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## **Give customers another reason to shop with you**

*The saying “a happy customer tells a friend, an unhappy customer tells the world” has never been more true. Taking this into account, and with businesses working harder than ever to differentiate themselves from the competition, one bad customer experience has the potential to deliver a long-lasting and far-reaching negative impact. In this post, Darron Kupshik, Chief Operating Officer from leading Australian homewares retailer House Group, tells us why staying Surcharge Free might be the difference between retaining or losing customers.*

When we advise our customers at House that we don't apply a surcharge, their response is often that it's a “great change” to the norm. This surprises me, because in today's competitive retail landscape where card payments are becoming more common than cash— it's not necessarily optimal for businesses to charge customers extra because of how they decided to pay their bill.

Having a one sided policy in place which may result in a negative impact on the customer experience and sales just doesn't make commercial sense.

We're seeing more competition than ever before – from small independent stores through to global brands. If we were to introduce a surcharge in this market climate we would effectively give our customers a reason to shop with one of our competitors who doesn't surcharge. Obviously, this isn't smart business practice regardless of your size or industry, and in today's economy, the business benefits of going Surcharge Free far outweigh the costs involved.

For House Group, customer service is at the forefront of our group philosophy. We pride ourselves on great product and product knowledge; best practice store layout; great brands and making our customers feel welcome in store. We focus on ensuring we take the time to understand our customers' needs and we are committed to creating an atmosphere and environment that makes our stores a fun place to shop and the shopping experience a positive one.

House Group's commercial performance and growth shows this is a good formula for success. In contrast, surcharging is not conducive to all of the pillars upon which our customer service – or that of any business for that matter – is built.

With unprecedented choice, it's critical businesses remember customers are buying more than a product when they decide to shop with you. They are paying for the experiences you provide. In recent years there have been numerous studies stating customers are willing to pay extra for a superior experience. Surcharging does not fall under the category of 'Superior Experience'.

The positive experiences you deliver mean they will keep coming back for purchases, specifically big purchases, where card payments are most common. Additionally, with many credit card platforms linked to reward programs, by not surcharging it's almost like we are giving back to customers as a thanks for their loyalty and helping them achieve their desired rewards.

Our advice for all businesses is to consider their customer experience. Do you want your customers' last impression to be that they were charged extra for the purchase at the last minute? As consumers ourselves we all know it's a bad feeling, and it creates an awkward environment. Ultimately, going Surcharge Free gives customers a reason to shop with you over your competitors.

In today's highly-competitive market where loyalty and advocacy is key to success, you have to ask yourself whether surcharging is a practice your business can afford.