



The Ultimate Guide to Customer Service 101

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Overview

Customer service.

For you, those words might refer to the name of your team or department. But to customers, the worst "customer service" might remind them of hours wasted waiting on hold, repeating information to representatives, and not getting their problems resolved.

And that's because many customer service teams aren't actually working to serve their customers. Instead, customer service organizations treat cases like numbers, and not like people. Customers are forced to use long forms and complicated phone trees to get the help they need, instead of using the communication channels they prefer.

And worst of all, customers aren't empowered to succeed -- instead, they receive one-off answers to questions, and not the tools to develop a growth strategy.

The dire state of modern customer service is a real shame -- because as it turns out, helping your customers succeed helps your company, too. In fact, in a recent HubSpot Research survey, they found that companies that prioritized customer success were also growing in revenue. And successful companies are happy customers -- and happy customers grow your business faster than sales and marketing by telling friends and family and, eventually, referring new, loyalty customers. And customer happiness starts with customer service.

What Does Customer Service Mean?

Simply put, customer service is helping customers solve problems, teaching them how to use products, and answering questions.

The definition is in the name of the concept -- customer service is about serving the needs of customers. And customer service can take many forms -- from troubleshooting a product installation to downloading software to processing a purchase return.

In most customer service interactions, a customer reaches out to a company to make a request, ask a question, or note a complaint, and a customer service representative (or their team) works quickly to offer support, expertise, and help.

The quality of a company's customer service -- good or bad -- can play a huge role in the company's success. Happy customers spend more money and refer their friends and family members to companies that help them succeed -- and dedicated customer service plays a critical role in customer happiness.



What Does Customer Service Mean?

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On the flip side of the coin, unhappy customers with bad experiences spread the word even further among their network, and could actually cost you customers and impact your reputation, both online and in person. Just look at how many of this Yelp user's friends could see this negative review of a Comcast store:



San Francisco, CA

105 friends

26 reviews

13 photos

- Share review
- Embed review
- Compliment
- Send message
- Follow Kat C.

★★★★★ 7/30/2017

Advice for Store Manager:

Beautiful store, but it would help to either staff the front desk so people know to check in or make your check in display area BIGGER so people can actually see it!

Efficiency counts, and is often more important than the service aspect.

Another thought ; training your staff to say " hello" before asking a customer if they " signed in yet, and to put your name on the list before we call you". Customer service 101. Greetings come first.

Seriously so irritated with Comcast/ Xfinity ripping people off with their price increases and promotional pricing BS. And then as icing on the cake, make someone wait forever to return an item. This is the gratitude one gets with being a Comcast customer for 11 years.

If you think customer service (or customer support) are at odds with customer success, think again -- building a relationship with customers by providing excellent service is a critical building block of helping customers succeed.

One of the biggest differences? While customer service is typically reactive, customer success is proactive -- wherein customer success managers reach out to work with customers on strategy and goal-setting, compared to customer service representatives responding to individual problems and troubleshooting. But more on that later.

