Part I

Get a Grip

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Welcome to the Compulsion-to-Compare Planet

"I Googled it." These three words describe the game-changing customer behavior that is rewriting the rules for winning customer loyalty.

Think about it: your customer's use of Google or other search engines is now a ubiquitous, taken-for-granted behavior. Listen in on any conversation when folks are discussing new discoveries, and chances are you'll hear, "I Googled [fill in the blank] and found it!" The experience of typing a few keywords into a search engine, hitting the Enter key, and in about a second having a wonderland of relevant listings and links pop up on your screen is downright habit forming. The power of search routinely delivers plenty of payoff to both B2C and B2B customers, making its value delivery indisputable. Little wonder that customers' time online devoted to searching continues to grow.

But know this: when it comes to holding on to your best customers, the power of search in itself is not your biggest worry. Your real threat is what the ability to search breeds in your customers and prospects: *the compulsion to compare your offerings against others*. Make no mistake—the compulsion to compare is an ever-present customer behavior. It's like a special type of gravity that can pull your buyers away from you and into the orbits of your competitors. Left unaddressed and unmanaged, this behavior can lead to switched-away customers and the big losses of sales and profit that follow.

Here's why. Search technologies have enabled an unprecedented state of customer "informedness."[1] The average buyer today can quickly garner near-perfect product information: what's available, from whom, with what attributes, and at what price. Routine customer searches can pit your brand against countless competitors at any given moment. What can trigger your customer's urge to compare? A big service mishap or budget cut can do it. But perhaps even more troubling is that simple curiosity or sheer boredom may be all that's required. Many firms are oblivious to these threats.

Consider the small, niche textile manufacturer supplying linens and chefs' clothing to hotels and restaurants. After rapid growth in the East and Midwest, the Pennsylvania-based firm was looking to expand westward. When the CEO was advised to draw on search-term advertising by buying such key terms as "restaurant napkins" to help efficiently and aggressively attract linen buyers across the United States, his "business as usual" perspective kicked in. "I don't have to be on Google," he declared. "Every linen-rental company knows me."[2] But he was ignoring some tough new realities: purchasing managers come and go in companies; these managers are getting increasingly younger, and younger buyers are more apt to go online. The bottom line: his buyers will increasingly tap into the cyber-marketplace with compulsion-to-compare behaviors, and his firm must aggressively compete there too.

This CEO's story is a classic: he's an extremely hard working, resourceful business leader with a track record of success, whose firm is ripe for solutions for taming today's search-and-switch-prone customer. Can you relate? Want to know more? *Welcome to the compulsion-to-compare planet*.

What's Driving the Compulsion: Four Forces

Human beings have an innate hunger for information and are designed to be "infovores," according to Dr. Irving Biederman, professor of neuroscience at the University of Southern California, whose studies on brain activity suggest that humans experience real pleasure in acquiring information.[3] This finding alone goes a long way to explain today's customers' compulsion to compare. But other factors are driving the behavior as well.

The never-before convergence of four powerful forces is making your customers' already natural compulsion to compare more potent than ever:

1. **Underserved customers**
2. **Unprecedented choice**
3. **Spot-on Web search listings and links**
4. **Bottom-up, social media activism**

For each of these four forces, there are specific underlying factors that feed your customers' insatiable desire to compare. Let's examine these four forces in detail.

Force 1: The Underserved Customer

Two types of underserved customers—service seekers and newness seekers—have deeply rooted compulsion-to-compare tendencies.

Service Seekers

Today's buyers span four generations: the Silent or GI Generation (born 1901–1945), baby boomers (born 1946–1964), Gen X (born 1965–1977), and Gen Y (born 1978–2000). Some three-quarters of these customers have earned the real-world equivalent of a "PhD in Buying" through the twenty to sixty-plus years of consumption experience they have under their belts. These buyers know exactly what real service looks like, and when they don't get it, they move on. Sadly, despite all the talk about improving the customer experience over the past decade, a majority of customers still feel underserved due to subpar service across many industries. A recent worldwide consumer survey by Accenture found that 88 percent of respondents reported suboptimal experiences, 47 percent saying that their expectations were met only sometimes and 41 percent rating service quality fair, poor, or terrible; 59 percent of respondents reported switching service providers during the past year due to bad service experiences. Accenture found that the number of consumers switching due to bad service had increased in relation to the prior year.[4]

