



## Tom's Message Board

amazon.com®

### My Kudos To...

Being a small business owner, I'm a big *Buy Local* advocate and buy locally first when I can. But I also agree with the message in Thomas Friedman's book *The World is Flat*, and accept that we exist in a global economy and that buying locally will continue to be challenged by brilliant internet marketers like Amazon. So...here's my story.

Last fall I upgraded my original Kindle to the new Kindle Fire HD. Over time I noticed that the battery charge didn't last anywhere near the "up to 11 hours" feature of the device, so I explored the Amazon site to troubleshoot. What I found in the tech support area of the site were three options for support: email, live phone chat and phone support. What blew me away was that the "phone support" option was actually "recommended" and that I should expect a return call within five minutes! But wait a minute... isn't this an online company, and isn't the "phone" the antithesis of an online business's model? I chose the phone option and no sooner clicked "submit" when my phone rang. "Hello"...an automated attendant informs me that a representative will be with me in less than 2 minutes. So far so good. Sure enough, a man named Jesse greets me and asks a few questions, then suggests I try their super-duper PowerFast charger and cable; and that if this doesn't work, Amazon will replace the Kindle with a new one. I receive the charger and cord two days later at no charge. I'm a little impressed at this point.

Two days pass and I receive a phone call from Jesse asking if I received the charger and cord and if they appear to have solved the problem with the battery. I tell him that the Kindle is charging fully and better than before but that I hadn't really used the device much in the past couple of days to really know if the batter life has improved. It's Friday and he says he'll call again Sunday evening to check back in... which, true to his word, he does. I tell him the battery appears to be holding a charge better than before but I'll need some more time and use to determine for sure. He agrees and asks if he can check back in after a month, reminding me that if the problem isn't fixed, he'll replace my Kindle with a new one. Wow. By now I'm more than a little impressed.

In my mind, this is a game-changer. This experience transforms Amazon.com from a place to conveniently buy everything from bandages to electronics at low prices, to resemble what I'd expect from a good local buying experience. To actually speak with a real person – and the same person – by name is comforting and good business. This creates Raving Fans and defines great marketing – *getting someone with a need to know, like and trust you*. This is also the strongest form of branding a business can build – delivering what they promise. Amazon.com knows that people do business with people. I also believe this level of service holds local sellers more accountable for extending excellent customer service every time; because if this is any indication of an emerging trend, the bar has just been raised... and that's a good thing. Competition makes us better.

*Tom*