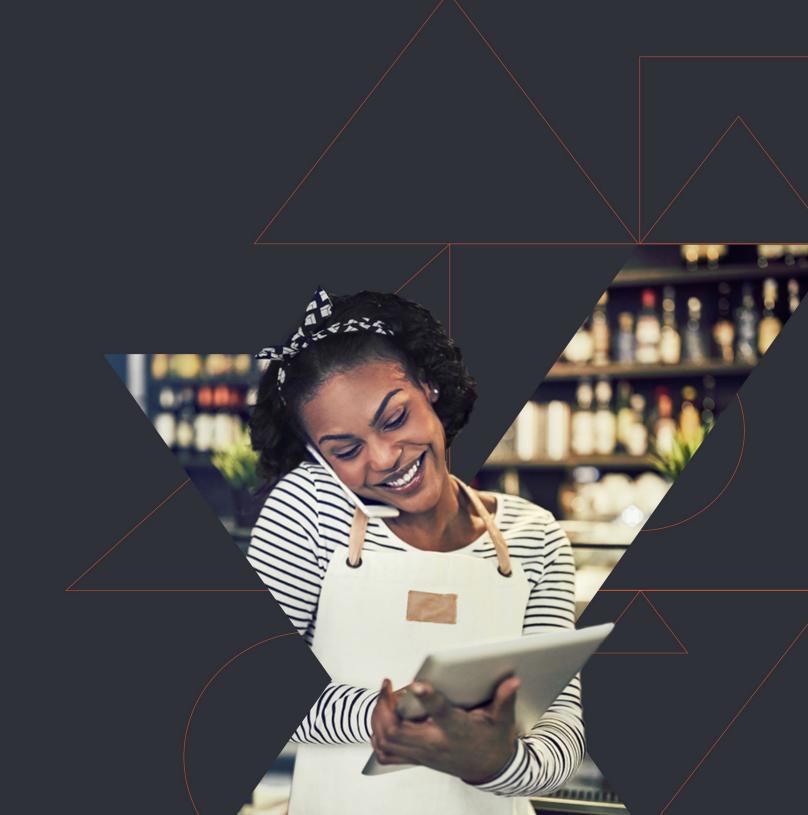
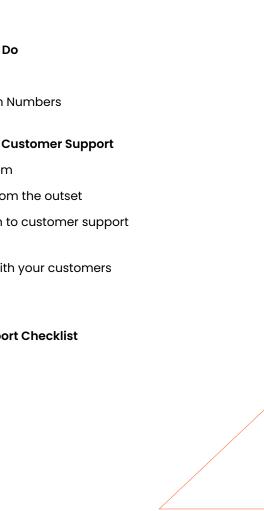
## xsellco

Ultimate Guide
To eCommerce
Customer Support



## IndeX

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#### INTRODUCTION

# The Importance of Providing Outstanding eCommerce Customer Support

Great customer service is the foundation of every successful business and this is even more pronounced in eCommerce. Get it right and you'll receive five star ratings and positive reviews. These are rocket fuel for the visibility of your listings on Amazon and eBay. Outstanding support makes the shopping experience more enjoyable, builds customer confidence and can lead to shoppers becoming loyal and long-term champions of your brand. According to research, 67% of customers will pay more for a company that provides them with excellent customer service.

Small issues left unresolved can escalate and have serious consequences for your reputation and seller rating. As an online shopper, there is nothing more frustrating than being unable to get clear answers regarding your order, being promised one thing and getting another, or otherwise being left in the shade. Oftentimes, you only get one shot at customer support.

33% of Americans say they'll consider switching companies after just a single instance of poor service. The stakes are high and the opportunities are many. After all, customer support is the one, true connection that exists between the customer and business. It is an integral part of the online shopping experience.

The opposite is also true.

## 67%

of customers will pay **more** for a company with excellent customer service.



33%

of Americans say they'll consider switching companies after just a single instance of poor service.





**75**%

of online shoppers expect help within five minutes.

**McKinsey** 

# COVID-19, Shifting The Focus to Online Selling

The COVID-19 crisis is unlike anything the world has ever seen.

Societal trends related to how we work, how we learn, how we shop, and how we use technology are changing rapidly.



