

# Exceptional Customer Service

## Exceptional Customer Service

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## Customer Service Foundations

### Outstanding Customer Service

- Define Outstanding Service
  - **Outstanding Customer Service** is service that exceeds your customer's expectation.
  - **Good Service** occurs when customers expectations are met.
  - **Poor service** occurs when experience is worse than customer expected.
  - Every customer has their own unique perspective.
  - Treat each customer as an individual and try to understand their own unique needs.
- Identify your customer
  - A customer is anyone you serve.
  - Identify the major groups of customers you serve and each group's basic needs.
- Create a customer service vision

### Build Rapport

- Building rapport is one of the most essential skills in customer service.
  - customers are more trusting
  - customers are more loyal
  - customers are more forgiving of mistakes
- Techniques to build rapport
  - Make the first move
  - Greet warmly
  - Convey enthusiasm
  - Demonstrate Helpfulness
  - Call the customer by name

### Exceed Expectations

- Uncover customer needs
- Actively listen to customers

### Identify emotional needs

- customers have 2 basic needs - rational and emotional
  - Rational - The specific assistance a customer requests.
  - Emotional need - how the customer wants to feel about their experience.
  - Emotional needs are more important than rational ones.
- Manage Expectations
  - Onboard new customers
  - Explain processes and procedures to customers
  - Share worst case scenarios when quoting time frames
  - Use clear specific language when quoting response times

- Tell the truth
- Go the extra mile.
  - Adopt the extra mile mindset
  - Identify opportunities
  - Take action.

## Solve Problems

- Take ownership of problems
  - Acknowledge the problem
  - Follow-up
- Act on customer feedback
  - Look for pain points
  - separate **facts** from **rants**
- Empathize with customers
- Expand your influence
  - Things you can control
  - Things you can't control
  - Expand the your **circle of influence** on things you can control.
- Prevent negative emotions
- Defuse angry customers
- Anchor your own attitude.

## Customer Service: Problem Solving & Trouble Shooting

### 2 -step approach to common sense Customer Service for most situations

- Validity of complains
  - is the **complain** , **criticism** , or **feedback** valid or invalid.
- How to respond to valid complains
  - Address 4 key areas
    1. Apologize.
    2. State how you are going to handle the situation.
    3. Communicate how you will follow up.
    4. Follow through and follow up - Follow up is everything!
- How to respond to invalid complains
  - Treat invalid complains as though they are valid - customers want to know that they've been heard and recognized.
  - Redirect & Reframe
  - Don't give free stuff in response to invalid complains.
  - Review the customer's history

## Critical Customer problem solving skills

- Diagnose before you prescribe
- Listen carefully
- Verify, clarify, follow up.
  - Allow the customer to speak
  - Check for understanding

## Critical Troubleshooting Skills

- Disarm an angry customer
- Give the customer options
  - Try to never let the customer walk away angry.
- How to deliver bad news
  - Put yourself on their side
  - Frame the situation in a new or positive light
    - Here's what we can do ...
    - What will make you happy?

## Personal development

- Maintain your sanity
  - Take a break
  - Move away from unnecessary conflict
  - You are not to bow to every wish and demand of the customer
    - Customer Service is not an opportunity for people to treat you like garbage.
  - You have to fire some customers
- Proactive problem solving
  - identify recurring issues
  - Looking inward to improve
    1. List your company's biggest mistake.
    2. Measure your mistakes for 30 days
    3. Prioritize your mistakes, ranking from bad to worse
    4. Make Improvements

## Building Rapport with customers

## Simple ways to build rapport with customers

- Build **rapport** in 6 seconds or less.
  - Talk with enthusiasm
- Use the customer's name - easiest way to build rapport.
  - Engage the customers with warm **aahs** and **umphs** .
- Acknowledge concern with customers

## Techniques for Maintaining Rapport

### 1. Yield to customers in conversations

- Always allow your customers to finish sentences.
- Apologize if you interrupt a customer.

