

COMMERCE & GROWTH

E-commerce post-purchase audit

Confirmation, delivery, support and repeat use

Inspect the service customers receive after placing an order, including the points where payment, fulfilment and communication stop agreeing.

THE WORK

Trace completed orders and exceptions across the storefront, payment service, warehouse, carrier and support team.

THE RESULT

An evidence-backed set of improvements to order status, delivery communication, problem resolution, returns and follow-up.

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

02 Scope and order states

04 Support and returns

06 Journey checks

03 Confirmation and delivery

05 Feedback and retention

07 Finding and action record

01 / ESTABLISH THE JOURNEY

Audit scope and order states

Start with a customer outcome: receiving the expected item or completing an understandable resolution when that cannot happen.

Choose a coherent set of orders

Select the product range, market, fulfilment method and review period. Include ordinary completed orders and relevant exceptions: split shipments, late delivery, cancellation, returns and partial refunds.

Use order identifiers to connect records without copying unnecessary personal information into working documents. Collect the customer messages, status history, fulfilment events and support contacts needed to reconstruct the sequence.

Trace the operating handoff

For each stage, identify the person or system responsible for the next action, the information they receive and the acknowledgement that establishes ownership.

Review delayed, duplicate and missing integration events. Confirm that retries cannot create repeated fulfilment, refunds or messages and that reconciliation can detect an event that never arrived.

Keep the states distinct

Payment, order acceptance, fulfilment, delivery, return and refund are related but separate states. A captured payment does not prove dispatch; a return request does not prove receipt of the item; a refund initiated does not necessarily mean funds are available to the customer.

Identify which system establishes each state and how other systems learn about it. When records disagree, assign an owner to reconcile them instead of allowing the customer to interpret conflicting messages.

Separate evidence from assumptions

Record what happened and its consequence before deciding why it happened. A customer asking where an order is may reflect an absent message, an unclear status, a carrier delay or an inaccurate promise.

Give unknowns an investigation owner. Avoid turning a staff explanation into a verified cause until the records support it.

02 / CUSTOMER VISIBILITY

Confirmation and delivery communication

Every message should explain the current state, the next expected event and the route for resolving a problem.

01

Accepted

Confirm the order and agreed details.

02

Prepared

Explain any split or changed fulfilment.

03

Dispatched

Provide a usable tracking route.

04

Received

Make problem resolution easy to find.

Check the confirmation against the order

Verify the item, variation, quantity, charges, delivery address, contact details and stated timing. Include the order identifier and a retrievable status route. Ensure a guest buyer can use the route without an unnecessary new account.

Test the message on mobile and with assistive technology. Essential details should remain available when images are blocked. Links should clearly describe their destination and avoid exposing other customers' records.

Tie communication to real events

A shipping label can exist before the carrier has the parcel. Use wording that matches the event and distinguish estimates from confirmed movement. Explain split shipments and which items belong to each tracking reference.

When a promised date changes or tracking stops progressing, assign a response before the customer has to repeatedly chase the order. State what is known, what the business is doing and when the next update will arrive.

Inspect the whole message sequence

Read the messages in order with the customer's status page beside them. Check for duplicate notices, contradictory dates, missing items and a final state that was announced before the underlying service completed.

03 / RESOLUTION

Support, returns and refunds

A resolution route should preserve the order context and make responsibility visible until the customer's problem is actually closed.

Make support reachable with context

Provide an obvious route from the confirmation and order-status page. Pass the order identifier into the support process where appropriate so the customer does not need to repeat information the business already holds.

Check staff access to the relevant order, payment, fulfilment and communication records. Give the case one current owner and a clear escalation route when the normal team cannot resolve it.

Separate the physical and financial work

Track authorisation, return transit, receipt, inspection, exchange and refund as the states that actually apply. Name the event that permits the next action under the approved process.