Types of Customer Service

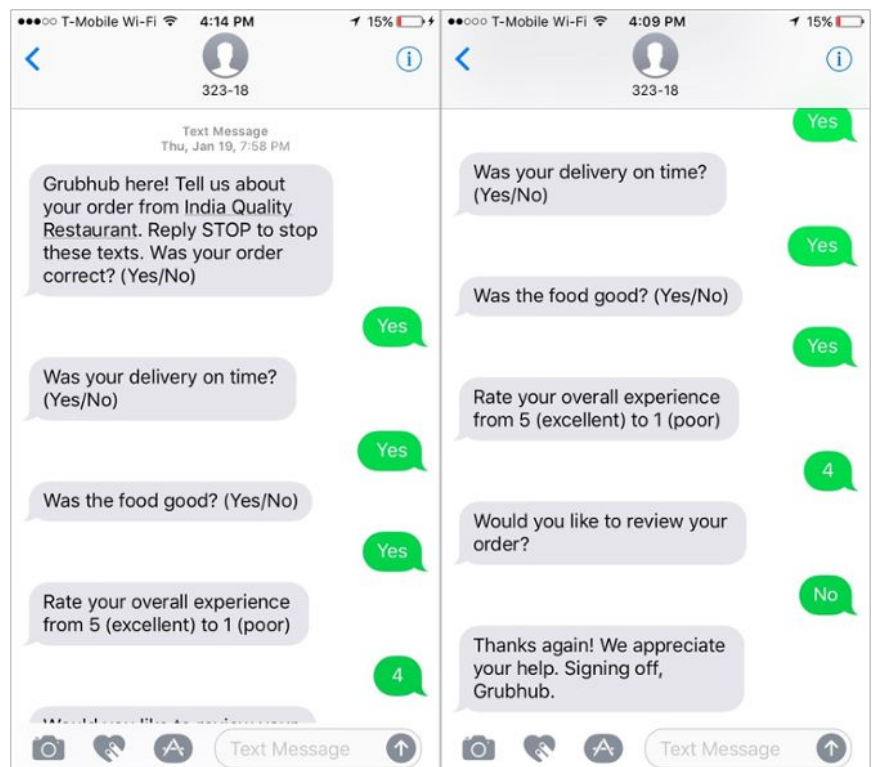
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Phone

Many organizations offer customer service primarily through phone interactions. Customers call a hotline, enter a queue, and a customer service representative picks up the phone. [Forrester](#) found that phone-based customer service is decreasing in popularity, though -- and that phone service is viewed as an escalation of another channel, such as email or web-based service.

Texts

Twilio surveyed consumers to learn about their messaging habits, and while [90% of respondents](#) said they wanted to use messaging with companies -- via texting on their phones or messaging apps (more on those below) -- only 48% of businesses were equipped to reach customers via messaging. Customers want to connect with businesses for things like order confirmations, reminders, status updates, surveys, and coupons -- and that's partly because people keep messaging app push notifications turned on -- because they're already using the platforms every day.

