

next tuesday afternoon

July 15, 2008

Would you believe that a woman could respond in a positive way when told she looks fat in a dress?

On a recent visit to J. Crew, Jackie Huba asked the salesperson if a dress made her hips look big. The frank response, "Yes, it does," was followed with a swift recommendation for a more flattering silhouette. Huba posted her thoughts at the Church of the Customer blog, and praised the honest and helpful feedback on what looked good, and what didn't.

She says it's the kind of personalized service she has come to expect from J. Crew under the leadership of CEO Mickey Drexler. "He is clearly driven by a fanatical mission to understand what his customers want," writes Huba. "He spends part of almost every day visiting stores ... [and] ... chats up customers for feedback and comments." This, not surprisingly, is exactly how Walmart has become what Walmart is today.

Among the unusually upscale services that seem to have come from those conversations:

On the way into her dressing room, a salesperson handed Huba a bottle of chilled water, something you sure don't expect in a mid-range store.

Shortly after her visit, Huba received a J. Crew offer inviting her to make a complimentary appointment with a personal shopper, even before or after store hours. I have long thought that this idea was being missed by many retailers, particularly for professional women with little or no time for shopping. I strongly believe this lack of time is the main driving force behind retail internet sales.

Says Huba, "By listening to customers all the time, J. Crew has learned that some of us who aren't afraid to part with our cash want someone to help style us and do it on our schedule." Agreed.

I'm Lisa Davis. Let me know if I can help you in any way, please feel free to visit at OneAlliance.com and I'll be back next Tuesday afternoon.

Lisa Davis
859.225.2684
Lisa@OneAlliance.com

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