How To Make Your Customer Service More Personal (And Why You Want To)

By: Len Markidan

Delivering personalized customer service makes a huge difference. Here's how to do it right.

"Personal service" is the "synergy" of the customer support world.

A buzzword used so often – by support agents, customers and marketers alike – that it's lost meaning for many of us.

Which is a damn shame, because personal service, when done right, *is* incredibly powerful.

It can be the difference between a customer forgetting about you the minute their transaction is over, and that same person returning to become a loyal customer for life.

But there's a difference between *saying* that you deliver personal service (as so many companies do), and actually doing it.

Today, I'm going to share what personal service *really* is, why it's so important for your business, and actionable tips you and your team can use to start making your support more personal.

The Value of Personal Service

A few years ago, a survey by Genesys asked more than 9,000 consumers about what mattered to them most when it came to doing business with companies.

What did the respondents mark as the improvement they'd like to see most among the companies they do business with?

40% of them – more than double the responses that the second place answer received – said "better human service".

The Most Important Aspect of Customer Support
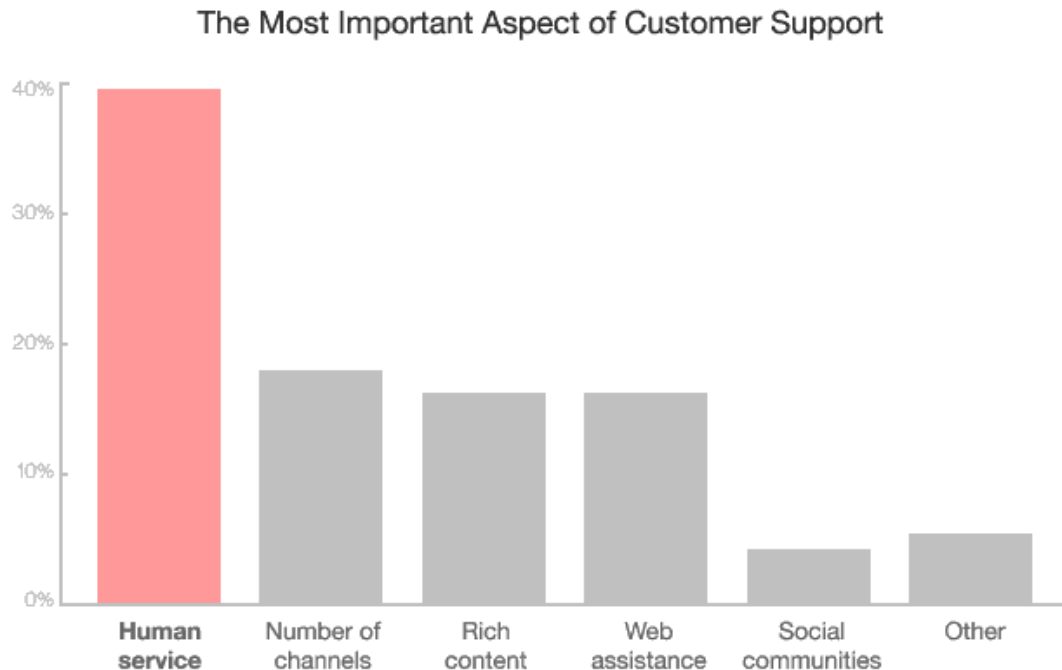
And that, in a nutshell, is what personal customer service is.

Personal service is about making the customer feel like they're doing business with a human, not a company.

It's a simple concept, but incredibly valuable. Why?

Because when customers feel like they're getting personal service, they become better customers.

Numerous studies have shown that happy customers buy more, they buy more often, and they tell their friends to buy, too.

The benefits of personal service extend beyond your customers and their immediate social circles, too.

As your business builds a reputation for great service, you'll begin to draw more customers from around the market.

In fact, another study found that 72% of customers are "very" or "extremely" likely to do business with a company because of their reputation for strong customer service.

The benefits are clear. Now let's talk about the approach.

How To Make Your Customer Service More Personal

The great thing about using that simple definition of personal support is that it gives you an easy benchmark that you can measure any interaction by.

Am I making the customer feel like they're doing business with a human, or a business?

Just by keeping this question in the back of your mind, you'll begin to subconsciously add personal touches to every support interaction.

To get you started, here are a few tips you can use to make your support more personal right away:

## Use Names (Both Yours and Your Customer's)

When Dale Carnegie said that "a person's name is to that person, the sweetest, most important sound in any language," he may not have had access to the latest medical research.

But as recent studies have shown, he was spot on.

As it turns out, our names are *so* important to us that hearing them lights up an entirely different part of our brain than any other words.

Using your customer's name makes them like you more, and on the flip side, using your *own* name makes the interaction feel more personal, too.

Who would you rather get an email from, "Mike" or "The Support Team"?
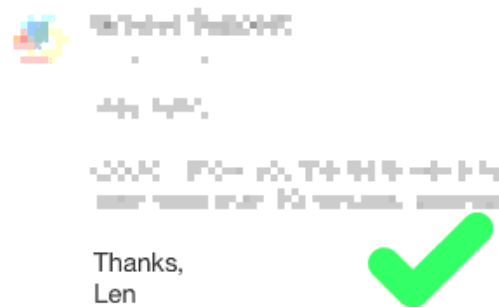
Show Your Face

Want to make a deeper connection with your customers when they read your emails?