Newness Seekers

Another large contingent of underserved customers feeds the compulsion-to-compare threat. Look no further than the seventy million members of Gen Y in the United States, sometimes referred to as millennials. This group is now 26 percent of the overall population; they not only make many of their own purchasing decisions but also heavily influence purchasing decisions in their households. Gen Y consumers feel underserved, but not for reasons related to service. Compared to prior generations, this group cares far less about a quality, personalized shopping experience and far more about keeping up with what their friends and colleagues have and having the newest product of its kind. Having come of age as consumers during a period of rapid, unprecedented advances in technology and connectivity (Internet, e-mail, cell phones, instant messages, MP3 players, camera phones, and so on), members of Gen Y have a preconditioned ravenous appetite for what's new, and feel underserved by firms that don't deliver it. How do they soothe their frustration? By constantly looking out for who's offering what's new and different.[5]

Recognize these newness seekers for the big threat they are! This group with arguably the strongest propensity to compare is seventy million buyers strong and, of all the generations of buyers, has the most lifetime spending value still to come! Now or sometime soon, your brand is likely to need Gen Y buyers.

"I think we'll need a bigger boat" is the oft-repeated line from *Jaws* uttered by the Amityville Island chief of police when he first sees the huge shark with his own eyes. As you start thinking about Gen Y buyers' compulsion to compare and how you will be mobilizing your brand to defend against it, a bigger boat may well be in order.

Force 2: Unprecedented Choice

What motivates underserved buyers to invest time comparing your brand to others? Their belief that plenty of other choices await.

Choice helps drive the compulsion to compare, and today's buyers have a wide number of options from which to select across nearly every industry and brand category. Three factors contribute to this flood of choice.

Fewer Buying Boundaries

For a quick glimpse into the array of choices available to today's customers, walk in the shoes of brides-to-be planning their dream weddings. "I see brides who are inundated with extra choices and options and ideas," reports Rebecca Ginnals, owner of Engaging Concepts, a Florida-based wedding industry consulting firm. "Before the Internet, you were limited to what you found in a bridal magazine or in your hometown. You might have looked at seven candidates for the perfect photographer. Now you might be looking at 70 or 700."[6]

Or ask nursing student Cynthia Zapata, who wanted a designer wedding gown without the designer price. First, she scouted on eBay and connected with a dressmaker able to replicate Zapata's gown of choice—a Casablanca bridal dress that retailed for $1,200. Zapata e-mailed the dressmaker photos of the dress and a few weeks later received the finished gown. Her price: $175 plus a $50 shipping charge. The dressmaker's location? China.[7]

More E-Tailing Choices

Because the Internet offers cost efficiencies unrivaled in any other selling channel, both B2C and B2B vendors are using the Web to provide buyers with wider and deeper product assortments than ever offered before. Little wonder that both B2B and B2C online business continues to skyrocket. During the 2007 holiday season, shoppers spent a whopping $28 billion online, an impressive 19 percent increase from just the year before.[8] Facing fierce online competition, e-tailers are, generally speaking, delivering value for customers. The University of Michigan reports that online retailers are one of the highest-rated industry groups tracked by its American Customer Satisfaction Index.[9]

Private Label Picks Up

If the words *private label* conjure up an image of products wrapped in white packaging with black letters, you'd better push the Delete key on that unit of your memory bank. That's because retailers in Europe and, increasingly, the United States are launching their own powerful brands, further expanding choice availability for today's customers.

Savvy retailers, such as the retail club Costco, have trained their shoppers to expect high quality from private-label products. Through its highly popular private-label line, Kirkland Signature, Costco has applied cobranding strategies to increase shopper appeal. Observed Neal Stern, analyst with McMillan/Doolittle, "the idea with Costco was: Do you really trust Kirkland to make good tires? Well, maybe. But you do trust Kirkland *and* Michelin? It's a way to work with manufacturers such as Whirlpool with refrigerators and Paul Newman with juice where you need some legitimacy and credibility. It allows Costco to go to a top-tier supplier and co-brand with someone who has respect. It's an unbeatable combination."[10]

Look for more expansion of retailers' own brands both in-store and online. Why? Because retailers are using insights from their own loyalty programs and research to out-innovate branded consumer goods manufacturers. After all, retailers, not manufacturers, control the necessary tools—sales data and in-store and online test-drive capability—to adapt and innovate quickly.

