



How to Write Great E-mail to Improve Customer Support

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Presentation Overview

- Is poorly written customer service e-mail really a problem?
- What are the traits of excellent customer service e-mail?
- How do you assess customer service staff's e-mail writing skills?
- How do you train customer service staff to write better e-mail?



Is poorly written customer service e-mail really a problem?

For Customers:

- What writing problems do you see in these e-mails?
- What effects did these problems have on the customer?
- What did the customer probably do after receiving these e-mails?



Review sample CS e-mails

- Sample 1: “PROBLEM – Wrong ZIP CODE on brochures”
- Sample 2: “Sellers questions”
- Sample 3: “Need explanation of bill”



Sample 1: “Problem – Wrong ZIP CODE on brochures”

For Customers:

- What writing problems do you see in this e-mail?
- What effects did these problems have on the customer?
- What did the customer probably do after receiving this e-mails?



Sample 2: “Sellers questions”

For Customers:

- What writing problems do you see in this e-mail?
- What effects did these problems have on the customer?
- What did the customer probably do after receiving this e-mails?



Sample 3: “Need explanation of bill”

For Customers:

- What writing problems do you see in this e-mail?
- What effects did these problems have on the customer?
- What did the customer probably do after receiving this e-mails?



Is poorly written customer service e-mail really a problem?

For Customers Service Providers:

- What negative outcome would these poorly written e-mails have on the company?
- What negative outcome would these poorly written e-mails have on you, the customer service department?



What are the traits of excellent customer service e-mail?

- Read Sample 4: "Pants, size 6?"
- How is this an example of an excellent customer service e-mail?



What are the traits of excellent customer service e-mail?

1. Use a helpful subject line.
2. Respond promptly.
3. Personalize the response.
4. Answer all the customer's questions.
5. Make it possible for the customer to take action.
6. Solve the customer's problem.
7. Use a polite, positive, and personal tone.
8. Write clearly and simply.
9. Proofread for mechanical errors.
10. Make it easy for the customer to contact you.



Do Help Desk agents need writing skills to get good jobs?

- Adaptec - Help Desk/Support/Call Center: "Provide in-depth telephone and e-mail customer support...Must have excellent oral and written communication skills."
- Eden Systems: "...Excellent customer service and support skills Strong communication, problem solving, and technical writing skills..."
- Infonet: "...Excellent written communication skills for composing internal and external emails as well as updating ticket logs..."



How do you assess customer service staff's e-mail writing skills?

1. Review sample e-mails to see whether writer has “big picture” strengths
 - Read Sample 5: “Do you offer a credit card for businesses?” and Sample 6: “Paying for Transcript.”
 - Which writer has “big picture” writing strengths?



How would you evaluate the writing skills of this help desk writer ?

Read Sample 7: "Getting error message when I send e-mail"

- Does this writer have "big picture" writing strengths?
- Does this writer have "small picture" writing strengths?
- How would you improve the writing of this message?
- How would you help this writer build his writing skills?



How do you assess customer service staff's e-mail writing skills?

2. Use open-ended scenario-based writing assessments in hiring
 - Provide an authentic customer question and a fact sheet (product knowledge)
 - Use a checklist to rate the e-mail answer



How do you assess customer service staff's e-mail writing skills?

3. Use a standardized writing assessment (test) developed in-house or purchased. The test must:
 - Be work-related not school-related
 - Assess applied, not abstract, knowledge
 - Assess writing skills, not product knowledge



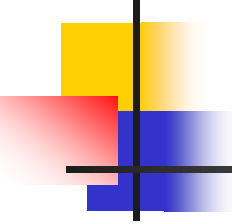
How do you assess customer service staff's e-mail writing skills?

4. Form an e-mail quality review panel to assess CS staff's writing skills
 - Panel members from all levels/parts of the company: CS, marketing, communications,
 - Set "big picture" and "small picture" quality standards and rating system before review
 - Gather a sample set of e-mails. Rate writing problems in terms of frequency and severity



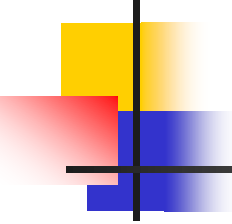
What do you believe?

Are excellent writers born or made?



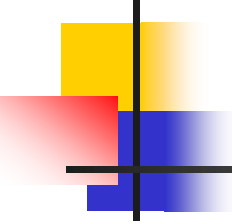
How do you train agents to write better e-mail?

- What writing skills must the training cover?
- What resources should you provide to support CS e-mail writing training?



What writing skills must the training cover?

- “Big picture” writing skills: thinking skills
 - Find the customer’s question(s)
 - Solve the customer’s problem
 - Organize a complete response
 - Integrate “canned” answers into “handmade” answers



What writing skills must the training cover?

- “Small picture” writing skills: basic writing proficiency
 - Spelling and word usage
 - Punctuation
 - Clear, concise sentences
 - Polite, positive, and personal tone
 - Write for global customers



What resources should you provide to support CS e-mail writing training?

- Self-paced writing improvement tools
- Coaching
- E-mail writing standards and guidelines
- Models of excellent e-mail responses to customers



Questions? Comments?

Thanks very much!



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