## There is no doubt that COVID-19 is having a seismic effect on the eCommerce industry.



In early 2020, when lockdowns were put in place worldwide, the landscape changed entirely. High street retailers were forced to close and people were encouraged to stay indoors.

Almost overnight, online shopping became the only game in town. Many businesses had to switch to online selling in order to save their business. Those that weren't online already set up webstores or added their products to marketplaces such as Amazon or eBay. Other hybrid companies, which had both an offline and online presence, adjusted their focus to online-only.

One of the ways that people have responded to this great period of uncertainty, are huge changes in shopping behaviour. From bulk-buying to online shopping, people have changed what they're buying, when, and how. The surge in online shopping has been dramatic and isn't showing any signs of slowing.

### The World of eCommerce is in Flux



In the USA, according to data published by the U.S. Census Bureau, consumers spent \$211.5 billion during the second quarter of this year on eCommerce, **up 31.8%** quarter over quarter.



The UK has turned into a nation of online shoppers since the coronavirus lockdown. A study carried out by Waitrose showed that 77% of people now do at least some of their grocery shopping online.



In Japan, the country is running out of credit card numbers amid the **online shopping boom**.



The Irish division of European delivery firm DPD averaged
730,000 parcel deliveries per week at the height of the countries' lockdown restrictions in May and June, double what would usually be delivered.



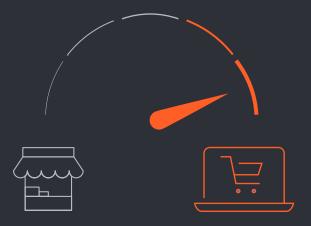
In the first six months of the year, consumers spent \$347.26 billion online with U.S. retailers, **up 30.1%** from \$266.84 billion for the same period in 2019, according to the latest Digital Commerce 360 analysis of the U.S.



According to new data from IBM's U.S. Retail Index, the pandemic has accelerated the shift away from physical stores to digital shopping by roughly five years.



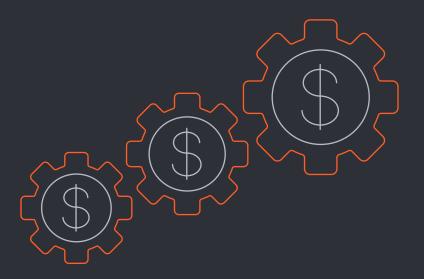
Google Shopping now has free listings worldwide. Just in time for Q4, Google unlocked free product listings, <u>a real shot across the bow for Amazon</u>, and a huge opportunity for webstore sellers to win back customers for onsite sales.



The pandemic has accelerated the shift away from physical stores to digital shopping by roughly five years.

IBM's U.S. Retail Index





Gearing up for the most lucrative - and competitive - shopping period in eCommerce history.

#### THE WORLD OF ECOMMERCE IS IN FLUX

We've seen how the global pandemic has accelerated the move to online shopping. However, the busiest period is yet to come. Prime Day, Black Friday, Cyber Monday, and Christmas are just around the corner. According to a trend report from Bazaarvoice,

**85**%

of retailers believe online sales will increase this holiday season compared to last.

There is also the distinct possibility that COVID-19 restrictions could be tightened at any time. This could, once again, impact online sales.

If sales from earlier in the year are anything to go by, 2020's holiday season is set to be the most lucrative - and competitive - shopping period in e-commerce history. In fact, eCommerce sales in 2020 have already exceeded Black Friday and Cyber Monday figures in 2019. For example, eCommerce shopping levels during COVID-19 (April to May 2020) were

## 7% higher

than what retailers saw during the 2019 holiday season (November to December 2019).

With COVID-19 driving online purchasing to an alltime high, managing customer support demands will be of utmost important.



## Almost half of US customers expect to shop on Prime Day

Coresight

#### THE WORLD OF ECOMMERCE IS IN FLUX

Speaking at the September 2020 'Think Retail on Air' virtual conference, Justin de Graaf, Google's Head of Research and Insights cited FOGO—fear of going out—as a major influencer on consumer behaviour. Citing the results of Google's Ipsos COVID-19 survey, he observed that:

"17% of US holiday shoppers say they won't be shopping in stores this upcoming season."



17%

of US holiday shoppers say they **won't** be shopping in stores this upcoming season.

