

Best Buy displays Worst Behaviour - Places - Rants - Geek-Rant

Written by The Geek

Thursday, 24 February 2011 03:37

I've been a long-time customer of Best Buy. While they don't always have the best deals on what I'm looking for, they have a wide selection and usually have what I am looking for in stock. Plus, their sales are usually pretty good. But what happens when the good goes bad?

So I've been in the market for a notebook computer for the last few months. I've been watching the sales and waiting for a good deal on a Toshiba Satellite laptop (yes, I am a fan of Toshiba). Just last week, I finally found what I was looking for, a Toshiba Satellite notebook on sale at Best Buy for less than \$400. It was the exact specs I was looking for, so after calling the store to verify it was in stock, I took a drive down to the local Best Buy to make my purchase.

I'm the kind of guy who knows what I want before I even get to the store. So when I walked into the Best Buy, I went directly back to the computer department and looked for someone to give me a hand. Now, I suppose I'm not your typical computer buyer, or at least what the sales force at Best Buy expects. But if you had people around in business suits, and some dude hanging out in shorts, what would you think? Well, even though I was dressed very casually, I was getting perturbed at being ignored numerous times. People came into the store, made purchases, and left while I was still attempting to get some help. Guess Best Buy doesn't teach their employees not to judge a book by its cover.

So while I was waiting, I decided to find the item I was going to buy, so it could expedite the process. I had the product number written down, so I began to look for the box for the notebook I wanted to buy. Figured all it could do was help, since I was basically sitting on my hands anyways. I started looking. After about 5 minutes I found the model number I was looking for, but it had some sort of software taped to the box. After looking for a few minutes, all I found were 5 of the same thing, which had this extra software package taped to it. I couldn't even see the name, as it had a huge white label covering it.

Let me explain something about the Best Buy notebook section. It is basically these long benches with notebooks sitting on top and turned on for people to come a play with, to decide if they like how it looks, feels, performs, etc. The bottom of these benches are kind of like cabinets without doors. There are two shelves, and they are lined with boxes of notebook computers. These notebooks sit on these shelves kind of like books, so only one end is visible from the outside.

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Now, with the above in mind, I wanted to know if there were any of the laptops that DID NOT have the software attached. My complete sweep through the whole section had only found the 5 bundles, so it looked like that was all there was. But on a hunch, I got down on one knee and pulled out a couple of the bundles. Behind them on the shelf, stacked back against the wall basically hidden from the other laptops was what I was looking for. The exact model number I was looking for, without some sort of attachment. But it wasn't just one, there was a lot in there. I would guess 10-12 from my brief look.

OK. I'm getting to the good part, I promise.

So its now been nearly 25 minutes, and now it's just ridiculous. I walk to the front of the store and ask for the manager. The store manager comes out (I'll call him Paul, as I don't want to name any REAL names). I explain to Paul that I have been waiting for help for over 25 minutes to buy a computer. I tell him how I have been continually ignored in favor of people who look like they have more money to burn than I do. I explain that I know EXACTLY what I want to buy, and just need a warm body to process the sale for me. He apologizes and walks with me to the computer department. He speaks with the guy who seems to be running the show over there (I'll call him Todd). Todd apologizes for my wait, and calls over an associate who is just finishing a sale. I'd like to point out that the person who he was helping had come into the store nearly 15 minutes after I began my waiting game, and because of his shirt and tie, had already finished his purchase and was on his merry way.

So Todd introduces me to Marvin (yes, not his real name). Marvin says "Oh, you're here to buy? I saw you trying to get Fred's attention, I thought you were a friend or something". I wanted to smack Marvin in the jaw. But I also wanted to make my purchase, so I bit my tongue. "So what kind of computer are you looking for?", Marvin asked, "Asus makes a fine notebook".

I told Marvin I didn't need any assistance in shopping and making a decision. I wanted the Toshiba Satellite model C655-S5132. He said, "Oh, those. I know we have some of the bundles left". With that, I reached down under the counter (yes, I had walked to this location when talking to Marvin) and pulled out one with the software attached. Hey, if I can get some free bundled software, I'll take it!

"Yes, that's it", he said. "This software bundle includes a licensed copy of (Kaspersky, I think) anti virus that is good for a year, and (add in some other stuff here, as I didn't quite catch it)". I asked him if it was the same price as what was advertised in the paper. In all honesty, when he

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started reading off what it included, it gave me a weird feeling and I actually interrupted his little spiel to ask my question. "Oh no", he said, "the laptop with this software bundle is an additional \$125 on top of the advertised price. But you are getting...". I stopped him again. I explained I didn't want any software that I was probably not going to use. I just want the notebook in the ad.

"Sorry, those are all sold out", Marvin informed me. "But I would highly recommend this bundle, because you save money in the end". I looked down at the counter, to where I knew there were quite a few of the computer he said are sold out. "Sold out? Are you sure?", I asked. "Oh yes", he said, the lie just flowing from his small grin like water. "We weren't shipped what we were promised, which is why we're promoting these bundles in their place".

I asked if I could just pull the software from the bundle and buy the computer. Nope. Not wanting to play anymore, now that I was nearly 35 minutes into my hour-long lunch, I reached down and pulled out one of the notebook boxes that were out of stock. "How about this one?", I asked.

Marvin looked like I had just ran over his pet squirrel. He looked at the box, then at me, and said to me "Excuse me a moment, I need to check something". Huh? "Check what?" I asked. "I need to confirm I can sell this to you", he responded. With that, he left in search of Todd. And I went back up front looking for Paul.

Paul was standing up front near the front doors, talking with the guy who checks receipts. Seeing me empty handed, he asked me if I was unable to find what I was looking for. I was pretty ticked, so to his face, I asked him what sort of bait and switch operation he was running. He acted surprise and asked me what I meant. I explained the complete conversation between Marvin and I, and asked him for what possible purpose would Marvin have to ask permission to sell me an item that was clearly advertised, unless they were trying to dishonestly rope customers into buying the more expensive bundle.

Paul and I walked back over to the computer area, where we witnessed Marvin and another employee whose name I never knew, removing the other 10-or-so hidden machines from their hiding space and taking them somewhere away from the sales floor. I pointed this out to Paul, and told him they must be doing a better job of hiding the evidence. Paul shook his head and walked over to Todd, and told Todd to sell me the exact notebook I was looking for and then to come and speak to him about what was going on. Todd rung me up himself, and I was out of

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the store less than 5 minutes later, with my planned purchase in tow.

Unless I'm missing something, the guys at Best Buy were blatantly attempting the bait and switch. It is completely possible that Paul, store manager, was in on it as well, but he acted surprised when I presented him with the goings on.

So what's the moral here? Best Buy is apparently not always run by the Best Guys. As with any store, keep an eye on what you are looking to buy, and don't be goaded into purchasing more pricey packages. I didn't have the luxury of going home and ordering it online (it was a birthday present) or I would have done that just to keep the store from getting the sale. Be careful where you buy, and who you buy from. I'm guessing in the Best Buy snack room someone took down the "Customer is always right" sign and replaced it with "Customer is always a sucker" instead.

I can tell you I'll be taking my business elsewhere, unless the sale is too good to resist...