
5 Template Responses to Crazy Customer Letters

By Gergana Dimova,
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Dear Bootstrapper,

Thanks for downloading “**5 Template Responses to Crazy Customer Letters**”.

This ebook examines 5 letters, provides an example response to each letter, and a template response that you can reuse. Each template response contains terms and phrases that I use daily to extinguish disappointment, anger and frustration in our customers. The structure of the letters is explained, the choice of words, and what alternative choices would have negative effect on the communication.

I hope this ebook will help you find the right words when you don't know how to reply to a customer.

Please feel free to email me at sansmagi.cc@gmail.com with your questions, feedback and crazy customer stories.

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Structure of the templates

1. Text *without any special formatting* can be copied and pasted without modification. These are the magic words. :)
2. Text in *bold*, surrounded by “<” and “>” is a *specific name* or a term that you have to substitute.
For example: <**customer_name**>
3. Text in *italics*, surrounded by “(” and “)” contains *notes* and comments on the text before it.
4. Text in *bold*, surrounded by “[” and “]” is a *section* of the letter. It explains what I'm trying to achieve in this section. For example: **[Start with empathy.]**

Okay. Let's get on with the cases!

Case 1: Customer demands support after their support contract has expired. To top it off—he refuses to pay for it.

Imagine you're selling accounting software called “Bookkeeper”. You offer free support for up to 6 months after purchase. Bob has had your software for over a year, but he contacted you just yesterday to complain about “bugs”. In reality, he doesn't understand the accounting terms and how the software is supposed to work. (Neither do I, but this is just an example, so please, bear with me.) He sent you the following e-mail:

found a serious fault with your software, I tried to extract end of month balance sheet today and it doesn't work!had to fill in a number of boxes, which I did, but in the end I got NO balance sheet at all... Nothing!I need this fixed asap...

Do you already feel annoyed by the overuse of ellipses and the “terms” Bob refers to? Take a deep breath and ignore this feeling for a minute. :)

If you refuse to help and simply tell Bob this is not a bug, you're in for a torrent of back-and-forth emails, threats and rants. You have to *convince him* it's not a bug.

How do you convince Bob the problem is not a bug?

Here's an example e-mail:

Hello Bob,

I'm sorry to hear that you've had trouble extracting the End-of-Month balance sheet.

I have examined the problem and was able to successfully produce an End-of-the-Month Balance sheet on my end.

To extract (yes, use his own "terms") your own sheet, you need to enter additional data first. Here is an article in our Help Center which explains this in depth: <http://bookkeeper.com/help-center/end-of-month-balance-sheet>

Please note

According to the terms of service that you agreed to, when purchasing "Bookkeeper" on January 2nd 2013, you were entitled to 6 months of free technical support, starting from the date of purchase. Although this period has expired now, there are 2 other possibilities for you to receive helpful and informative answers to your questions:

Purchasing one of our support plans. You can find more information about them here: <http://bookkeeper.com/support-plans>

Browsing our Help Center: <http://bookkeeper.com/help-center>

I hope this is helpful.

Have a great day!

Template #1: Convincing customer the problem is not a bug

Hello <customer_name>,

[Start with empathy.]

I'm sorry to hear that you've had trouble using <feature>. *(Note: The customer has had trouble using the feature. You don't say anything about bugs, because it is not a bug.)*

[State that you find no problems. Avoid negative words and expressions such as “don't”, “can't”, “wasn't able to”. Try to sound as positive as possible.]

I have examined the problem *(again, not a bug)* and was able to successfully use <feature> on my end. *(Positive words in action: “I was able to successfully use” instead of “I wasn't able to reproduce the bug”.)*

[Calmly point the customer in the right direction. No need to hint that he or she is a moron, because they don't know how to use your software.]

In order to use <feature> you have to <required_action>.

[Give the customer some articles to read]

Here is an article in our Help Center *(or on the internet)* which explains this in depth: <link> *(You need to help the customer find their way around. Otherwise, they will keep thinking it's a bug, which you refuse to fix.)*

[After you have helped the customer, tell them that they have to pay, if they want more help.] According to the terms of service *(or support policy, service agreement, etc.)* <link> that you agreed to when purchasing <product_name> on MM-DD-YYYY *(If you're specific, you leave no room for the customer to argue)*, you were entitled to <support_terms>.

Although this period has expired now, there are other possibilities for you to receive helpful and informative answers to your questions *(You want to sound*

*like: “Heey, I'd love to help you! All you need to do is send some dollars over.”,
not: “You're not getting any help unless you pay, you !\$#@@&#&”):*

[Describe the ways they can receive help]

[Be nice]

Have a great day!

<signature>

Throughout the templates you will often see the word “empathy”. It's because I believe that, when doing customer support, you have to deal with the customer's feelings, as well as the actual issues. This is what builds a relationship.