## Spotlight on Google Shopping Customer Support

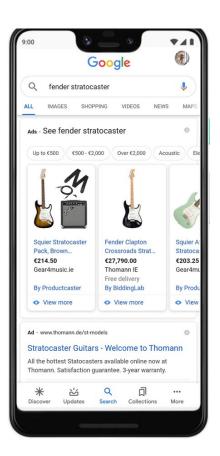
In Oct 2020, Google unlocked the benefits of the organic Shopping Tab to sellers worldwide in a critical move for online webstore sellers. (It was made free to US sellers in April)



Right now, there are NO FEES on Google.

That is a leg up for your business. I'd shout it from the rooftops, get your products listed on Google, because they still have 80% of all search volume.

**Chad Rubin**, CEO of Skubana - a multichannel eCommerce software for back-office operations.



By putting the start of the shopping cart into search itself, Google is giving consumers the product comparison experience they appreciate on third-party marketplaces, while simultaneously driving traffic direct (and sales) to seller sites.

This move comes at an inflection point in eCommerce where the global landscape is transforming rapidly, driven by crisis, overwhelming societal and behavioural change, and accelerated by mass adoption of virtual experiences.

Google Shopping drives traffic directly to your own webstore, where you have much greater access and visibility of your customer support channel. You are also one step closer to building a direct to consumer relationship, where you can surprise and delight your customer with outstanding service and support.

# An Opportunity That Cannot Be Ignored

## PROVIDING YOUR CUSTOMERS WITH OUTSTANDING SUPPORT

As we've outlined above, COVID-19 has led to a phenomenal rise in online shopping. This alone would place pressure on online retailers. However, there is another very important factor to take into account - uncertainty. These unprecedented times have created a great deal of uncertainty and confusion for online shoppers. Many countries are experiencing varying levels of interruption. They are also in different stages in their fight against the infection.



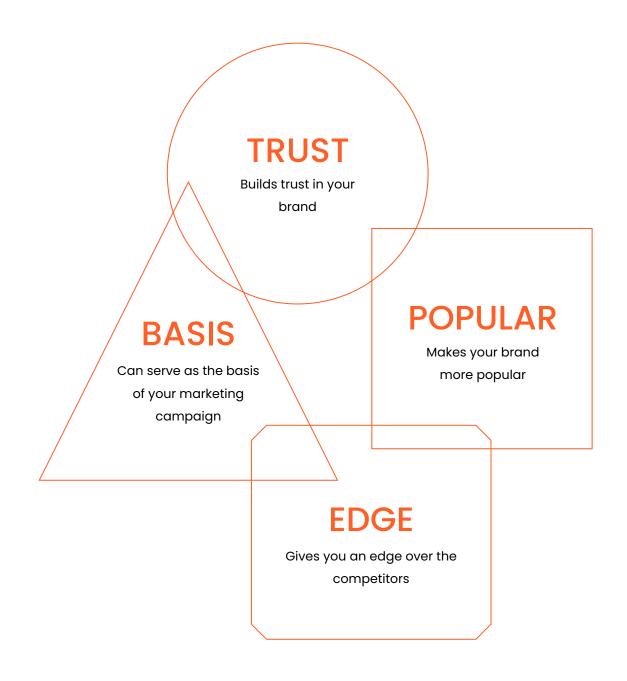
Around the world, customers have been left uncertain. It is hard to tell which sellers are operating at full capacity. Customers don't know if they should expect delays or how badly supply chains have been affected. If an order is running late, is there a good chance they won't arrive at all? After a difficult year, shoppers can be forgiven for fearing the worst. All this unpredictability has led to a huge surge in customer support queries.

The increase in demand in customer support shouldn't be seen as a negative thing. Instead, it should be taken as a great opportunity to stand out. With each customer support query, you are given the chance to meet and exceed expectations. You can reassure customers, build confidence and create long-time followers. Satisfactory customer service interactions can generate all important positive reviews. That is why every query should be treated as a sales opportunity.

AN OPPORTUNITY THAT CANNOT BE IGNORED

<u>Easyship</u>, global shipping software for eCommerce outlined

4 main benefits of implementing customer service into eCommerce:







67%

of customers will pay more for a company that provides them with excellent customer service

<u>SalesForce</u>

# Marketplace vs Webstore Customer Support

Is there a difference between best-in-class customer support on a webstore versus marketplaces? Yes, there certainly is.

