

Hearing Care, the Internet, and “Big Box” Retailers

By Crystal Chalmers, Au.D.
Doctor of Audiology
Owner, North State Audiological Services

A full decade into the 21st Century, it would be rare to find an American who has not been to a modern shopping mall or used the Internet. In fact many of us visit “Big Box” anchored shopping malls at least occasionally, and the number of Americans who regularly use the Internet far exceeds the number who do not. Even amongst senior citizens -- the final demographic to embrace this technology -- the gap between Internet users and non-users continues to narrow.

Without doubt, the Internet is a fabulous tool, providing us with a wealth of easily obtainable information in mere seconds. And the amount of relatively low-priced goods and services that “Big Box” and chain retailers supply can certainly help many families stretch their monthly budget.

But are these two venues the be-all-and-end-all for every consumer scenario?

The short answer is, “Absolutely not!” ... especially when it comes to professional hearing care technology and follow-up service. The Internet outlets as well as “Big Box” and retail chain stores simply cannot provide the level of patient care and service that a full-service, Audigy Certified™ hearing care practice must provide to its patients.

These outlets may tout “low prices” but remember that “price” is only an issue in absence of value. And when it comes to hearing care services and technology, value is clearly lacking from these types of retailers.

Compare Apples with Apples

You’ve heard that old saying countless times before and there is a good reason for its longevity. High volume consumer retailers and Internet companies are famous for blow-out prices on a host of products, many of which are either close-outs on outdated technology or are subsidized by the manufacturer. Then, they make those skinny margins work for them by cutting corners on labor which means poor service ... for you!

This may be fine for a lot of goods such as flashlight batteries, printer paper, bulk grocery items, and various sundries.

But because hearing difficulties are so unique to each and every individual a far different approach is absolutely mandatory for a successful solution. Achieving that solution should be a process built upon a relationship of trust and respect between the patient and a highly trained, competent, and ethical professional whose services and products provide long-term value.

For example, as a private care Doctor of Audiology and member of AudigyGroup™ – the nation’s largest member-owned association of hearing care professionals -- my practice is AudigyCertified™ in order to guarantee my patients that they will receive nothing less than the most experienced, professional care available in the United States.

All my patients receive the following:

- 100% Service Satisfaction Guarantee in Writing
- Complimentary 75 Day Trial Period on all New AGX Technology Purchases
- 3 Year Warranty
- 3 Year Loss and Damage Insurance
- Free Batteries ... *for Life!*
- Complimentary Monthly Clean & Check of Technology with Fresh Batteries Installed
- Free Annual Hearing Screening

As a smart consumer, you really do need to make sure you are comparing apples with apples. And one good way is through the Internet, which, as noted above, shines in providing information. Check websites. Do research. Verify credentials as well as state and federal consumer protection laws. A good website should educate you. A terrific source is the Hearing Care Blog at <http://hearingcareblog.com> where a number of Audigy Certified professionals have written and posted informative articles on a variety of hearing care topics. Another good informational site is www.hearingloss.com .

In closing, I founded North State Audiological Services with the goal of offering complete hearing health care ranging from diagnostic testing to treatment for tinnitus, with hearing technology sales and fitting based upon patient need and lifestyle; not on manufacturer incentives. For my staff and I, our jobs are not about selling something. Instead, it is all about taking care of our patients and helping them hear better.

Do you have questions for me or about my practice? You can call toll free at (888) 844-7024, email me at nsas_ears@hotmail.com or visit my website at www.nsaudiology.com *because hearing is a wonderful gift!*”

About the writer: Crystal Chalmers, Au.D., is an AudigyCertified™ Doctor of

Audiology, the owner of North State Audiological Services in Chico, and a member of AudigyGroup, the nation's largest member-owned association of independent hearing care professionals.

Since 2006, AudigyGroup has interviewed over 5,000 of the 18,000 audiologists in the United States, yet has selected only 250 to be members in this elite association. AudigyCertified™ is a trade-mark of AudigyGroup, LLC.

To learn more about Dr. Chalmers, her practice, and AudigyGroup visit online at www.nsaudiology.com