The moral here is... Show the customer great support and then ask for their money.

Don't simply refuse to reply, because they haven't paid. Don't assume that people want to abuse your support service. Maybe they aren't aware of your terms. Trust me, customers will happily give you money, if you are nice to them.

Case 2: Customer requests a new feature, but you won't start working on it right now

Imagine you're selling note taking software this time (“Notalicious”). You receive the following letter from Alice:

Hello, I've recently installed your app, but I'm having a serious issue with it... I'm missing the text highlight tool!can you fix this?

There is nothing to “fix”, but Alice doesn't know this. The “Text highlight” tool is a feature that other customers have already requested. You will start working on it. Just not right now.

How do you say to Alice that she has to wait without disappointing her?

Here's an example response:

Hi Alice,

I'm sorry to hear about your problems with “Notalicious”.

I understand that being able to highlight text makes skimming it very easy later on. Actually, this is a feature that we haven't considered adding yet. It sounds like an awesome thing to have, though. I have added “text highlighting” to the list of requested features. Thank you for taking the time to share this with me!

There isn't an exact time-frame yet, but I hope that we'll able to start working on the “Text Highlight” tool very soon.

In the meantime, there is still a way for you to highlight text.

Here's how:

1. Open the note you want to edit.
2. Select the text you want to highlight.
3. Click on the "Text color" tool.
4. Change the background color to yellow, for example.

By the way, did you know we recently added the ability to share notes? If you haven't tried it out yet, go ahead and download the new update. Here's an article which covers note sharing in more detail.

Have a great day!

Template #2: Telling customer that you won't start working on a new feature right now

Hi <customer_name>,

(Always, always use their names, if you know them)

[Start with empathy]

(If they called the feature request "an issue", don't contradict them.)

I'm sorry to hear about your problems with <product_name>.

[Show your understanding]

I understand that having <feature_name> makes <task> very easy.

[Point out it's a new feature, not an issue, so there is nothing for you to fix.]

Actually, this is a feature that we haven't considered adding yet.

[Compliment them. Tell the customer that it's a great idea.]

It sounds like an awesome thing to have, though. I have added <feature> to

the list of requested features. Thank you for taking the time to share this with me! *(Because you value the customer's time)*

[They will ask about the time-frame, so save yourself another letter]

There isn't an exact time-frame yet, but I hope that we'll be able to start working on **<feature_request>** very soon. *(Vague, not promising anything. You want to be vague. You may or may not start working on it.)*

[If there is another way for them to do what they want, be sure to mention it. This way you still help the customer achieve their goal.]

In the meantime, there is still a way for you to **<perform_action_that_requested_feature_will_allow>**. Here's how:
<Instructions>

[Mention other cool relevant feature you have added recently. You want to remind the customer that you're working for them and constantly adding new stuff. Not mandatory, but if you have something to say, go ahead.]

By the way, did you know we recently added the ability to **<new_feature>**. If you haven't tried it out yet, go ahead and download the new update. Here's an article which covers **<new_feature>** in more detail.

<signature>

This might seem like a long response for such a question. The magic lies in the fact that long responses dry up the conversation. The benefit for you is that you won't need to answer any further letters from this particular customer on this particular topic. Fewer letters mean fewer interruptions for you.

The moral here is... Predict any questions that you customer might have on a topic and answer them beforehand.

Case 3: Customer requests an unreasonable feature that you won't be adding

Amy sent you this letter about “Notalicious”:

Hi there, I bought your app a while ago and installed it and it's great, thanks. I'm really missing an important option, I want to be able to have a button to print notes on my iPhone. this is very important for me... it shouldn't be hard to add this kind of button.

can you help me?

You don't want to bloat your software with new features that only one person has requested. However, you never know—one day many people might need note printing.

The problem is that the new feature is important to Amy. You have to be polite, but careful not to promise anything.

How would say to Amy you won't add the feature that is important to her, without disappointing her?

Hi Amy,

Thank you for your purchase. I'm glad that you like “Notalicious” so far.

I understand that it would be very handy to be able to print notes straight from your iPhone. This sounds like a nice thing to have and I have added it to our list of ideas. Thank you for taking the time to share this with me!

When choosing new features to add from the list of ideas, we have to pick the ones which will bring most value to as many customers as possible. We're a really small team with a long list of ideas. Since you're the first person to mention note printing, I have to say that we'll consider adding this feature to "Notalicious" only after we receive a number of similar requests.

By the way, there is another cool thing you can do with "Notalicious": You can share notes! If you haven't tried it out yet, go ahead and download the new update. [Here's an article](#) which covers note sharing in more detail.

Have a fantastic Wednesday!