Here are some key differences, and what they mean for your support best practice.

At your own webstore, you own the customer relationship.

This means you have direct access to customer data and can build a richer customer relationship from day one. If you commit to outstanding customer service SLAs, you have the opportunity to build an advocate and cheerleader for your brand and your store. Own webstores might include BigCommerce, Shopify, Magento or WooCommerce.

## Marketplaces provide a ready made audience. For a price!

Marketplaces like Amazon, eBay, Walmart and etsy each have their own loyal customer base where people return to make repeated purchases.

Marketplaces also have the ability to offer a broader range of payment options:

In a recent study, **42%** of online shoppers said that the types of payment options offered are a factor that influences them when deciding where to shop digitally.

- Paypal

With marketplace selling, the key strategic focus of your customer support channel is to gain competitive positioning relative to product searches. That means, for example, actively leveraging support tools to drive enough feedback and reviews to win the buy box on Amazon. With marketplace support, it's all about those seller scores, and support is the means to win those.

You'll need to invest in meeting and exceeding SLAs. Beware of selling into global markets if you're unable to respond in the customer's mother tongue. Consider using in-built translation tools to enable speedy and clear customer support responses.

With webstore selling, the key strategic focus of your customer support channel is to get closer to the customer, for the ability to build a long-term relationship where they will return, to buy directly from you, and where you can actively remarket to them over time. You can also harness their satisfaction for the generation of powerful and authentic reviews, which can generate more direct-to-site sales opportunities.

## Customer Support: What Not to Do

Later in the ebook, we give our keys to outstanding customer support.

But first, let's examine the opposite end of the spectrum and take a look at what not to do.

Enter Hillary...

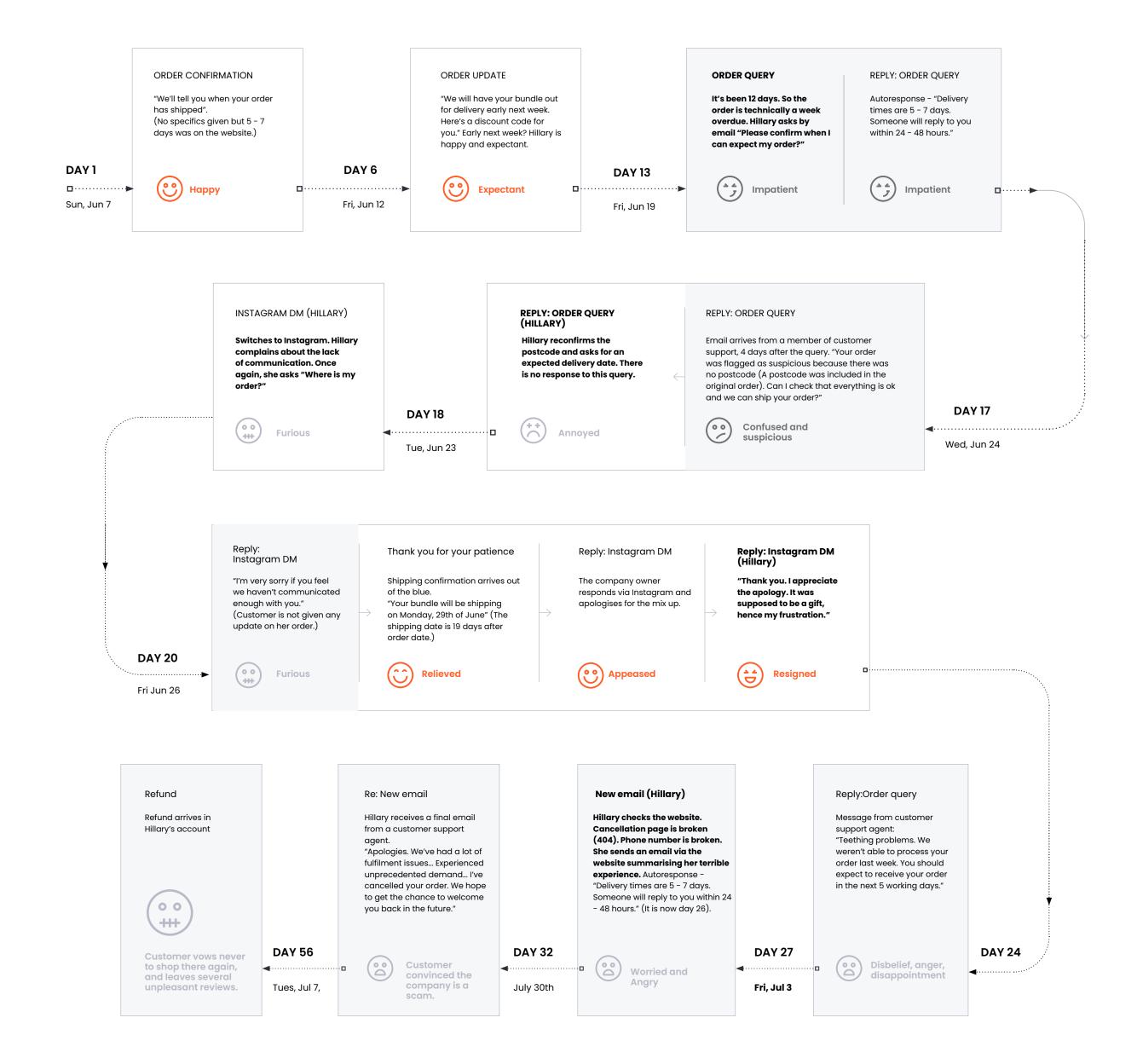
Hillary is a marketing professional, a mom of two and a frequent online shopper. She counts herself as being fairly savvy, and checks out reviews and feedback before she spends her dollars. She's generally patient and easy going. But this online experience was so bad, she shared her story with us.