### 2. Pace customers

- **Pacing** when you mirror the body language or verbal expression of another person.
  - 3 things you can do to pace customers:
    - Use your customer's words - speak like the customers.
      - If they say soccer instead of football, use the word soccer too.
    - Don't correct customers
    - Let their little mistakes pass
  - Pace the level of detail
    - ... I want to know A, B, C, D ... to Z - Answer the customers request in that order. The customer wants the details in this scenario.
    - Pacing, here is knowing just what level of detail to give the customer.
    - Only pace positive things - don't mirror frustration or profanity.
    - Time your pacing, over-pacing makes you appear insincere.,

### 3. Speak in complete sentences with customers.

Date of birth?

Lastname?

zipcode?

Asking questions in the manner above makes you sound robotic, mechanical, impatient and unfriendly.

- Always ask questions in complete sentences
- Use **please** and **thank** you.

Can I please have your lastname?

Do you have your claim number?

Thank you, one last question for you.

## Building Rapport in Specific Situations

- End Customer Interactions with a fond farewell - make your **closure** upbeat and surprising.
- **Closure Process**
  - Share the next steps
  - End with a fond farewell.
- Create rapport in customer chat interactions
  - Use personal pronouns
    - **I, me, we, you** - these make written communication sound personal.

"We have recieved your order return and a replacement is on its way to you." [say this]

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"ABC Company has recieved order number 4026 and a replacement will be sent" [Don't say this]

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- Keep chat exchanges short.
  - Acknowledge your customer's concerns
- Create rapport in emails

3 things to make your emails read naturally, like you talk.

  - Write in a casual conversational tone.
  - Use personal pronouns
  - Express Empathy

I am disappointed to hear that your lentils spilled during transit. I hate to think that you won't be able to fully enjoy your meals and had this mess to clean."

- Use rapport to disarm angry customers
  - Acknowledge
  - Yield - don't interrupt or over-talk
  - Pace - match your customer's energy
- Maintain rapport when delivering bad news.
  - Deliver bad news with empathy and a positive slant.
  - Use the **Feel-Felt-Found** method.
    - **Feel** - relay that you understand how the customer feels.

- "I understand why you feel that way."
- **Felt** - Show the customer they aren't alone.
  - "I had another customer who had a similar situation and felt the same way."
- **Found** - tell the customer what you found to work.
  - "We found that *this* works best."

## Customer Service: Call control Strategies

Reeling in unruly customers

### Call Control Strategies

- Give a limited response
  - Answer personal questions swiftly
  - Choose not to debate
  - Don't provide excessive detail
- **Snatch and Flip** technique
  - Listen to grasp and problem and flip right into problem solving.
- Ask 3 closed ended questions
  - Use close-ended questions to assert authority.
  - Close-Ended questions are questions that have limited answers.
- Assertively interject long conversations - break in at just the right time.
  - Your tone is as important as your timing.
  - Keep a friendly and assertive tone with no hint of annoyance.
- Reframe the conversation
  1. Allow the customer to explain the issue
  2. Say something to recognize their frustration.
  3. Move your customer out of story telling into resolution.
- Politely Excuse Yourself
  - Slightly increase your volume
  - Jump right in
  - Make a positive declaration

I always enjoy talking to you Kayla. I have to be on another call in 2 minutes. Let's catch up next week.

I feel like I could talk to you all afternoon. I do have customers waiting. So I'll wish you a great weekend and say goodbye.

- Applying Exiting Body Language when face-to-face with the customer
  - Stand up to signal departure if you are seated.
  - Lead your customer to door politely.
  - Continue smiling but wind down by talking less.

## Proactive Conversation Management

- When customers feel understood, they talk less

3 ways to make customers heard and understood

- Label the customer's response.

- It sounds like you've had a frustrating time
- It seems like this has been overwhelming for you.

Labeling makes customers feel heard and the venting stops when customers feel you understand them.

- Don't interrupt customers while they vent.
- Offer little reassurances as they vent.

- Provide a comprehensive recap.

- Wrap up the conversation by focusing on an assertive resolution.

How to Sound Assertive

- Raise your volume slightly
  - Slow your pace
  - Give your customers all the details they need.
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## Customer Service: Handling Abusive customers

### Steps for handling abusive customers

1. Assess the customer service interaction

- Why is the customer upset?
- What does the customer want at the end of the transaction?
- What can you do to solve their problem?
  - Avoid using the word **No** to keep the transaction moving in a positive direction

2. Reassure the customer

3. Use empathy to show you care

- To the abusive customer, lack of empathy is fuel for fire.

