

**How to communicate with customers.**

Going on a first date is incredibly nerve-wracking. You spend a long time picking out the right clothes. You’re double-checking the meeting place and time. Your heart’s racing, and you’re worried about making a good impression. You want to accurately represent yourself and make sure your date doesn’t get the wrong idea.

The same goes for customer support. Each interaction is a chance to represent—or misrepresent—your product and your brand.

But just like the subtleties of dating, it’s not just what you say, it’s also how you say it. Few people take customer service as seriously as they do a first date—even though there’s sometimes even more on the line.

*As business mogul Sam Walton says, “There is only one boss—the customer. And he can fire everybody in the company from the chairman on down, simply by spending his money somewhere else.”*

**Mind Your Manners**

. It starts with being warm and polite, “Approach customers with a personalized warm welcome,” and ends on a positive note, “End with a fond farewell and an invitation to return.”

Customer service starts with what your mother taught you—mind your manners! That means greeting people with a “hello,” saying “nice to meet you,” “thank you,” and “goodbye.” It seems obvious, but when you’re communicating with your customers through a computer screen all day, it’s easy to forget there’s a human being on the other end.

To keep yourself in check, use your customer’s name in all your interactions with them. It’s a subtle reminder to yourself that you’re talking to a person, and not a computer, and it’ll give your emails a personal touch.

Every time a customer reaches out to you, they’re giving you some small insights into how you can improve our service and product. It’s extremely valuable information that you wouldn’t have had otherwise—don’t be afraid to say “thanks!” and be eager about talking to them again.

**Don’t Use Jargon**

To really communicate with customers, talk just like you do in real life. When you run into someone on the street, you don’t “apologize for the inconvenience,” you just say “I’m sorry about that.” Similarly, you don’t say “we thank you for your patience,” you say, “thanks for waiting.” The phrases packed with those fancy words are associated with automated, impersonal interactions.

This also means you should talk in your customers’ vocabulary. We use “industry lingo” internally, but it might not be comprehensible to our customers. Remember that your job is to solve the customer’s problem as swiftly as possible and to offer them a suitable solution. Using jargon that your customers can’t understand won’t clarify anything and can come across as condescending.

**Keep It Positive**

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Be conscious of your word choices. Don’t make it sound like you’re I pointing out the obvious, or that they made a mistake for reaching out to you and not figuring out the issue on their own. That will discourage them from asking support questions in the future.

That means avoiding negative language like “that isn’t possible,” “we can’t,” “we don’t,” “but,” or an outright “no.” This is especially difficult when customers are requesting features that aren’t quite in the game plan yet. Try replacing “not at this time,” with “I’ll talk about your request with the team,” “we’re working on it,” or “it will be available soon.”

You want to provide solutions for your customers, not disappoint them and push them away.



**Know When to Say Sorry**



One of America’s most famous retail tycoons, Harry Selfridges, once said **“honesty always pays.”** In his book, [*The Romance of Commerce*](https://books.google.com/books?id=KP1CAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA8&lpg=PA8&dq=honesty+always+pays+harry+gordon+selfridge&source=bl&ots=M-Se4e9kT5&sig=8R31QNzb6DOgNjv936SMn0CYPDU&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwigy6Ph3anRAhXBx4MKHZGCBkwQ6AEIKDAC#v=onepage&q=honesty%20always%20pays%20harry%20gordon%20selfridge&f=false), he wrote that a business cannot be built on honesty alone, but it’s one of the most important values that customers will always take notice of.

There’s nothing more frustrating to a customer than when we don’t own up to a mistake. It’s bound to happen once in a while, and when it does, the best way to smooth things over is to give a personal apology.

Make your response more sincere by making your empathy for their situation explicit. Instead of just saying “we’ll look into the issue,” try adding “I understand how frustrating this can be.” This lets your customer know that you’re on the same team, you’re working to fix the problem for everyone.

[**67% of customers leave a brand after a bad experience**](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/vala-afshar/50-important-customer-exp_b_8295772.html)**.** If they’re helped by a vague and unsympathetic support team member, they’re basically being escorted away from the product.

**Don’t Ghost Them**

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No one likes to be ignored, especially our customers.

Some of our customer support issues aren’t going to be solved in one go. You often have to follow up to update them on a fix or a feature request. But you should be sure to follow up on all your customer’s problems to make sure their issue doesn’t come up again. Set yourself reminders in your calendar or in your email workflow to follow up with every customer a week or two after your conversation.

A friendly check-in to make sure everything is going smoothly lets the customer know that you’re always available to help with a fix—even if it’s one they’ve already reached out about.

***You’re Not Perfect, but At Least you’re Human***

You’re not going to make every single customer happy, just like you’re not going to nail every first date. We’re only human, so something—whether it’s a bug in the product, or an email that falls through the cracks—is bound to get screwed up.

At the end of the day, though, people don’t typically remember what went wrong—they remember how they were treated. Your greatest asset as a customer support person is that you’re human, so don’t be afraid to show it.

Link to Assessment

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScp2xAwLsbAVZXe_-jxR9CTir5bQZBFDIViLtBptSm4z9vUMw/viewform?usp=sf_link>