Help them put a face to your name.

Using photos of faces doesn't just [increase conversion rates](#) on your site; it help to humanize your business, [built trust](#) and make your customers feel as though they're dealing with real people.

And real is key here. No cheesy stock photos of "business" people wearing headsets.

Try putting photos of your team on your site's about or customer support pages, or even in the emails themselves.
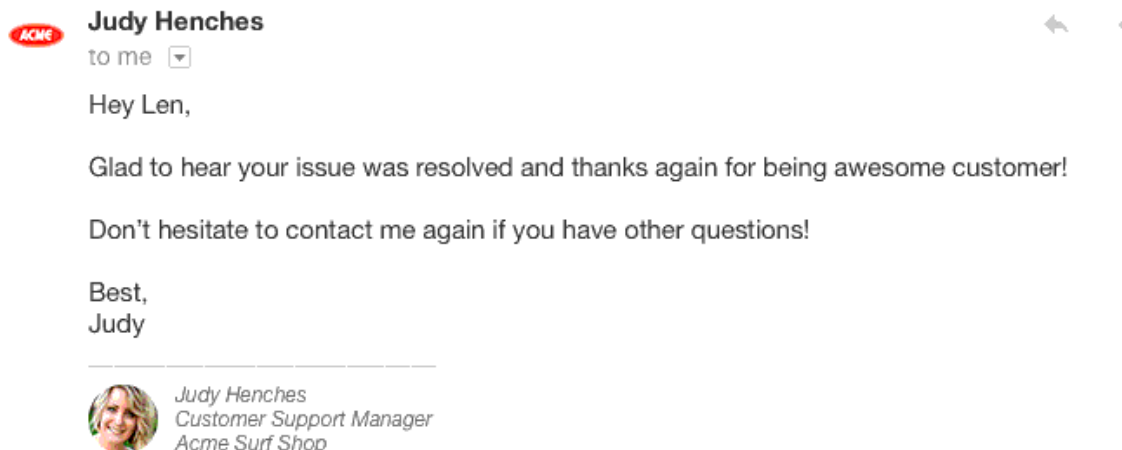
Know Each Customer's History With Your Business

Last week, I had to call American Express to fix an issue with my account.

After I told the support agent about my problem, she told me that she'd be happy to help. But right before she put me on hold, she casually noted:

"…and by the way, thank you *so* much for being an American Express customer since 1998. It means a lot to me that we've had your business for so long."

That small touch *made* the interaction for me.

Simply by knowing a tiny detail about me as a customer, the agent made me feel like she (and the company) cared about my business, and made the interaction a lot more personal than a simple support transaction.

You can do the same thing.

At Groove, we accomplish this by displaying the customer's history in our help desk's sidebar next to each ticket:
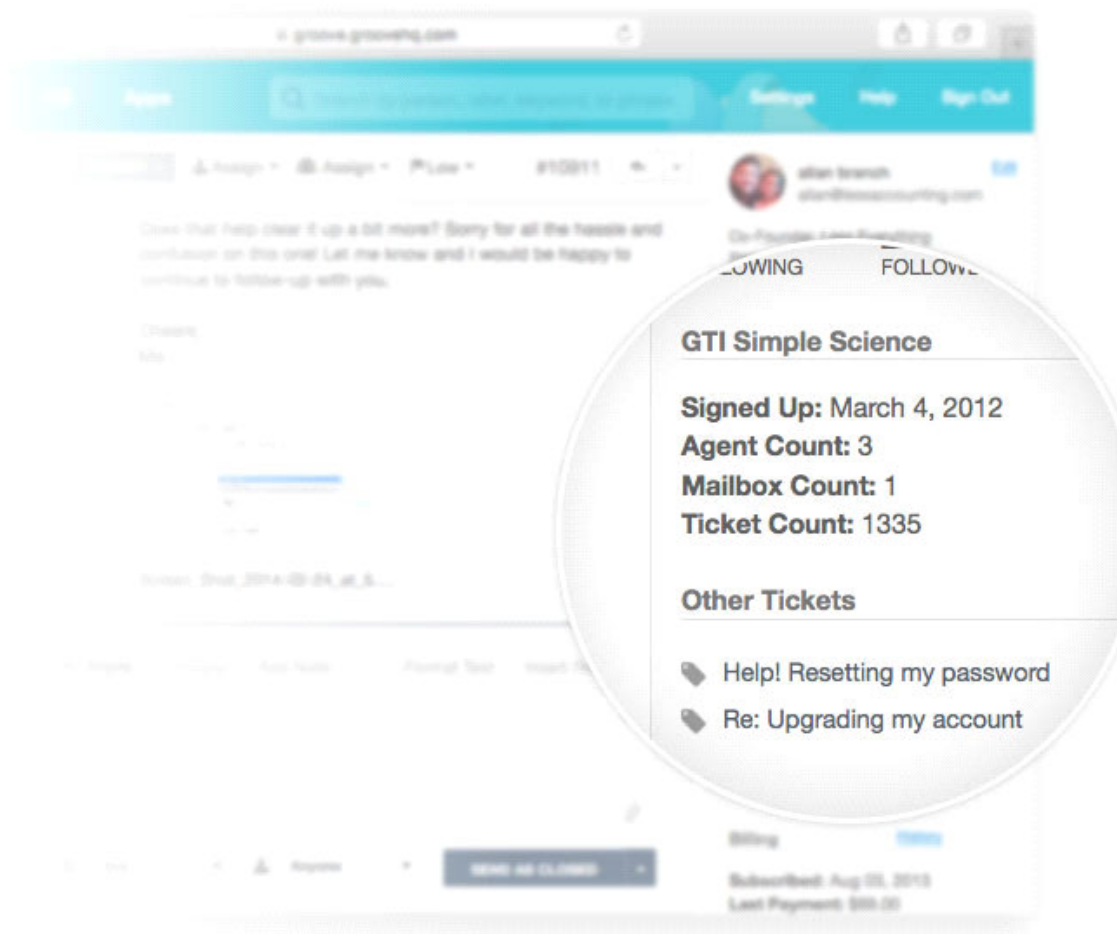
This way, we can add personal touches to support conversations.