4. Change the customer focus

5. Resolve the customer issue

- understand the problem
- confirm what they want
- Try to do what they want.

6. Abort the interaction



When do you abort a transaction? After you have given great customer service and the customer is still extremely upset.

How to abort an interaction

a. Remind the customer:

- You care
- They are important to you and your company
- You want them to leave happy

b. Apologize for not being able to serve them at this time.

We cannot serve you while you are abusive towards us, you may come back when you can have a calm conversation and be respectful of me and my colleagues.

c. Be careful with the language that you use.

d. Take further action if the customer refuses to leave or keeps calling back.

- Notify your manager if you have one.
- If you are in physical danger, notify security or run away immediately.

### Code System to Rate Trouble Customers

- Stage 1: Code Orange
  - Customer using explicit language, yelling, and has disdain towards you.
- Stage 2: Code Yellow
  - Customer using explicit language, yelling, and degrading or being abusive towards you.
- Stage 3: Code Red
  - Customer using explicit language, yelling, and degrading and threatening you mentally and physically.

You do not have to tolerate abusive customers.

### 7. Follow up with the customer

You can use follow up to turn an abusive customer into a loyal customer. How does this happen? - Emotion. Emotion is energy.

Follow up a customer with negative energy after things have calmed down and turn all their negative energy into positive energy making them a happy customer in the process.

### Steps to Following Up

- Remind Customer that your goal is to serve them
- Gauge the state of mind of the customer
  - Are they still irate?
  - Are they calm?
  - Are they apologetic?
- Offer the customer an unexpected item of value
  - Coupon
  - Discount

- Free Gift
- Free Shipping
- Full refund ?
  - The Law of reciprocity - offering an unexpected item of value becomes a peace offering. When you offer someone a gift, *oftentimes* they will feel they owe you a gift in return.

## Steps to implement

1. Create a list of common situations you encounter
2. Come up with many solutions and practice
3. Implement this code system into your employee handbook

## Creating Positive Conversations with Challenging Customers

Telling a customer what you can do.

### Working with difficult customers

1. Be positive with customers not provoking
  - Work to keep interactions positive by offering explanation or options

There's nothing we can do!  
One Thing we can try is...

- Look to give a positive slant when giving bad news.
2. Pacing your customers
    - Pace with urgency
    - Pace with agreement
      - I can see your point on that.
      - I know that had to be frustrating .
    - If you outpaced, walk it back
  3. Ask what else? questions.
    - Use "what else" to manage expectations.
    - Use "what else" to recap and give next steps.

## Positive Positioning Skills

1. Use partnership language with customers.
2. Overcome resistance with customers.
  - Remember the **feel-felt-found** strategy
3. Empathize for positive interactions with customers.

4 steps to fostering a sense of empathy with your customers

- Put yourself in the customer's shoes
  - Sense the situation from their perspective
  - Discuss the things upsetting the customer
  - Offer solutions to fix the issue
4. Words and Phrases to avoid - and better options
    - When correcting a confused customer
      - Don't be short, and don't make them feel foolish
      - Avoid words that elicit negative feelings:
        - When dealing with a failed transaction
          - I'm having trouble authorizing your card.
        - Explaining a fault
          - Let's take a look and see what's going on.

### 5. How to apologize

An apology isn't about placing blame.

How to apologize when the situation isn't your company's fault.

- We are sorry for any frustration you may have experienced .
- We are sorry you had to make this call today.

Notice that none of the preceding apologies admit fault - apologies can be safe. Apologize without opening up the chance of liability claims.

Steps to a good apology.

- a. State only the facts - never share your opinion as to what caused the problem.
- b. Don't assume fault for the mishap and don't blame others.
- c. Apologize for the impact on the customer and not for the issue itself.

## Positive Positioning in action

- Positioning your return or refund policies.

2 step process for returns and exchanges

- Acknowledge the impact.
  - Explain how the policy benefits the customer.
- Issues with billing or customer rewards

With billing issues it's not the mistake that gets you in trouble. It's how you handle the issue.