Force 3: Spot-on Search Listings and Links

No doubt, the world is brimming with brand choices. But in reality, for choice to succeed in stimulating a customer's compulsion to compare, it must be accessible. The Internet and the search engines that probe it empower customers with accessible choices and, as a result, play powerful, pivotal roles in driving buyers' compulsion to compare.

Internet use has become the norm in America. A recent Pew survey on Internet behaviors found that 73 percent of American adults[11] and 87 percent of American teens use the Internet.[12] The Pew study found that 49 percent of American adult Internet users use a search engine *daily* to find information.[13]

The survey found that the spread of higher-speed, always-on, broadband connections has amplified and intensified Internet use—with people spending more time logged on and increasingly considering the online world as a desirable destination to simply "while away" some time. A recent BurstMedia survey of thirteen thousand Web users (ages eighteen to over sixty-five) found that three out of five respondents visited more Web sites in a typical week than they did one year earlier. Two-thirds of respondents said that their daily routine would be disrupted if their Internet access was taken away and not available for one week, and 43 percent said "significantly" so.[14]

U.S. workers are avid Internet users. The average employee spends roughly eighty-one hours each month online.[15] Search is a valued on-the-job activity, as indicated by these sky-high usage statistics:

- 85 percent of business executives use search,[16] and nearly every member of a purchasing committee uses a search engine sometime in the buying process.
- 80 percent of business executives turn to search to learn more about a product or service, compare it against alternatives, or read reviews about products and services.[17]
- 96 percent of B2B buyers report either finding everything they were looking for online through a search engine or discovering some information online, which they supplemented with offline information. Less than 1 percent said that the search experience was unsuccessful.[18]

Vertical search engines are out to further enhance the shopper's search experience. Web studies find that typical buyers' initial searches are done on a general engine (usually Google) and then as participants move through the research phase, they tend to interact more and more with vertical engines specific to their industry. Consider the B2B vertical search engine Business.com. To assist the seven million business buyers who come to its site each month, Business.com provides drill-down search categories, such as "Construction" (building materials, software, interior design, and so on), "Human Resources" (company policies, employee evaluation, benefits, and so on), and "Transportation & Logistics" (trucking, warehouse management, containers, air freight and cargo, and so on).[19] Such B2B search sites are out to save business buyers significant click time and win their site loyalty in the process. The site's search algorithms are designed to ensure, for example, that the engineer searching with the keyword *pump* for an industrial installation does not get a listings page populated with site links for women's shoes.

B2B marketers understand the targeting potency of search and its ability to position a company's message smack dab in front of a prospect actively searching for the very thing the B2B firm sells. Little wonder that nearly two-thirds of B2B marketers now earmark resources for search engine optimization and other search marketing when formalizing their firms' annual marketing budgets.[20]

Force 4: Social Media Activism

Our picture of compulsion-to-compare forces is almost complete—so far, we've seen how *underserved customers* are empowered with *unprecedented choice* garnered through *spot-on Web search listings and links*. What remaining force helps drive customers' relentless comparison? The opinions of their fellow buyers and shoppers. To fully appreciate the importance of buyers' sharing with buyers, let's take a quick look back in time. Before the Internet, buyer information was mainly a tightly controlled, one-way communication from the enterprise to the customer—think golf outings with reference accounts, creatively edited customer testimonial letters, and firm-hosted trade show dinners with carefully drawn seating charts. Firms largely controlled brand perceptions by making sure that buyers were exposed only to carefully selected information about other customers and their user experiences. Any customer information shared was typically screened and sanitized to ensure that the firm looked good. Even Web 1.0 was dominated by corporate sites overflowing with customer recommendation letters, Web site testimonials, and other corporation-sponsored content.

But Web 2.0's onslaught of social media tools changed these dynamics forever. The advent of blogs, wikis, social networking sites, message boards, RSS alerts, and the like have provided a platform for buyers to share their opinions as customers, without company oversight. This empowerment and authenticity has strongly resonated with shoppers, creating a sea change in how customers now make purchase assessments. In fact, customers now trust each other more than they trust marketing. A recent Nielsen worldwide study in forty-seven markets across the globe found that over three-quarters of respondents (78 percent) rated recommendations from other consumers as the most trusted form of advertising, compared to 63 percent for newspapers and 56 percent for TV and magazines.[21]

Today's bottom-up social media put the opinions of fellow customers front and center. Here's how.

