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Slow Response to Customer Emails Fatal for UK Business

A slow response to customer emails can be hugely damaging to UK businesses, according to a survey released today by Fasthosts Internet.

/24-7PressRelease/ - July 14, 2007 - A slow response to customer emails can be hugely damaging to UK businesses, according to a survey released today by Fasthosts Internet, the UK's largest web hosting provider. A survey of 1300 British consumers revealed that a slow response to a customer's email enquiry will negatively affect business image and directly lead 89 per cent of consumers to choose a competitor. 78 per cent of consumers surveyed have been disappointed by a slow response to email, with the average consumer sending three emails before receiving a satisfactory response. A further survey of 500 UK small businesses found that one in five UK SMEs had received a complaint specifically about their slow approach to email, and 56 per cent had no policy in place concerning their response time.

[Fasthosts'](#) 'Customer Service Email Study', performed by research company Tickbox, found that for British consumers, waiting too long for a response to an enquiry is their biggest gripe when emailing a business, with some 78 per cent of consumers having suffered. Unhelpful automated replies came second with 66 per cent of consumers affected and 40 per cent had found out-of-date email addresses. Whilst the majority of emails from consumers to businesses involved large companies, one in three Britons have been disappointed with a slow response to an email sent to a small local company they have used.

The research also revealed that email response time directly affects brand loyalty and a consumer's purchasing decision. Over 90 per cent of consumers admitted to being more brand-loyal and more likely to increase spend with a company who responded swiftly to their email enquiry.

The average British consumer is only willing to wait up to 24 hours for a reply, with one in five consumers (19 per cent) abandoning their enquiry after only 12 hours. Women are prepared to wait longer, with 12 per cent prepared to wait up to a week, compared with only 7 per cent of men.

However, a further study of 500 UK small businesses found that despite 82 per cent of companies recognising email to be important to their customers, some 56 per cent had no policy in place concerning response time, and over half had no consistent corporate style for emails to customers.

It is therefore unsurprising that one in five businesses (21 per cent) surveyed admitted to having received a complaint about their slow response to customer emails. More businesses had received complaints about this issue than traditional small business gripes such as the phone not being answered promptly (14 per cent), a slow response to a customer's letter (7 per cent) or the front desk not being manned (5 per cent).

Fasthosts' study also revealed that whilst consumers saw a strong link between prompt replies to email and their brand loyalty, some 48 per cent of UK SMEs surveyed believed there to be no link between how quickly they reply to emails and their sales revenue.

Mark Jeffries, CTO Fasthosts Internet Ltd, commented, "It is clear that businesses of all sizes can incur real damage by responding slowly to customer emails. Whilst most recognise that email is an important form of communication with their market, the majority remain misinformed about the kind of effects that poor email practices can have on their business".

Alarmingly, two thirds of businesses surveyed (66 per cent) had no training at all on important email issues such as email management techniques, email etiquette, document management or data retention law. Some 55 per cent provided no formal training to their employees on the day-to-day use of their email system.

UK small businesses also appear to be missing out on the latest ways to speed up email communication. 61 per cent admitted to not utilising a mobile email solution, such as a Blackberry or mobile email device, to communicate with customers. The majority of businesses also admitted that they fail to capitalise on website traffic, with 62 per cent not providing basic [email solutions](#) such as functionality on their website such as feedback forms.

Jeffries added, "Both consumers and businesses have much to gain from more swift email communication. British SMEs can see great returns from investing in the way they handle customer emails".

Fasthosts, as the UK's largest [web hosting](#) company, offers a comprehensive range of web solutions including domain name registrations, email solutions (including mobile email services), shared web hosting, dedicated servers, online payment services, reseller web hosting and feature-rich broadband packages.

About:

[Fasthosts](#) is the UK's largest web hosting company. Based in the UK and operating 24x7 from their dedicated UK data centres, Fasthosts keeps over 1 million domains running smoothly and ensures over 6 million emails are delivered safely each day. All Fasthosts services can be self-managed through the award winning Fasthosts web-based control panel that provides customers with unparalleled online control, enabling them to manage hosted services including domain registrations, shared web hosting, business-class email, dedicated servers internet merchant accounts plus unlimited broadband. Fasthosts' highly successful reseller channel has recently been rated Number 1 for reseller hosting by industry portal Web Host Directory.

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