3 ways to handle billing complaints better:

- Thank the customer.
  - Thanks for giving us a chance to fix this.
- Don't challenge the customer.
  - Your focus is not to prove the customer wrong.
- Apologize regardless of fault.
- "Your competition is better"

Customers sometimes make unfair comparisons to your competition. Help customers see when their competition is an apples to oranges comparison.

For pricing comparisons

- Point out the benefits you offer - your Unique Selling Point.
- Justify a perceived lack of a quality as a benefit.
- Don't make negative remarks about your competitors.

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## De-Escalating Intense Situations

*Successfully defuse intense situations with angry customers. Learn practical approaches for managing a customer's frustration, as well as your own.*

### Preempt an Escalation

1. Three reasons situations escalate - and how to solve the problem.

- Customers don't accept your word as final.
  - Position yourself as the expert, talk assertively and offer options when you can.
- They think it's faster to go to the top.
  - Say, "I can connect you to a supervisor but I may be able to help. Will you give me a chance to assist you first?"
- A cycle of escalation is put into motion.
  - A cycle of escalation is put into motion when you don't put forth the effort to dig deep for the customer.

2. Positive Positioning

Delivering a message in a positive way to minimize a negative reaction.

Using positive positioning

- Maximize positive language and minimize negative words
  - Avoid words like problem use the situation instead.
  - Don't use unfortunately .
  - Use absolutely ... definitely ... certainly .
- Reframe the problem.

"while the warranty doesn't cover this, we do have a couple of options for you today."

- Reflect your brand promise.

### 3. The **Don't push** principle.

Instead of saying "there's nothing we can do.", say "we will look into this."

### 4. Manage customer expectations

I'm noting that your flight was canceled because of bad weather. Our policy states *reservation not canceled 72 hours prior to check-in will be charged a cancellation fee*. But I have opened a case documenting weather as the reason you canceled. The local hotel will research and back to you. Please understand, this is solely at the manager's discretion.

Paint a clear picture of what may happen

- Don't over-promise
- Try to proactively give customers what they need.

### 5. Be regretful but direct with customers

Say what you mean, mean what you say , but don't be mean when you say it.

- Be firm, confident and final.

## Three-step deescalation

### 1. Recognize the customer's emotions

"I know you are eager to see this resolved."

### 2. Reframe the conversation

Reframing helps you take control, deflect intense emotion, and keep the interactions focused.

- "Here's what we know."
  - Give them details
  - Be confident and transparent
- "Here's what we've done."
  - List steps taken to fix the issue
- "Here's what we've done."

- Let them know when they will be contacted.

"The accident happened in our garage at 7:42 PM. The driver was in white Honda Civic and he left the scene. We have filled a claim with our laws prevention team and we filed a police report. You also need to submit a police report and you also need to notify both your insurance company and your rental car company."

### 3. Resolve the customer Issue.

A key to deescalation is moving the conversation forward to closure.

"We appreciate hearing about your experience, but we cannot compensate you because the damage is due to normal wear and tear."

## Double your effectiveness deescalating

### 1. Listen with the intent to understand.

- Don't interrupt or make assumptions.

### 2. Use partnering language to understand

### 3. Dealing with your own frustration

- Quit Taking it Personally. **Qtip**
- Put yourself in the customer's shoes
- Wait 1-2 seconds before saying anything.
- Don't say anything you wouldn't say to your grandmother.

### 4. Dealing with demanding customers

- Keep your responses brief.
- Use Silence - don't interrupt enraged customers
- Draw the line.

"I'm sorry it's not possible for me to help while listening to that language, if it stops, I can help."

"I'm trying to help you, but if you continue to yell or swear, I'm going to ask that you call back another time."