It's a Jungle out There

In the old Tarzan movies filmed in the 1930s and 1940s (featuring Johnny Weissmuller as Tarzan and Maureen O'Sullivan as Jane), tribal drumbeats kept everyone in the jungle alert and informed about what was happening. From telegraphing the invasion of greedy diamond merchants and animal captors to announcing the arrival of helpful do-gooders, a drum language of sorts helped Tarzan, Jane, and the jungle community stay in the know. Think of the Internet's surging flow of blogs, message boards, and other social media as online drumbeats, signaling a cyberbuzz ranging from hard-core factual news, product information, and how-tos to assertion and rumor and, occasionally, downright falsehoods.

Customers' participation in social media will only grow stronger, according to the longitudinal survey work of Roper Starch Worldwide. This firm's fascinating research shows that as more information sources infiltrate people's worlds and they have more and more means of creating and sharing information, people will become even more attached to word-of-mouth sources.[22]

It's a phenomenon that the social networking site Facebook knows well. Its open platform has encouraged programmers worldwide to create innovative new ways for members to share information on the site. Consider ShareThis, a free feature offered by hosted social commerce provider Bazaarvoice. The feature enables, for example, a college student who is psyched about the Hewlett-Packard laptop he just purchased to share the news by posting on his Facebook profile a link to a review that he or someone else wrote. The post, which can also include an HP logo or an image of the laptop alongside a brief comment from the student, will show up on his profile mini feed and in the news feed his Facebook friends see.

Gen Y Lives Online

Gen Y buyers are more heavily influenced by peer groups and word of mouth in the form of text messaging, e-mail, and blogs than they are by such traditional authorities as brand advertising. A Maritz Research poll of shoppers ages eighteen to thirty found that 69 percent said they text approximately seventeen messages per day and that 67 percent use online reviews as a source when making purchasing decisions; 26 percent have posted an online product review.[23]

Online Reviews Keep Growing

Gen Y buyers are not alone in actively seeking and giving customer advice online. More customers across all demographic groups are following suit. A recent Deloitte consumer group survey found that 62 percent of the respondents to an online poll said they read online product reviews written by other consumers. More than eight in ten (82 percent) of those who read reviews said that their purchasing decisions have been directly influenced by those reviews. People have used the reviews both to confirm initial buying decisions and to change them, the study found. Further, 69 percent of the respondents said they have shared online reviews with friends, family, or colleagues—which indicates a viral word of mouth on the word of mouth itself.[24]

Recognizing the trend toward bottom-up media, firms from all types of industries are responding with online tools that leverage this customer predilection.

Take health care. WellPoint, one of the nation's largest health insurers, has teamed with Zagat to let patients rate their doctors, just as diners rate restaurants in Zagat's burgundy-colored guides. This program is available online to more than a million members. WellPoint joins the ranks of a growing list of doctor review sites, including RateMDs.com, which averages a thousand new reviews a day and has seen an eightfold increase in page views in one year. Likewise, the Web site Yelp, where folks can write a review on anything with an address, reports that queries about doctors routinely rate among the top ten most popular search topics.[25]

Are customers influenced by what they read on doctor review sites? Allergist Michael Reid says yes. His Bay Area allergy practice has doubled its number of new patients thanks to positive reviews and a $500-per-month ad on Yelp. Likewise, Manhattan ob-gyn Natalia Meimaris says that paying close attention to online reviews has helped her understand how to improve her practice, such as by getting test results back to patients more rapidly.[26]

But not all doctors are happy about the proliferation of patient reviews. When San Francisco allergist Jeffrey Davidson went online and looked himself up, he was stunned by what he read. Several patients had written negative reviews; one described him as “patronizing” and another as “unprofessional.” A third patient complained that his office staff was “too young.” “The things people have written about me and my staff are false and unbelievable,” said Davidson, who has no reliable way to measure how many prospective patients these reviews have cost him. For example, a Google search returned an entry that said, “I had a horrible experience here and will never go back.”[27] But Davidson gets good reviews too, and he’s fighting back by running his own Web site and requesting that patients talk to him offline about complaints rather than posting them.

The Power of Context

The context in which a piece of information is “framed” has everything to do with how people perceive the message. Consider this scenario: you have an experience, you react to it, and then you return to your home or office and start retelling the circumstances. Friends, family, and associates pile on with their opinions and experiences, and soon you start to perceive your original experience in a different light. This new perception may be so powerful that you actually return to the folks you encountered in the original experience, but this time you bring with you a different point of view. That’s the awesome power of context in action. In today’s wired world, the contexts provided by social media are influencing your buyers and prospects like never before.

