

Garry Conn's Secret Shopper Web Hosting Evaluation September 2008

This is a report that documents my evaluation and overall experience with placing a general telephone sales inquiry into HostGator.com, BlueHost.com, LunarPages.com and iPowerweb.com. In my evaluation, I assessed each company based on the time it took to speak with a sales representative, the level of customer service provided, the level of knowledge of each sales representative, the eagerness and personal motivation of the sales representative to present the business and service they are hired to represent and their eagerness and level of personal motivation to help me with making a decision to sign up for web hosting services provided by their company. Additionally in this report are my remarks which detail my overall experience with the telephone conversation of each sales representative. Each telephone call was based off the same scenerio. I projected myself as a very casual individual who had a personal Blogger.com blog and had an interest in signing up for their web hosting services with the objective of migrating my existing Blogger.com blog into a Self-Hosted WordPress blog.

	HostGator.com	BlueHost.com	LunarPages.com	iPowerWeb.com
Time To Speak Live	I placed a call into HostGator.com at 10:07 PM and it took me less than 30 seconds to speak with a sales representative. The call ended at 10:17 PM.	I placed a call into BlueHost.com at 10:28 PM and it took me less than 20 seconds to speak with a sales representative. The phone called ended at 10:39 PM.	I placed a call into LunarPages.com at 10:56 PM. My sale inquiry phone call was forwarded to a voice mailbox with a default computer recorded voice.	I placed a call into iPowerWeb.com at 11:05 PM. My call was automatically transferred to their sales department. From there I was placed into a holding pool and my call was not answered until 11:11 PM. The phone call ended at 11:17 PM.
Customer Service Rating:	6.0	10.0	N/A	3.0
Level of Knowledge:	7.5	10.0	N/A	1.5
Willing to Help with Transferring My Blogger.com Blog?	Yes, but there will be a service charge to have a technician do this if I am not able to do it myself. The sales rep gave me an estimated price of around \$100 dollars. I honestly think that is a very fair price.	Yes, they provide totally free tech support to all customers and will make all efforts towards helping me transfer my blogger.com blog and import it into WordPress. Whether the ultimate result ends in success or not, there would NOT be a charge for doing this.	N/A	No. I was told that they do not have the ability or the level of support to advice, assist, guide or support me in my objective of moving my blogger.com blog to Self-Hosted WordPress.
Cost of Hosting with Fantastico:	The sale rep recommended their Baby Plan. He quoted a price of \$9.95 / month.	The sales rep very accurately explained their pricing plan and recommended that I join their 2 year plan which breaks down to a price of \$6.95 / month.	N/A	They do not offer Fantastico.
Remarks:	The name of the sale rep I spoke with this evening was Dave. He was very polite, very knowledgeable and eager to help me. He had a very friendly personality and totally catered to my needs and was able to successfully answer my questions. This was a secret shopper call, so indeed I put Dave through the ringer	The name of the sales rep I spoke with from BlueHost.com was Lonny. He was extremely polite, very curious, had a wonderful telephone voice and excellent communication skills. I was totally impressed with this phone call. I explained to Lonny that I have a Blogger.com blog and that I am	LunarPages.com does not provide a toll free number. While that isn't all that big of a deal in today's standards, still I believe that it does carry a level of professionalism. I am very disappointed to have my call forwarded to a default setup voicemail box. I understand that many businesses can't provide 24/7	The name of the sales rep I spoke with from iPowerWeb.com was Randy. While Randy was indeed polite, he was not very knowledgeable of the services or even the prices being offered by iPowerWeb.com. I explained to Randy that I have a blogger.com blog and I wanted to sign up for web hosting with a

and acted as if I didn't know anything about web hosting or the services they provided.

I explained to Dave that I had a blogger.com blog and I was interested in HostGator.com because I had researched Fantastico and noticed that HostGator.com provided that with their hosting services.

I explained to Dave that I wanted to sign up with HostGator.com and set up a WordPress blog and move my existing blogger.com blog over to my new WordPress blog.

Dave was very confident in his position as a sales rep and very helpful. My only concern was with the quoted price for hosting. He quoted \$9.95 / month for the Baby Plan. I asked him again, is that the best deal you can offer me. He then told me that there is a 20% off discount that can be issued with my initial order.

I am not sure why he didn't tell me that the Baby Plan can be discounted down to \$7.95 / month with advanced purchase.

If he had not made the assumption that I wasn't interested in paying in advanced towards getting the better discounted price, customer rating score would have been a 6.5.