## Common Customer Issues

### 1. When a customer asks for a manager

- Don't refuse
- Use **USA**

- Understanding Statement
  - Explain the situation
  - Action
2. When a customer disagrees with your policy
    - Just stating the policy with no empathy or explanation frustrates the customer.
  3. Yelling or cursing customer
    - A lot of the times when a customer uses this tactic, they are baiting you.
    - Don't be a doormat, don't let customers disrespect you. Address unacceptable attitudes head-on. Otherwise, you've lost control and the interaction will only go downhill.
  4. Customer request is not possible
    - ACT
      - Acknowledge the issue
      - Care - express care or concern
      - Transition to next steps

## Customer Service: Serving customers through chat and text

### Do more than answer questions -- Solve problems

1. Ask probing questions

How can I help you today?

- Ask open-ended questions
  - These help customers to express needs.
- Probing questions
  - allows you to narrow down on issues.
- Close-ended questions
  - allows you to confirm understanding and can often be answered with a yes or no.

An effective chat or text conversation will include a mix of all three types of questions.

2. Confirm the customer understands
  - troubleshooting software apps
  - making product suggestions
  - presenting choices
3. Know when to switch channels

#### Switch to a phone call

- Customer unable to follow directions
- Customer has poor writing skills
- You don't want a written record of the conversation

# Control the conversation

## 1. How to open and close the chat

### Chat Opening

- Build rapport
  - To build rapport write like a person.

Hello Susan, I'm Lory with Real Madrid, How can I help you today?

- Start Customer Service

## 2. Handle delays with grace

### Agent Delays

- Let the customer know you are doing something else.
- Tell them how long they'll have to wait.
- Let them know the outcome of the wait.

### Customer Delays

- Acknowledge the customer has stepped away from the chat, let them know how long you will be waiting.
- Let the customer know you are ending the chat and tell them how to reconnect - it's customer service and not hide and seek.

## 3. Cue the customer you are keeping track of the conversation

### Managing out-of-sync chat conversations

- Go with the customer's flow
- Keep of track of and answer all of the customers questions
- Use words to signal the return to a topic.

- You mentioned earlier that you lived in Ohio, would you like me to search for locations in your area?

## 4. Manage the length of your response

- Limit chats to 40 words or less
- Limit texts to 160 characters

# Build Templates and Freetext

## 1. Use templates in specific customer situations

- For detailed content that blends words and numbers
- For multi-step instructions
- When asking customers to wait

## 2. Freetext to make chat efficient and authentic

- **Free-texted** responses fit the customer's mood and topic.



## Use a conversational tone.

### 1. Match the customer's level of formality

#### Tips to gauge formality

- How do they write their name?
  - Amy or Dr. Amy
- Do they use emojis and text-speak?
  - LOL, BTW, Nice!
- Do they write full sentences
  - Formal: That would be fine with me
  - Casual: Sounds Good
- Do they use conventional punctuation?
  - Thank you for shipping quickly.
  - Awesome ... thx for the quick ship!!!
- Do they try to create a casual connection?

### 2. Write in your company's brand voice

#### Brand Voice

How your brand personality comes across in words. Use a consistent brand voice with all your customers.

#### Brand Voice Opportunities

- Greeting and Closing
  - Hey and later
  - Hello and Goodbye
- Apologizing
  - "Ugh - really sorry"
  - "I sincerely apologize"
- Offering Help
  - "What's Up?"
  - "How may I help you today?"
- Accepting thanks
  - "We are blushing!"
  - "Thank you!"
- Showing Understanding
  - "I hear you ... I get it ... Gotcha"
  - "I understand ... Yes that makes sense"

### 3. Use emojis and abbreviations

#### Emojis

- Never substitute an emoji for a word
- Use emojis to deepen the feeling with actual words
- Write what you want them to know and embellish with emojis

#### Abbreviation Risks

- You could appear unprofessional
- You can increase ambiguity and confusion

#### Abbreviation Tips

- Wait for the customer to use an abbreviation first.

- Use well-known abbreviations

## **Push content that boosts sales and provides service**

### 1. Push links, videos and self service content

- Mention where the link goes and why you're sending the customer to that link.

### 2. Write customer service chat that sells

#### Three Methods for writing chat that sells

- UpSell opportunities

- If you like product A, you might like product B
- Sounds like product A isn't enough for you have you considered product B?
- Would you like to know more about our other products?

- Risks of UpSelling

- Longer chats
- You may not be equipped to close the sale.
- Customer may be annoyed.