For example, if we know that a customer recently started using a new Groove add-on, we can say something like:

I noticed that you set up the Slack integration — that's one of my favorites :-)

Small personal touches like that make a big impact on how a customer feels as they come away from an interaction.

Learn More About Your Customers

Personal touches aren't just about business, though.

Knowing things about your customers – *outside of your business relationship with them* – gives you big opportunities to create personal touches for them.

Many restaurants, when they learn that you're celebrating a birthday or other special occasion, might send out a free dessert to make it extra special.

Eleven Madison Park, one of the top restaurants in the world, takes things [a few steps further](#):
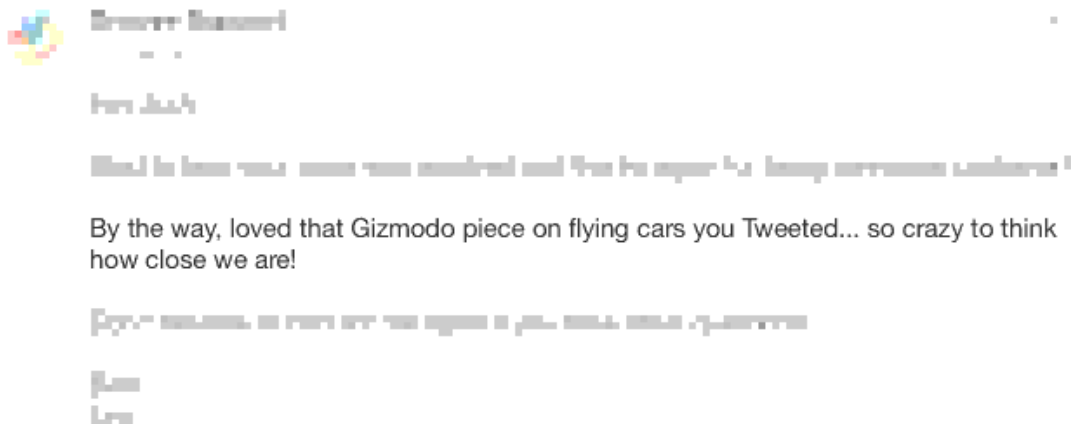
At 3:30 p.m., in the back office of Eleven Madison Park, maître d' Justin Roller is Googling the names of every guest who will come in that night.

"I'm looking for chef's whites and wine glasses," he says. A shot of a guest wearing whites means a chef is probably coming to dinner. Wine glasses signify a potential sommelier (or at least a wine geek). This is just the beginning. If, for example, Roller discovers it's a couple's anniversary, he'll then try to figure out *which* anniversary. If it's a birthday, he'll welcome a guest, as they walk in the door, with a "Happy Birthday." (Or, if it seems to Roller that a guest prefers to keep a low profile, "I'll let them introduce themselves to me," he says.) Even small details are useful: "If I find out a guest is from Montana, and I know we have a server from there, we'll put them together." Same goes for guests who own jazz clubs, who can be paired with a sommelier that happens to be into jazz.

While I wouldn't recommend this approach for most businesses (chances are, your customers don't want exactly the same experience as Eleven Madison Park's customers do), it's a great example of how you can deliver a more personal touch in customer service.

One way to apply this in your own support is to make sure that when your customers follow you on Twitter, you follow them back.

Take note when they Tweet interesting things, and mention them in your support interactions.

By the way, loved that Gizmodo piece on flying cars you Tweeted... so crazy to think how close we are!

Personal Customer Service Is Worth It

Don't let the buzzword status of "personal service" fool you; it really is

an important, and valuable concept that can help you increase retention and grow your business.

Delivering personal support isn't terribly hard, but it can pay off in a huge way.

Let's celebrate companies that go the extra mile. When have you experienced exceptionally personal customer service? Share your story in the comments!