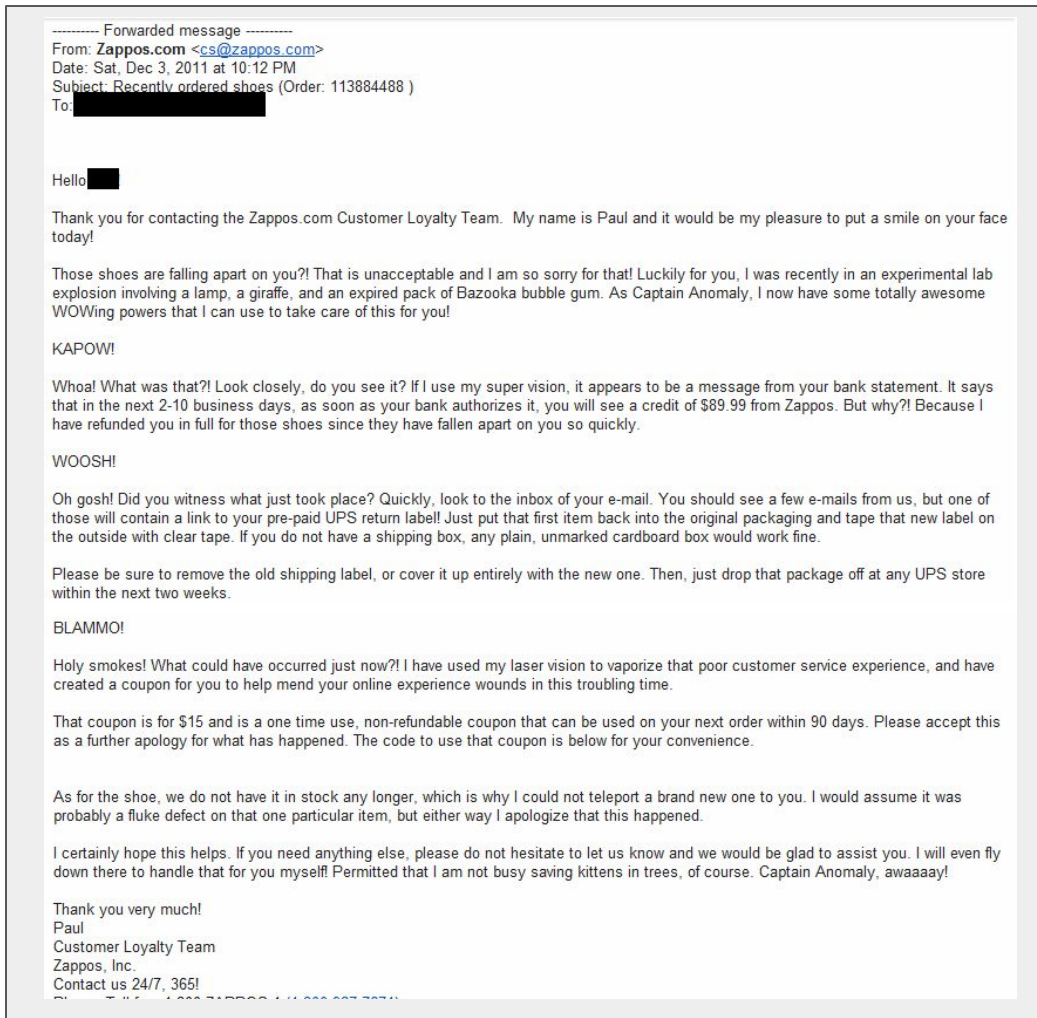


GrubHub uses [SMS messaging](#) to glean [customer feedback](#) on recent orders and its mobile app.

Types of Customer Service

Email

A lot of customer service is still requested and delivered via email -- where it's still possible to offer a human touch, even over a computer. In fact, Twilio found that email was the second most preferred method of customer service communication for all ages -- which is perhaps a reflection of the time-saving capabilities of submitting requests on your own time, without having to wait on hold.



Zappos is well-known for its commitment to excellent customer service, but this email example might take the cake. It's not replicable for every single customer query imaginable, but the rep is clearly committed to delivering service -- and making the customer happy in the process.

Types of Customer Service

Self-Service

Many customers are now turning to DIY customer service methods to get the information they need quickly and easily without having to hop on the phone or wait for an email reply. And in response, businesses are developing [knowledge bases](#), where they publish articles and videos that explain how to use products and services so customers can seek out touchless customer service whenever they need it.

HubSpot Academy's Knowledge Base is full of articles and videos that explain step-by-step processes for using HubSpot software. And for bigger-picture learning and training, HubSpot Academy offers [free certifications](#) and trainings to learn about the inbound methodology and specific verticals within the software.

The screenshot displays the HubSpot Knowledge Base interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with various menu items: Contacts, Conversations, Marketing, Sales, Service, Automation, and Reports. On the right side of the navigation bar, there are icons for search, settings, notifications, and a user profile for 'HubSpot Education Program'. Below the navigation bar, the main heading is 'Knowledge'. To the right of the heading, there are two buttons: 'Organize articles' and 'Create article'. Below the heading, there are two tabs: 'Manage' (selected) and 'Analyze'. On the left side, there is a sidebar with 'All articles' selected, and three radio buttons for 'Draft', 'Published', and 'Archived'. The main content area shows a list of articles with columns for 'NAME', 'VIEWS', 'FEEDBACK', 'SENTIMENT', and 'LAST UPDATED'. The articles listed are:

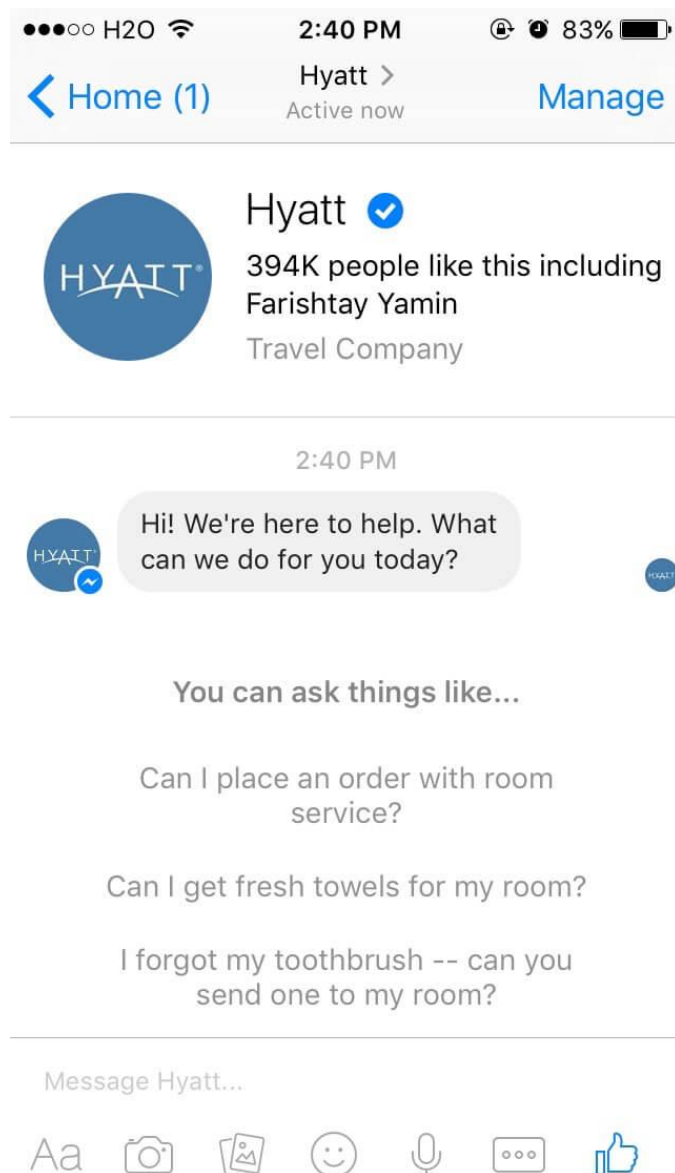
NAME	VIEWS	FEEDBACK	SENTIMENT	LAST UPDATED
<input type="checkbox"/> How do I join HubSpot's Education Partner Program? ● Draft				Apr 24, 2018 8:43 AM Isaac Moche
<input type="checkbox"/> Which certifications does HubSpot offer? ● Published				Apr 23, 2018 4:36 PM Isaac Moche
<input type="checkbox"/> How do I change the email address associated with my Hub? ● Published				Apr 23, 2018 3:58 PM Isaac Moche
<input type="checkbox"/> Help and support for Education Partners ● Published				Apr 13, 2018 12:33 PM

Types of Customer Service

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Messaging

Messaging is quickly becoming the most popular way to seek out customer service help -- and this can take many forms, including text-based messaging (discussed above), messaging apps, and direct messaging on social media (more on that below).



Messaging apps boast more than [5 billion users worldwide](#), and businesses are starting to rely on them to offer quick and easy content distribution and customer service to audiences.

HubSpot uses Facebook Messenger to distribute blog posts like this one, but other businesses are using these apps to make it easier for customers to make purchases and get the help they need -- in apps they're already using to communicate with friends and family.

Types of Customer Service

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Social Media

Customer service on social media is another up-and-coming way businesses are communicating with customers more often, and for good reason -- nearly 80% of the consumers we surveyed have shared positive experiences with companies, and 24% recommended companies on social media.

Customers can get fast and easy responses to questions they have on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, and social media gives businesses permission to be a little more fun, too. Some brands even create specific accounts for customer support. Yelp Eat24 uses Twitter to offer great customer service -- while still making customers laugh in the process.



Replying to @thegeek_chic

Perfect! You should have an email from us w/instructions on how to use your credit, but if you need anything, don't hesitate to buzz us :)

Types of Customer Service

Live Chat

Live chat is another option for [offering speedy customer service without forcing your customers to wait on the phone](#) -- and it can be operated by humans or robots -- specifically, chatbots.

Live chat widgets can launch on company web pages to offer instant customer support and service -- in another easy way that might be more convenient for your customers. They require full-time dedication to operate successfully, so some businesses turn to chatbots to operate them more affordably -- like [CenturyLink did when it employed Conversica's Angie](#) to start communicating with new leads to save time for sales and customer service staff.