Before we move on to the template, meet the criticism sandwich:

<http://visual.ly/how-give-constructive-criticism-sandwich>

This is a very popular technique for saying something unpleasant to someone. It's based on the simple fact that each one of us likes being praised.

So, much inspired by the criticism sandwich, I'm using a refusal sandwich here. The basic structure is: *repeat positive customer experience with your product-empathize-refuse-offer a new positive experience with your product*

Template #3: Saying “No” to a customer

Hi <customer_name>,

[Set a positive tone. Remind the customer of their positive experience with your product.] *(For example, If they said “I bought it and it's really great”, you can say “Thank you for your purchase”).*

[Empathize. Show your understanding.]

I understand that it would be very handy to

<perform_action_that_new_feature_will_allow>.

[Say that you like their idea, but don't be excited about it]

This sounds like a nice thing to have *(not “great”, not “awesome”)*. I added it to our list of ideas *(not “list of feature requests”, not “list of future improvements”, not “list of bugs”)*. Thank you for taking the time to share this with me!

[Time to say “No”. Explain why.]

When choosing new features to add from the list of ideas, we have to pick the ones which will bring most value to as many customers as possible. We're a really small team with a long list of ideas. *(Saying that the circumstances force you to do this. Not that you don't want to help the customer.)* Since you're the first person to mention <feature>, I have to say that we'll consider adding this feature to <product_name> only after we receive a number of similar requests. *(Saying: “I'm really sorry that I have to turn you down right now, but I can't promise you anything.” without the negative words: “sorry”, “can't”).*

[Mention other cool relevant feature you have added recently.]

By the way, there is another cool thing you can do with <product_name>: <new_feature>! If you haven't tried it out yet, go ahead and download the new update. Here's an article which covers <new_feature> in more detail.

*(You're shifting the focus to the cool things your software already does.
Trying to offer the customer a new positive experience with your product.)*

[Don't forget to be nice]

Have a fantastic <day_of_the_week>!

<signature>

Why tell the customer you've written down their idea? Because having this feature is *important to them*. Even though you're saying “No”, you still appreciate their idea.

The moral here is... When saying “No”, be careful not to sound like you promise features you won't deliver. Instead, remind the customer of the features they already like and tell them about the new ones they might like.

Case 4: Customer has posted a bad review about you and is now demanding support

Meet James. He's installed “Notalicious”, but it crashed the first time he tried to open it. He posted a nasty review about you on a popular website/message board. Now he's asking for your help:

I bought your software, but it doesn't work!When loaded,only 70% of the screen showed,until it really started,but even after that only 90-95% of the screen was present,but not enough to not be able to put notes in it. Any ideas?

So James sounds quite pissed off. You'll help him, naturally, but you'll also want him to amend his review.

How would you calm James down, so that he will eventually be so happy as to change his review?

Hello James,

I'm sorry to hear that “Notalicious” didn't work for you. I'll be happy to help you resolve any problems that you might have with “Notalicious”.

I will need a little bit more information to find the cause of this. To speed up the resolution of your problem, please, answer these questions for me: [...]

I'll be waiting for your reply, so that I can start working on your issues. Thank you.

Template #4.1: Calm down a disappointed customer

Hello <customer_name>,

[Start with empathy] I'm sorry to hear that <product_name> didn't work for you. *(You can take this further and customize it according to the specific case: "I'm sorry to hear that you weren't able to add new notes in "Notalicious". I understand this must be quite frustrating.")*

[Reassure the customer that they can count on you]

I'll be happy to help you resolve any problems that you might have with <product_name>.

[Ask for more information about the problem. Hint that it's in the customer's best interest to provide you with the necessary information.]

I will need a little bit more information to find the cause of this. To speed up the resolution of your problem, please, answer these questions for me:

<questions>

[If you need credentials for setting up a remote help session, ask for them.]

[Remind the customer that you're waiting for him to take action]

I'll be waiting for your reply, so that I can start working on your issues. Thank you.

Fast forward to the moment when you've already solved the issue. Let's say James isn't the nicest person in the world and he won't even say "Thank you". Then, you have to send him a "ping request" yourself. :)

For the sake of the story, you solved the problem by sending him a hotfix. Here's what you could write:

Hi James,

I was just wondering if that hotfix did the trick for you. Are you still having trouble seeing the entire screen when “Notalicious” is loading?

Template #4.2.: Contacting a customer after solving their issues

Hi <customer_name>,

[Ask if the problem is solved. This is a subtle way to remind the customer that you did something for them.]

I was just wondering if <my_help> did the trick for you.

Are you still having trouble <action_that_bug_prevents> with <product_name>?

<signature>

When he gets back to you and says: “No, it's fine”, it is the time to ask him to change his review:

Hi James,

Thank you for getting back to me. I'm glad that “Notalicious” is working fine now.