HostGator.com does not hide their phone number it is seen everywhere on their web site and from what it seems, they offer a very inviting attitude.

calling today because I saw that they offer WordPress compatible web hosting. I further explained to Lonny that I am some what computer saavy but I am far from being a programmer.

I continued to explain that my objective was to find a web hosting company, set up WordPress and make an attempt to transfer my existing free Blogger.com blog into a self-hosted WordPress blog.

Lonny explained to me that this is a very common occurrence and they provide assistance with this quite frequently. He further explained that their technical support is available to help me, guide me and even assist me in fulfilling my objective.

He also eagerly and opened stated that there would never be a charge for this service and that is what tech support is for. Lonny was very confident in his position and extremely perceptive of my situation and was able to build confidence and trust within minutes of speaking with him.

The BlueHosting.com pricing is very affordable and very fair. He was open and honest about the pricing plans offered. He fully explained to my why he made the 24 month recommendation and also willingly explained to me their wonderful 30 day money back guarantee as well as their extended guarantee.

Their extended guarantee is awesome. If I decide to cancel my server after the 30 day period they will refund the non used portion of my money. Meaning if I joined their 24 month program and decided to cancel my service after 23 months, they would indeed refund my last month.

During this 11 minute conversation I

sales and tech support; however, I would expect that their after hours sales inquiries would be more professionally routed.

With as much competition as there is in the business of providing web hosting solutions, LunarPages.com just doesn't cut it.

I have no choice but to take this first impression and assume that this is a direct reflection upon how they run their business internally and how well they provide customer and technical support to their customers.

I would not recommend doing business with LunarPages.com simply for the fact that HostGator.com and BlueHost.com have proven themselves to be much more customer friendly, professional and accommodating.

domain name and set up WordPress on it and transfer my Blogger.com blog to it. I further explained that a friend of mine recommended that I call iPowerWeb.com.

Randy explained to me that it would cost \$12 dollars to have WordPress installed and also that they would not be able to provide any level of assistance with transferring my old Blogger.com blog into my new Self-Hosted WordPress Blog.

I mentioned to Randy that I have called quite a few other web hosting companies and they offer a program called Fantastico which is a program that allows for free and automatic installation of programs such as WordPress. I then asked Randy if iPowerWeb.com has Fantastico.

Randy explained to me that he honestly didn't know much about Fantastico. He claimed that he read about it once before about a year ago, but wasn't sure what it did.

I then asked Randy if iPowerWeb.com didn't provide Fantastico, then what kind of free features and software came included with iPowerWeb.com web hosting?

Randy, some what sarcastically, asked me if I have visited the iPowerWeb.com web site? I admitted that I only visited to get the phone number and reminded him that I called based off a friend's personal recommendation.

Randy then said, if I had visited their web site then I would know what services are included with their web hosting. As we were talking, apparently he was accessing the home page of iPowerWeb.com himself and noticed that they no longer charge a fee for installing WordPress and informed me of this.

actually learned something. I learned that there is another program similar to Fantastico called Simple Scripts. Lonny explained to me that Fantastico was great; however, he likes Simple Scripts better for the fact that they get program updates quicker than Fantastico.

He further explained to me that it can take weeks for Fantastico to get the latest version of WordPress, which indeed, he is correct. He then explained that it only takes a few hours with Simple Scripts.

Both Fantastico and Simple Scripts are included with their hosting packages.

He also explained to me that domain name registration is free when you join with BlueHost.com and they will also cover the cost of renewal of your domain name as long as you remain a customer of theirs.

My experience with BlueHost.com was a perfect 10.

I explained to Randy that unless iPowerWeb.com can provide either a free or paid service to assist me with transferring my Blogger.com blog to a Self-Hosted WordPress blog, then signing up with iPowerWeb.com might not be my best option.

Randy then requested that I call him back tomorrow so that he can ask the guy who does tech support about this situation. He then gave me a different toll free telephone number than the one I dialed from the iPowerWeb.com web site and gave me his direct extension while admitting that he worked on a sales commission and would appreciate a direct call back.

Overall, Randy did not seem to be very mature in nature and he did not carry a very professional or knowledgeable demeanor.

During this phone call with Randy, I projected myself as a very casual individual with an average level of experience with computers and the Internet. Randy clearly took advantage of my projected ignorance and did not respect my sales inquiry or place much of a value in it.

In my opinion, and in previous experience in sales, when a company is presented with a sales inquiry based off a personal recommendation and if a sale is not made, then truly there is an issue with the person who represented the business or service.

In my opinion, personal recommendations are the most effective and highest converting methods of marketing. If a sale can not be made based off a personal recommendation, then there is truly a problem with the sales associate.