



## Customer Service case study: Cobalt iP Analog and LEDs

Sometimes, we receive emails from customers with problems. Most often, its because the retailer didn't know the answer... but the answer is almost always there to use, if he had looked for it!

This example is a good one because it involves retailer, customer, distributor and DCCconcepts. It was also disappointing because both the retailer and distributor should know more about what they sell:

- At the start, the knowledge didn't exist at the retailer making our product look bad to the user.
- In the middle, the fact that knowledge did not exist at the distributor initially made our product look bad to both the retailer and the user.
- It was also disappointing that the exact Cobalt model involved was not even established by the retailer initially, also pointing to the fact that they didn't know there was a difference.
- In both cases, if the people involved had bothered to take the time to read information provided, there would have been a quick customer answer and no problem would have existed.

As it was there was NO problem with the product, and if the right approach had been taken, answers were there!

In the end, the customer found their answer in ONE quick email from us which gave them what they needed - that info has been on the web for months, so it could have been given to them on day 1, 5 min after the question was asked!

### The initial thing we saw:

It was a web enquiry form, "user to distributor". The (1) (2) (3) etc. are "red flags" that should have raised questions day 1, not leaving the customer waiting for DCCconcepts to get involved!

Enquiry : Hi, I recently purchased from (retailer name removed) some Cobalt analogue point motors. Having installed two on my railroad they do not operate correctly. (1) (retailer name removed) suggested that I contact you as you are their supplier/distributor. (2)

The problem is this when installed and connected into my wiring circuits my indicator LEDs flash and the point motors will not work. If I remove the LEDs then the point motor works! (3)

the wiring instructions quite clearly show that the motors can be used with indicator LEDs. All my existing cobalt motors perform correctly and without any trouble. (4)

I have also tried disconnecting one of my existing cobalt motors and replacing with one purchased from (retailer name removed) and it will not work.

I can only assume that my control circuits are functioning correctly and it is the motor that is faulty. (5) I have tried three of the box of six and all are the same. (6) Can you assist in some way. I can be contacted on (customer phone # removed). Thanks (name removed)

### First Distributor response to customer (48 hours after enquiry made)

Hi (name removed), I assume the motors and LED's are run from the same supply ? can you confirm if these are the IP or Omega motors please. (7) Lastly what power supply you are using - make voltage etc. (8)

### Customer reply to Distributor (same day)

Hello (name removed),

I have used two different types of supply one of which is the Cobalt PSU2 and using wiring as per Cobalt "advanced wiring diagram" - all my existing motors cobalt and tortoise with inline LEDs work ok with both supply units. (9) Supply voltage is around 9 volts.

The cobalt motors that I am having problems with are the latest IP Analog. (10)

Look forward to your reply.....

*Continued...*



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### The Distributor then emailed us (12hrs later)

Hello (name removed), we have a report of an unusual problem with an IP motor (see below) can you assist the customer and let us know the reason for future reference (11)

### We responded to the customer, CC to distributor

**(actually I DO have to say that our response was far, far too slow - 72 hours later, but sadly that is because we have to answer so many unnecessary emails like this)**

Hello (name removed),

LEDs in series work fine with Cobalt Omega which is a purely resistive motor management, but Cobalt iP Analog works differently. (12)

Because the iP Analog has interactive power management (both drive voltage and current drop at each end of the throw), the use of inline LEDs can cause issues especially at lower voltages as the led in series will not allow the motor to receive the power it needs, which is why they work fine without them. (13)

This was discovered after the initial manual was written and has been modified in the instructions, however early motors did get to the field before the modifications were done. (14)

Please place LEDs for Cobalt iP Analog across the two power wires, not in series with them. This PDF file from our website explains it clearly (15)

It is also on this link <http://www.dccconcepts.com/vamr/adding-leds-to-cobalt-turnout-motors>