If you spot any other bugs, just let me know. I'll be happy to help you any time.

By the way, I noticed that you posted a comment about “Notalicious” on <http://coolmarketplace.com>. If you have a minute, could you, please, mention

in the comments that I helped you solve your problem? I just want to make sure that other people know I'm willing to help when they have issues.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this.

Have a great day!

Template #4.3.: Asking a customer to amend their review

Hi <customer_name>,

[Express your happiness that the problem is solved.]

Thank you for getting back to me. I'm glad that <product_name> is working fine now.

[Reassure the customer that they can count on you]

If you spot any other bugs, just let me know. I'll be happy to help you any time.

[Ask customer to amend his review]

By the way, I noticed that you posted a comment (*don't say "bad" or "negative"*) about <product_name> on <website>. If you have a minute (*because his time is precious*), could you, please, mention in the comments that I helped you solve your problem? I just want to make sure that other people know I'm willing to help when they have issues. (*Asking for sympathy: "Come on, how would YOU feel in my place? I've been nice to you, give me some credit."*)

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this. (*You are thankful, because now you're asking the customer for help.*)

[Be nice]

<signature>

By the way, you can use this approach when you want happy customers to leave a nice review for you. Just ask them for “a minute of their time” after you've done something for them.

The moral here is... Do something for the customer and only then ask them to do something for you in return.

Case 5: Arrogant customer demanding that you call them when you only offer email support

Meet Bill. He works for “Big Guys” Ltd. and they have just bought your software. He sent you the following e-mail:

we bought your tool, but we’re having serious issues with it. I can’t find a phone number anywhere on your website, really frustrated... you’re wasting my time here! I’m waiting for you to call me back asap and rectify the issues.

if you want to work with the big guys, I suggest that you provide a 24/7 helpline, at least...

If you feel like punching something after reading one of these emails, go ahead. Just don't allow your aggression and irritation slip into your response. Violence produces more violence.

Whether “Big Guys” Ltd. will get your special treatment depends on what *you* want out of the deal. If you're after a big contract and you think you can handle them calling all the time, then go ahead and negotiate a custom support contract. However, you generally don't want to deal with this kind of people. They will suck the life out of you and the money may not be worth it.

Regardless of what you decide about offering them exclusive support, why not negotiate working on your terms first?

How do you calmly say to Bill that you will not bend your rules for him?

Here's a possible response:

Hello Bill,

Thank you for purchasing “Bookkeepr”.

I’m sorry to hear that you had issues with it. As our client, you are entitled to technical support, according to the terms of our support service. I’d be happy to help you resolve any problems you might have with “Bookkeepr”.

I appreciate your suggestion about providing phone support. The problem is that we’re a really small team and we just don’t have the human resource to provide 24/7 phone support. If we commit to live support, it has to be done right. We don’t want cheap outsourced support people that won’t be able to help our customers. That’s why our professionals provide assistance via email every Monday–Friday 9A.M.–12P.M.(GMT+1).

To help you solve your problems, I will need a little bit more information: [...]

Thank you for your understanding.

Template #5: Telling customer that you only provide support on your terms

Hello <customer_name>,

[Set a positive tone.]

Thank you for purchasing <product_name>.

[Show your understanding. Say you're sorry for the trouble.]

I'm sorry to hear that you had issues with it.

[Tell the customer he's entitled to support, but on your terms only.]

As our client, you are entitled to technical support, according to the terms of our support service(<link>).

[Reassure the customer that you're willing to help]

I'd be happy to help you resolve any problems you might have with <product_name>.

[Explain why you can't offer phone support]

I appreciate your suggestion about providing phone support. The problem is that we're a really small team and we just don't have the human resource (*trying to speak manager language here*) to provide 24/7 phone support. If we commit to live support, it has to be done right. We don't want cheap outsourced support people that won't be able to help our customers. (*"We only want the best for you as customers."*) That's why our professionals provide assistance via email during <business_hours> (<time-zone>). (*Saying: "What I'm offering is much better. I do want the best for you."*)

[Start troubleshooting]

To help you solve your problems, I will need a little bit more information: <questions>

[Assume the customer will sympathize.]

Thank you for your understanding.

If the customer becomes more arrogant and demanding or requests a refund, I'd advise you to just let them go. You don't need toxic customers.

The moral here is... Always stick to your guns. Even if you're considering signing a custom support contract, try to negotiate working on your terms first.

Thank you again for downloading and using “**5 Template Responses to Crazy Customer Letters**”. I hope the examples and templates in this ebook will help you crack your crazy customer cases.

As I said in the opening letter, these are expressions and phrases that **I use with success** daily.

I look forward to hearing from you as you use this resource!



Cheers,
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