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andrew

on

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I'm frequently asked how Groupon chooses which businesses to feature.

Variety is obviously important—part of what makes Groupon fun is the mix of business types and neighborhoods. And of course, we make sure we're offering the best price out there. But most importantly, we focus on quality. We're extremely proud of the fact that our customers discover and try new things simply because they're featured on Groupon. We've earned that trust by strictly adhering to rules we set for choosing our merchant partners. Every business we feature goes through a vetting process, when our team of 30 writers, researchers, fact checkers, and editors scour online and offline media for an objective consensus that the business is respectable.

Now, that last paragraph is usually the type of empty marketing BS that I loathe about companies, because anyone can get away with claiming it. Words mean nothing unless they're backed up by action. So how do we back it up at Groupon?

First, we have a public discussion board for every deal. Whether you love or hate a deal, we're there to have an open conversation with you about it. We've received priceless feedback through our forums that has made us a better company.

Second, we have The Groupon Promise: if Groupon ever lets you down, we'll return your purchase—simple as that. Why? Because when we do a bad job, we want it to be easy for you to punish us. We believe that when a customer has a bad experience, companies pay for it sooner or later—so we'd rather pay fast so we can make things right before it's too late.

So, couldn't someone just have magical Groupon experience after magical Groupon experience and still demand refunds, claiming that something awful happened and exploiting our policy? Yes—and that's probably why open policies like this are rare. But we believe it's a mistake to force everyone to live by rules meant to control the very small percentage of bad people out there—the unintended consequence is a worse experience for the 99.9% of customers who are honest and fair.

As most companies get bigger, they introduce frustrating policies that show less trust in their customers. They hide undesirable policies behind legal jargon and set up endless obstacles to reach customer service. Customers are forced to subvert those policies to get what they need. Out of necessity, customers act more abrasive when dealing with corporate customer service labyrinths than they ever would behave in real life. We never want to be at war with our customers, so we're taking it in the other direction. More freedom for our customers. More trust.

OK, so a couple of caveats that really go without saying: First, this is an experiment. While we're anxious to implement policies that empower our customers, if we're proven wrong and people take advantage of us by asking for refunds for things outside of our control or other frivolous reason, not only will we be deeply saddened by our misplaced and naive faith in the fundamental goodness of people, we'll be forced to switch to a more discriminating return policy. But we've had this policy since we launched Groupon and so far it's produced nothing but universal happiness. Second, if you're that guy that buys a million Groupons and tries to get refunds for all of them, we're obviously going to know and shut off your account, and no amount of whining, "BUT YOU SAID I COULD GET A RETURN FOR ANNYTHING!!11" will change that. And here's one our lawyers made us throw in: we're not the merchant, so while we'll accept a return if you feel like Groupon did something that let you down, we're still not legally responsible if you are injured or killed or breakup with your girlfriend while using a Groupon. In other words, Groupon is a city guide and a deal site, not a site that alleviates your core human responsibilities.

For me, one of the most exciting parts of starting a business is the opportunity to correct all the things that bug me about some of the companies I buy stuff from. Look for more features and policies that embody this perspective in the months to come. And, as always, [we crave your feedback](mailto:info@groupon.com).

34 what you had to say about it



[Chris](#)

on

February 5, 2010 2:43 pm

Reading this convinced me to join. Love the business model, love your philosophy, and appreciate the