Title:
Providing Customer Support To Your Hosting Clients

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Summary:
I have said in some of my other articles that a hosting company needs to provide good customer service to succeed. From past experience I know how annoying it can be for a client if their host doesn't have a good support system in place. Many clients will expect fast replies to their support questions, and if you cannot supply this you may start to lose clients.

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Article Body:
I have said in some of my other articles that a hosting company needs to provide good customer service to succeed. From past experience I know how annoying it can be for a client if their host doesn't have a good support system in place. Many clients will expect fast replies to their support questions, and if you cannot supply this you may start to lose clients.

For a hosting company to be successful, they must be able to attract new clients to their service and keep their old ones. A host can build a large customer base in a few months, the hard job is keeping their clients.

The Types of Support Services

There are many different ways a host can offer customer support to their clients, I have listed just a few below:

Email Support
Telephone
Support Desk
Live Chat
Knowledge Base

Many hosts now offer 24/7 support as well, any new host should consider offering

customer support around the clock, it can cost a lot to run this type of support service, however many clients do expect 24 hour support.

Email Support

This is a basic support system using emails, it can be a slow form of communication if the host or customer only checks their email inbox every hour for example. I would recommend providing an email address which clients can use to contact the support staff.

Telephone

Many hosting companies do offer phone support, however not all clients will use this method to contact the host. If the host can answer the phone for every call this can be a very quick method for answering clients' questions. The costs associated with telephone support can be relatively low, if no free phone number is provided. This type of support isn't necessary if the host provides other effective methods of contact.

Support Desk

I would recommend any new host to invest in a support desk, it can combine email support, FAQ (frequently asked questions), knowledge base, articles, and also allows for an online record of all replies.

Basically when a client needs support, they log into the support desk, create a ticket and when a support representative is free they can access the question (ticket) and reply online. Once the reply has been processed by the system, the client usually receives an email.

The advantages of a support desk means that a host can usually add unlimited departments and support staff, which means the host company can use outsourced support options, where another company can answer the support questions whenever needed.

The software required can range from nothing up to around $1000, many do have the same features. I would recommend that a host provides a support desk, but before they invest in one, shop around and ensure that they purchase one right for their needs.

Live Chat

Nearly every internet users has used some form of instant messenger service,

this is what live chat is, it provides a platform for the support staff and customer to talk over the internet in real-time.

This is a very useful support service, and can be low in cost as well. There are many live chat services around, again I would recommend shopping around.

Knowledge Base

You can provide a question and answers section online for the most commonly answered questions. This can stop different clients contacting the support desk with the same questions, which can be time consuming and quite frankly annoying.

I would recommend provide this type of support, as it will save time and money in the long run and can be very easy to set-up.

Forum

A online forum provide a platform for your customers to contact each other, and ask questions. Providing a forum can reduce the number of support requests you receive each month because another member may be able to offer help.

An example of an online hosting forum is Web Hosting Complete (http://www.whcomplete.com), this forum offers free web hosting tutorials and articles to it's members. Web Hosting Complete does not sell hosting services it's self, so if you as a host and are not prepared to offer a forum to your clients you should consider linking to a site like this. As the forum site does not sell hosting there shouldn't be much competition and you benefit from the site because they are providing free support to your clients.

Providing good customer support can cost money, however I believe that this is well worth as happy customers will generate more income.