

Apple Retail Reduces Stress of Shopping on Black Friday

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Adding staff for the holiday season is not unusual in retail. What is unusual is how America's most profitable retailer, The [Apple Store](#), trains its employees to communicate with customers to reduce the stress and frustration of shopping on Black Friday and other busy retail days.

Time slows down in a crowded Apple Store because of several techniques I learned during my year of research into what makes [The Apple Experience](#). One technique in particular blew me away. Some managers call it, "resetting internal clocks."

Reset internal clocks. I recently walked into a busy Apple Store and waited nearly fifteen minutes to talk to a salesperson about the new iPhone 5, yet the time flew by and I wasn't frustrated at all. A sales specialist reset my internal clock several times during the waiting period. He acknowledged my presence in the store immediately, placed me in queue, told me how long it would take before I'd be served, checked in every few minutes, and personalized the experience by using my first name. Here's a transcript and timeline of my experience.

Andrew (Apple sales manager): Hi, May I help you?

Carmine: Yes, I'd like to learn about the iPhone 5.

Andrew: Great. There are eight people ahead of you. As soon as one of our sales specialists is free I'll send them right over. Meanwhile, if you haven't had a chance to play with the iPhone, go right ahead. You'll love it. May I have your first name?

In the first sequence, Andrew approached and greeted me as soon as I walked toward the iPhone table. It's the first step in the Apple [Retail](#) "Five Steps of Service" I've detailed in [a previous article](#). Although Andrew could not give me a specific wait time, he reduced the potential frustration by letting me know how many people were ahead of me. In addition, every device in the Apple Store is turned on, loaded with games and apps, and connected to the Internet. By letting customers interact with products, customers create an

emotional attachment to the devices. It also helps the time go by and comes in handy when parents bring in their children who now have something to do while the parent is talking to the sales specialist.

3 minutes later

Andrew smiles, makes eye contact, walks over and says, “There are five people ahead of you.”

5 minutes later

Andrew (walks over again): Carmine, how do like the iPhone 5?

Carmine: It’s nice. Thinner and lighter than my iPhone 4.

Andrew: It’s a great phone. There are two people ahead of you so we’re almost there. It looks like Michael will be done soon and he’ll be right over to help you.

4 minutes later

Michael (Apple Store specialist): Hi, Carmine. I understand you’d like to learn more about the iPhone 5. Let’s get started. (Michael was able to walk right up to me and greet me by name because Andrew gave him my first name and told him what I was wearing).

At this point, I’ve waited a total of twelve minutes to talk to a salesperson about the device, but it didn’t *feel* like twelve minutes. Like many customers I have very little tolerance for poor communication or lack of customer service. If I had just stood there waiting, I would have left after two minutes. Instead Andrew greeted me, acknowledged my presence, made me feel as though my business was important to them, and checked in to let me know they haven’t forgotten about me.

The goal is to make sure customers who feel stressed with all the chaos on Black Friday feel relaxed, calm, and comfortable when they enter an Apple Store, even though the customer will see hundreds of others packed in the store.

Apple Retail has discovered what many retail and non-retail businesses have yet to learn: you’ll win the loyalty of your customers once you stop trying to sell them something. Instead figure out how you want people to *feel* when they’re doing business with you.

Carmine Gallo is the communications coach for the world’s most admired brands. He is a popular keynote speaker and author of several

books, including the international bestsellers *The Presentation Secrets of Steve Jobs* and *The Innovation Secrets of Steve Jobs*. His new book, *The Apple Experience*, is the first book to reveal the secrets behind the stunning success of the Apple Retail Store. Carmine has recently launched an eLearning course titled, *The New Rules of Persuasive Presentations*. Follow Carmine on Facebook or Twitter.