

Best Practices for Advanced Exchange Reverse Logistics

Contributed by Paul Rupnow
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Periodically it is useful to review your current practices against Reverse Logistics industry best practices. Below are some "valuable nuggets" of information from the recent Reverse Logistics Association Consumer Electronics Committee interactive webinar session on Better Customer Experience around Advanced Exchanges. The webinar was attended by over a dozen Reverse Logistics Professionals from companies such as Google, Philips, Toshiba, Staples and OfficeMax, who shared their issues, knowledge and experience. The items are in bullet point format for quick review:

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Keep it Simple - Make the returns experience mindlessly simple to execute for the consumer (and the support agents but keep them accountable for effective NTF issues)

Remorse or DOA Returns Simplification - for goods shipped directly to a customer, there will be some immediate returns due to remorse, technical or dead on arrival (DOA) issues in the first few days. Include return instructions and a return label in the packaging to enable a prompt and easy return for the customer as well as easy processing for the returns center to receive and issue the customer credit. Additionally, it is helpful to ensure your packaging is designed to be friendly for a quick repackage by the customer for immediate returns.

Advanced Exchange Alternatives - Although Advanced Exchange seems like the easiest, fastest and best solution, offer the customer other return or exchange options. An Advanced Exchange transaction usually requires a credit card or cash hold to ensure the defective unit is returned. Some customers may prefer the slower Replace on Arrival return transaction since they may not have a credit card or may not wish to use their credit card. Also some consumers may favor a Repair and Return transaction. Some customers may benefit from the shipment of a return packaging kit to box up their return. Let the customer choose.

Return Reminders - automated email reminders are beneficial to prompt the customer to ensure they return the defective unit and do not incur a credit card charge.

Prompt Hold Release - ensure your Receiving team quickly handles and updates the Advanced Exchange customer record to release the obligation on the customer's credit card. Ensure good data communication with your Returns processing partner, so customer service issues do not arise due to slow or unmatched transactions. In situations where the customer calls and believes they should not have been charged, enable customer service to immediately satisfy the customer with a credit, then have your collection team validate that the customer actually returned the defective unit.

Monitor Closely - continuous monitoring of transport, packaging and processing costs is essential as well as a constant evaluation of environmental waste and impact.

Please check out the RLA committees at RLA.org. Many committees now offer some excellent interactive webinars to share wisdom and experience with other Reverse Logistics Professionals. Or even better, let the committee chair people know about an issue you are trying to understand or improve, so you can have an experienced team of professional colleagues help you improve your Reverse Logistics operations.

Good Luck!

Paul Rupnow