they have a complaint ask them to send a photo of the issue (many will probably already have done that).

If it is really a problem with your product or packaging and it was damaged in transit, then replace or fully refund - ask then which they prefer.

If the problem has meant that the 'event' will have passed before the replacement has been received then they may (rightly) prefer a refund.

Sometimes you can point out the policy/warning you have on the listing. They may then realise that you did warn them, and not pursue any further.

Sometimes they can be placated with a partial refund or a discount on their next order.

(Sometimes they are just looking to reduce their costs and it is not a real complaint.)

If you think there is nothing really wrong, but they are being difficult then tell them you will do a refund (maybe less a 'restocking fee 20%') when they send it back (they pay postage too). Many won't do that - some will.

Some of your policies should be internal -

Create some procedures for you to follow if you get a complaint

Have a template to nicely ask for a photo of a problem with your item.

Have a template to ask them to check with their post office for a delivered but missing parcel.

Have a template to tell them that returns should be within 7 days if you think that a claim should have been started closer to the delivery date than a month later.

Making templates in advance means that you won't have to create a "nice" reply when you get an angry message - which will make you upset and not thinking straight.

Any template will most likely have to be adjusted to suit the exact situation, but it does help with your own internal upset at the time.

Any time you do get an angry message - don't answer straight away - take a short break and allow yourself to calm down a bit before tackling it.

Sometimes you will get a difficult customer who cannot be satisfied. If they leave a low review, you may have to just live with it and wait for good reviews to push it down.

If the customer opens a formal Dispute with Etsy then sometimes Etsy will back you up, but more often they will believe the customer and will force a refund.

If that happens, again you just have to live with it - learn what you can, and move on to the next (hopefully happy) customer.

But as I said above, most customers are sensible and lovely - and there are very few awkward ones - so don't let them spoil your great Etsy Seller Experience.

Next - Module 8

Taking Images and Making Videos