Think of social media as offering context on steroids. Look no further than a recent Pew study which found that when it comes to solving common problems, more people turn to the Internet than consult experts or family members to provide information and resources.[28] So, rather than a handful of family or friends, there are literally hundreds, if not thousands, of people who can serve as context makers and takers—feeding off the same original customer experience. This can be perilous perception-making ground for any brand, because product and service gaffes can galvanize customers’ reactions, and the news about those mistakes spreads quickly. Referencing a politician's gaffes in the race for public office, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, the director of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center, observes, "The public doesn't usually see something as a gaffe until it's interpreted as one by the press and then passes into popular culture."[29] That may be true in the political world, but today's social media can turn any buyer into a gaffe galvanizer. Want a quick example? Simply type a national brand name into Google, followed by the word "sucks," and you'll see plenty.

The Switch Button Looms Large

Do I stay or do I switch? This moment-of-truth question festers in the back (or front!) of the minds of *all* customers when they check out your competitors. Whether your customer is in aggressive search mode or taking a laid-back, just-for-future-information look, the "Do I switch?" question is always lurking. What makes this situation even more threatening is that the act of switching is often so effortless. At this writing, office supply store chain Staples is running its "Easy Button" campaign with the tagline "Don't stress it. Press it." Those same sentiments are in the minds of your competitors as they flaunt their wares to your customers in cyberspace and elsewhere.

Competitors Help Your Customers Switch

Your competitors are making it easier than ever for your customers to leave you. That's one of the findings from my firm's customer loss study conducted with research firm CustomerSat, in which we surveyed more than five hundred senior executives representing a wide cross section of B2B and B2C industries. Consider this eye-opening finding: 59 percent of sales executives and 43 percent of marketing executives reported using switching tools to reduce the hassles customers encounter when moving their accounts! In many industries, such as retail banking, firms have long relied on what I call the Hook Principle to retain customers. Direct deposits of social security and pension checks and automatic monthly withdrawals for insurance, telephone, and utility bills have long kept customers tied to a bank, for example, when they would just as soon leave. Customers perceive the red tape required to change banks as a big pain in the neck, hardly worth the trouble. But now competitors across many industries are wising up. They are sweetening their new customer offerings with switching assistance.

Executives surveyed in the Griffin Group study reported using a host of switching tools to woo customers away from their current vendors:

- 51 percent reported using incentives for switching (fee waivers or welcome gifts).
- 44 percent reported helping customers fill out paperwork required for switching accounts.
- 30 percent reported the use of switch kits that clarify steps customers can follow to move the account.

Tame the Tendency: Now's the Time!

So there you have it: four formidable forces enticing your customers to compare your brand against competitors. Add to that your customers' infovore inclinations and the likelihood that your competitors are offering switching assistance to your customers (or will be soon), and it's clear that you are operating in a search-and-switch marketplace.

How to cope? For starters, consider this unlikely parallel: your customers' compulsion to compare and those pesky brown patches on your lawn have a lot in common. Each is a lurking threat that can never be completely eliminated. Left unmanaged, both brown patch and compulsion-to-compare proclivities can spread to tipping-point status, with consequences that are hard to reverse. That small circle of brown, unsightly grass spreads outward, overtaking more and more of your green, healthy lawn. In the case of the compulsion to compare, tipping-point status can mean that your customer has stayed on the search task long enough to find at least one viable alternative, compared your brand against that alternative, and deemed your brand inferior or, at best, at parity. These search outcomes place your customer right in the middle of the "switch-prone zone," which in turn puts you at high risk for losing that customer!

But here's the good news: there is plenty you can do *now*—precautions to take and remedies to apply—to stop customer search and switch in its tracks. Like brown patch on your lawn, compulsion-to-compare behaviors can never be totally eliminated. But you *can* apply proven methods to tame the tendencies, minimize their negative effects, and in turn protect and sustain your customer revenue streams.

Your first step is to break the compulsion-to-compare challenge into addressable questions and manageable issues. This book gives you a three-part solution, previewed in the next sections with key queries you must confront for each part. (Part Four is a process for tying them all together.) Brace yourself for some tough, unexpected questions.