### Explaining all the "Red Flags"

- (1) TWO not operating correctly... now there is a really good clue that it may not be the motors.
- (2) Why couldn't the "Specialist" actually do his job, BE a specialist, earn his margin and do the research?
- (3) A technical clue. Switching works OK but while the LEDs flash nothing else works. A wiring error perhaps?
- (4) Another clear clue. OK, so if that's the case, he knows his stuff, so what may the reason be. Perhaps these Cobalt motors are not the same as his others?
- (5) A bit cheeky but at least a sensible test. WHY is it that the manufacturer is assumed to be wrong though.
- (6) Now hang on - 3 from 6, and it's the product is faulty - no way. Again, "assumption rules" for users which is why YOU as resellers need to learn about what you sell, to stop this ever happening.
- (7,8) At last, two excellent questions from the distributor. This is exactly the right questions to ask - Among the MOST important customer service skills are learning how to listen, and asking the right questions.
- (9, 10) A good answer that gave comfort that the power used was correct—and a direct line to the right answer, so in reality, the distributor should have been able to answer the problem right there and then. If he'd actually read the product information that is on the web, he would not have had to ask us and further delay the customers answer!
- (11) Unusual problem? No, the motor is working the way it was designed, and its really a customer wiring problem.
- (12) Qualifying the issue and explaining WHY one type is OK, but not the other...
- (13) Explaining in semi-technical terms the nature of the difference (Giving knowledge to the customer)
- (14) Acknowledging the problem and just in case, accepting responsibility for any customer confusion (Never lay blame on a customer and always accept your own part in any issue).
- (15) Give a clear and unambiguous answer or fix/detailed how to - Remember it and LEARN ready for next time.

**If you learn about our products properly, look after customers and do your best & we'll always help!**



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Continued...

### We also emailed the distributor separately...

Hello (name removed), Have you not read the manuals on our website? They explain the difference between the iP and Omega and the different wiring of LEDs for each. (If he was using Omega, he could use LED in series IF he sets the switch to 9~12v). here is a copy of a guide - but there are many more things there you should read to understand our products.

**And there was a happy ending within 9 hours of our email—that COULD have happened 5 days earlier if retailer and distributor had read the information we provide.**

Hi Richard, I have tried this out this evening and it works ok – very little additional wiring required in my control panel which is good. Thank you for responding quickly. Regards (name removed)

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**We chose this example for several good reasons... it contains lots of question and issues. Most have already been covered in the red flags, but there are other valid questions for us to think about.**

- (1) Was the customer ever offered the Omega and iP Analog option—and if he was already an existing Cobalt Analog user, if not, why not?
- (2) Did the dealer actually know there was a difference? If not, why not
- (3) Had ANYONE actually read the instructions or looked at the huge repository of web information that was available? Did anyone really qualify as a “specialist model railway store” here?
- (4) How can we make sure information gets into the right hands when needed
- (5) How can we do better in informing dealers and others of special information

**Today's business model is oriented towards the specialist as never before ... but with the “Market model” moving from “Service Retail “to “Specialised Experience” retailing, all niche specialists really MUST become authentic specialists if they are going to survive.**

**The key to that is NOT large range or flashy displays, it is the stocking of selected ranges and the rapid improvement in knowledge that will give the specialist the tools to survive.**

.. And it IS all about your survival: Working harder will not make it better, but time spent in learning about your products will pay huge dividends at a time when web retail and low knowledge mass resellers have a huge advantage in access, pricing abilities and cost controls that you as a smaller bricks and mortar store cannot win against... but they are pathetically weak in the area where we operate if you look closely.

Hobbyists need knowledge and they need to be able to trust their source. They will spend where they feel secure and respected, and the ability to listen, give good, targeted advice and recommend specific answers to questions by pointing them to the right product removes price from the equation.

Price simply becomes irrelevant if you truly are able to become the specialist you claim to be....

And if you are NOT working to become an “Authentic Specialist” already then then it is time to think about changing... because if you do not, no matter how hard you work, you will not have real success in the future.

**Become a real specialist.**

**Learn about what you sell, focus your knowledge and narrow your ranges so you can prosper!**