

## What Would You Do? Help, My Kitchen Isn't Color-Coordinated!

By Christopher Elliott, may 10, 2011

*Mind the fine print when you're buying grout coloring.*

One customer – let's call her Robin – didn't do that when she ordered her products online through a company called Grout Shield, and now her kitchen isn't color-coordinated.

Laugh all you want, but when it happens to you, it's not so funny. It's more like the end of the world.

"When a customer goes to our website, they see that we can make many colors for their grout," says the company's CEO, Michael Stracuzza. "There is a tab for them to look at colors and we specifically warn: 'Please note: The colors displayed here may vary slightly from the true colors depending on your computer settings.'"

Robin apparently didn't pay attention to that tab.

Stracuzza explains,

They receive the product and try to put it on their floor. But this was one time that the color was so entirely off due to the pixels on their computer.

Robin thought she was ordering a dark beige color and it was actually an off-white color. She called upset because although when she got the product and it "looked lighter" than what they ordered, she put it on anyway because, "they thought it would dry darker."

Well, when it didn't, it became our fault because we didn't send them the color on the computer.

All the time and energy spent on putting the product down in their kitchen! What were we going to do about it?

Well, my first suggestion, as a consumer advocate, is to fix the disclosure.

Groutshields could boldface the disclosure or increase its font size, or even add another disclosure during checkout. (As I write this, the fine print is in a regular-size typeface just above the color chart. Although it's difficult to overlook, I can see how customers might skip it if they're in a hurry.)

But what about the options for addressing Robin's problem?

But you were warned. If something is prominently disclosed on a website, as Groutshield's color warning was, then why should the business be responsible for an erroneous assumption? Indeed, the standard "customer service" response would be: "Told ya!"

How about a discount? A more compassionate company might understand that being right isn't as important as having a happy customer. (Remember, happy customers refer other customers to your business.) So maybe offering Robin a do-over at a discount, with reduced-rate shipping, would work?

Sorry, we'll send you the right product. Groutshield could go all-out and send her a free replacement product, even though technically, this wasn't the company's fault. But a manager might pause before authorizing that kind of compensation. After all, if everyone who had a complaint got more free grout coloring, how much would that cost?

What do you think?

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