Part One: Get a Grip

To thrive on the new compulsion-to-compare planet and tame the search-and-switch tendency, your firm must dig deep and develop a keen understanding of customer behavior dynamics. It is simply impossible to craft mission-critical, results-driven solutions without it. Consider these vital queries:

- What, specifically, in your customers' buyer and user experiences triggers search? Switch?

- What is your firm's working definition of customer loyalty? Disloyalty? What customer behaviors and attitudes must be present or absent?
- When a customer becomes more loyal to your brand, what has shifted in the customer's mind-set? When the customer becomes less loyal, what mind shift has occurred?
- What are the factors in your customer's user experience that, when aligned, will trigger immediate disloyal behavior? How do you blunt the effect?
- Your customers' search intents differ. What intents most characterize your customers, and which carry the highest risks? What is your plan for addressing each search intent?

Part Two: Get the Credit You're Due

To flourish in the brave new world of buyer empowerment, your brand must consistently get the credit it's due. The overriding concern here is to ace your buyer's Worth-It Test with a powerful, differentiated value proposition that repeatedly stands its ground when tested against an assault of alternatives. Doing so involves knowing how your customers form and influence perceptions about your brand in the marketplace and making sure your brand stands out—day in, day out. Consider these key questions:

- In your customer's mind, does your brand's perceived pluses outweigh the minuses?
- How do you crack your customers' worth-it code? How do you most advantageously connect the scorecard dots that are floating around in your customers' heads?

- How does your brand stack up against the next best alternative? What's required in order for your brand to constantly win that comparison?
- In today's cyber-marketplace, there are typically three participating parties in any customer relationship. Can you name these parties? Are all three on your radar screen? Do you have a perception-building plan for each?
- In a marketplace brimming with both instant information and nearly limitless competition, how do you make your brand different? Keep your brand different?

Part Three: Fortify Your Firewall

In a search-and-switch-prone world, several factors can serve as buffers of sorts around your customers to help keep competitors at bay. This book addresses three: customer trust, passionate-to-serve employees, and the continual infusion into your firm of fresh, new customer-keeping best practices. To these ends, consider the following questions:

- Does your firm have a specific plan to consistently earn and sustain customer trust in today's low-trust business climate?
- Customer trust is built in stages over time. Is your trust-building plan designed around a multistage strategy?
- The competition for competent employees is rising fast. Does your firm have an up-to-date game plan for attracting and keeping top talent?
- Passionate-to-serve employees need constant nurturing throughout their term of employment with your firm. What best practices does your firm employ to turn prospective employees into new hires? New hires into

productive employees? Established employees into fierce company advocates?

- In today's blisteringly competitive, search-and-switch marketplace, every firm needs continual inspiration to help tame customer switching tendencies. Where does your firm look for insight? From whom do you learn?

Moving On

Perhaps you found yourself answering some of the questions in the last section with lots of nos, don't knows, or not sures. If so, don't fret! You're already ahead: just by reading the questions, you zeroed in on key issues you and your firm need to address to prosper in today's compulsion-to-compare marketplace. You've begun the learning journey. The remaining chapters in this book will show you the way.

Next up is the remaining Get a Grip chapter: "Why Customers Search and Switch." Getting a handle on these fundamental principles early is essential to crafting successful strategies later. Read on.

Taming Takeaways

- For the first time in history, your customers can punch a computer key and receive instant buyer information. This puts insights about your competitors' offerings at your customers' fingertips in a few short seconds. Buyers who are even mildly dissatisfied with your product or service can now find alternatives fast.
- The limitless depth and breadth of the Internet, working in concert with the global economy, bring your business into competition with countless businesses and offer your customers a staggering array of buying choices.

- Humans by their very nature are infovores. Comparing product alternatives is one way buyers get their information fix. Expect your customers to compare your brand against others at an increasing rate. The instantaneous results offered by Google and other search engines make search time online feel productive and satisfying.
- Young customers have grown up with the constant onslaught of new technology—and they love it. From their mind-set, the product has to be not only good but also *new.* To retain these buyers, your firm will need to keep its value propositions sharp, fresh, and on the leading edge.
- By offering switching assistance in the form of monetary incentives, paperwork help, switch kits, and so on, your competitors are making it easier than ever for your customers to leave you.
- To stay ahead, you need to act now to secure new customers and keep existing ones from straying—you must make today's search-and-switch marketplace work *for* you rather than *against* you.