The screenshot shows a CRM dashboard with a navigation bar at the top containing: Contacts, Conversations, Marketing, Sales, Service, Automation, and Reports. On the right side of the navigation bar are search, settings, notifications, and a user profile icon. Below the navigation bar, there is a breadcrumb link '< Back to Inboxes' and a title 'Inbox' with an edit icon. A left sidebar contains a list of channels: 'Inbox', 'Team members', 'Slack', 'Channels', 'Email', and 'Chat' (which is highlighted). The main content area is titled 'Targeted messages' and features three buttons: 'Edit appearance', 'Edit chat availability', and 'Create targeted message'. Below these buttons is a table with the following data:

STATUS	NAME	DATE CREATED
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Pricing Page Live Chat Message	07/30/2018
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Homepage Live Chat Message	06/21/2018

Examples of Good Customer Service

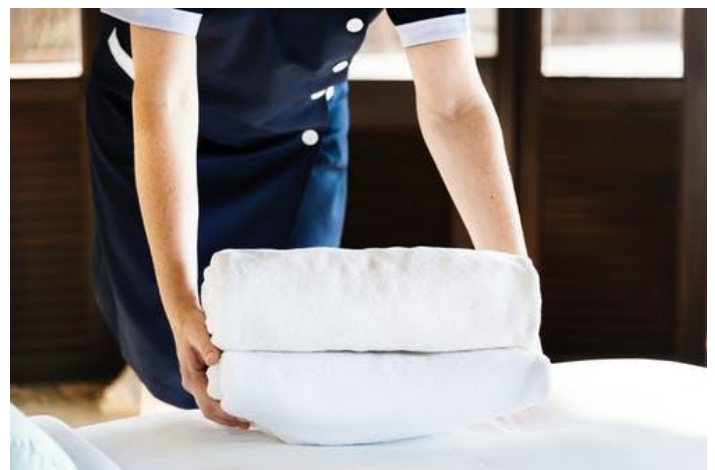
For every bad customer service experience you can think of, you might also be able to recall a representative or a business that knocked your socks off by going out of the way to solve problems for you.

And you might think that spending additional time on customer issues won't have a meaningful payoff for you -- but as we've now learned, happy customers bring better results to your business, so it's worth creating a team culture of dedication and extreme helpfulness.

Check out these [good customer service examples](#) from a few more big brands -- along with actionable takeaways you can bring back to your team. These businesses are within different industries, but all offer employees a tremendous deal of autonomy and resources to go the extra mile to solve customer problems.

One such example, The Ritz-Carlton Company, gives each of its employees the autonomy to spend up to \$2,000 solving customer problems -- without needing to seek approval. And while that whopping amount might be over budget for your organization, the greater reason why this company has created such a policy bears remembering for every customer service team.

The Ritz-Carlton prizes employee engagement -- because it believes engagement is the key to cultivating employees who are dedicated to improving customer engagement, too.



Customer Service Quotes from Leaders

Some of the most well-known business success stories can be credited to great customer service -- at least partly.

After all, attracting new customers with a fantastic product or service is only half of the journey -- a big part of revenue growth is keeping existing customers so they come back and purchase from you again and again.

As it turns out, leaders of big brands like Intuit, Pepsico, and Zappos have a lot of wisdom to offer when it comes to customer service -- and that's because they doubled down on it and made it their mission.

Take Amazon, for example, one of the world's biggest companies whose CEO, Jeff Bezos, has been trying to optimize the customer service experience for a long time by making shopping easier. Bezos advocates for "trying to do hard things well" as the cornerstone for improving brand reputation and establishing a positive brand identity. Now, Amazon is known as the quickest and easiest way to buy things you need -- it's as simple as that.

Read the rest of these [customer service quotes](#) to inspire yourself -- and your team -- to give the best service possible, and to see the bigger picture for your business.

Conclusion



Today, customers are in control. Their expectations for service are high, and it's minimally painless and virtually cost-free to switch to your competitors if you aren't meeting them. And the old customer service playbook isn't working. Successful customers can grow your business faster than sales and marketing, but in order to get there, customer service professionals must take on a new, more human approach to service.

Interested in learning more about how our services can help your service and support teams?

[Book a Consultation](#)