Ensure partial returns, shipping adjustments, discounts and multi-item orders reconcile correctly. A returned item should not create an unintended full-order refund or leave the customer with an unexplained remaining balance.

Explain the return decision before submission

Make the applicable return or exchange conditions, required steps, costs and timing understandable for the order. Have the responsible policy owner verify that the stated terms match the business's obligations and operations.

Show which items and quantities are included in a return request. Confirm submission, explain the next step and make the return status retrievable. Provide a route for customers who cannot use the standard self-service process.

Verify closure

Check the final financial state and customer communication, including an understandable explanation of any partial outcome. Give unresolved payment or delivery disputes an assigned route rather than closing the support case at the first internal handoff.

Review repeat contacts after apparent closure. They can reveal that the internal status changed while the customer still lacks the item, refund, replacement or explanation they needed.

04 / LEARNING

Feedback, retention and operating measures

Post-purchase follow-up should reflect the service the customer actually received.

Ask for feedback at the right point

Trigger feedback after the relevant experience has occurred. A delivery review sent before receipt produces frustration and weak evidence. Pause or adapt routine requests while a delivery or support problem remains open.

Give feedback a route into improvement work. Connect recurring themes to the order stage, product or fulfilment path and investigate the underlying records. Keep review invitations and incentives consistent with the business's approved policy.

Measure completed outcomes

Choose measures such as order-status contacts per eligible order, elapsed resolution time, return completion, delivery exceptions or repeat purchase within a defined observation window.

Record the denominator, time boundaries and exclusions. Segment by fulfilment method, product or market when the operating process differs. Do not interpret a lower support-contact rate as improvement without checking whether help became harder to reach.

Keep retention messages relevant

Match follow-up to the product and customer context. Useful care, setup or replenishment information may be more valuable than an immediate promotional sequence. Avoid encouraging another purchase while ignoring an unresolved service failure.

Apply the customer's communication preferences and the business's lawful messaging rules for the relevant market. Separate essential service communication from marketing so preference changes do not accidentally suppress necessary order updates.

Prioritise consequence and recurrence

Address incorrect charges, privacy exposure and unusable resolution routes directly. Order the remaining improvements by observed frequency, customer consequence and delivery dependency.

For each change, define what the team expects to observe and how it will verify the result. Retain the previous evidence so the comparison uses the same journey definition.

05 / REVIEW

Post-purchase verification checklist

Use actual authorised records and controlled tests. Mark a check only when the complete customer and operating sequence has been verified.

01	Confirmation matches the accepted order Compare the customer message, status page and authoritative order record, including charges and fulfilment details.	Verified ☐	Evidence to retain A consistent order identity, correct details and a usable guest-access route.
02	Delivery messages reflect the real state Trace label creation, dispatch, carrier events and delivery, including a split or delayed shipment.	Verified ☐	Evidence to retain Accurate status wording, item-level tracking and an assigned exception response.
03	Support retains ownership across handoffs Follow a delivery or item problem through support, fulfilment and any supplier escalation.	Verified ☐	Evidence to retain One current owner, complete context and a verified customer outcome.
04	Return and refund states reconcile Trace a partial return through receipt, approved adjustment, payment record and customer notification.	Verified ☐	Evidence to retain Correct item and amount, no duplicate refund and a clear final status.
05	Follow-up reflects the customer's situation Review feedback and marketing triggers for received, delayed, cancelled and unresolved orders.	Verified ☐	Evidence to retain Appropriate timing, respected preferences and suppression of conflicting messages.

06 / WORKING RECORD

Post-purchase finding and action

Use one record for each evidenced problem. Keep order and case identifiers here, with sensitive customer records in their approved systems.

Journey scope and review period

Affected stage and owner

Observed problem and evidence identifiers

Customer consequence and operating cause

Keep the cause marked unresolved until it has been verified.

Agreed change and completion evidence

Outcome measure and guardrail

Delivery owner and review date

Walk the changed journey again after release, including the exception route that exposed the problem.