Hillary's family splashed out on an orthopedic mattress for her elderly father, during lockdown. And as a milestone birthday present, the family also treated him to new bed linen. She shopped around, and chose a local company based approximately 3 hours from her home (because she wanted something quickly). This company operates 100% online, so she assumed they'd have the whole ordering process down.

On Sunday 7th June, Hillary filled her cart with 4 pillows, a super king size duvet, covers, cases and deep fitted sheets. The total cost of the order was €422.80, which was the most she had ever spent on sheets, but there were five of them chipping in, and they really wanted their dad to feel special. The estimated delivery times were 5 - 7 days. She provided full details, including postcode and phone number.

#### HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED...





#### **CUSTOMER SUPPORT: WHAT NOT TO DO**

What We Learned:

## MANAGE CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS AND MAINTAIN CLEAR COMMUNICATION FROM THE OUTSET.

Towards the end of the exchange the seller admits that there had been "unprecedented demand" and "teething problems". If delays had been highlighted and communicated clearly from the start, the customer might have been more understanding.

## CARE MUST BE TAKEN TO ANSWER QUESTIONS DIRECTLY.

On several occasions, Hillary asked for an update on her order. Not once did she receive a direct answer. This kept the customer completely in the dark.

### ONE BAD EXPERIENCE CAN CAUSE A RIPPLE EFFECT.

Hillary has vowed to never shop at that store again. But that is not all. Hillary has also casually told friends about her poor experience, and shared it on Instagram stories. This is not unique to Hillary's situation. Dissatisfied customers typically tell 9 to 15 other people about their experience; some tell 20 or more.

(White House Office of Consumer Affairs).

## FAST RESPONSE TIMES ARE VITAL.

when it comes to easing customer concerns. Many of Hillary's queries went unanswered for days, which would have fuelled further frustration.



#### **CUSTOMER SUPPORT: WHAT NOT TO DO**

#### **Customer Frustrations in Numbers**

of customers feel frustrated
when a shopping experience is
impersonal
(linkdex)

33%

of Americans say they'll consider switching companies after just a single instance of poor service. (American Express) **62**b

U.S. companies lose more than \$62 billion annually due to poor customer service (New Voice Media)

**150**%

More than 50 percent of consumers in the U.S. and UK expected ecommerce sites to remember their past purchases (linkdex)

**1.6**t

The estimated cost of customers switching due to poor service is \$1.6 trillion

(Accenture)

**78**%

of customers have backed out of a purchase due to a poor customer experience.

(Glance)





## xSellco's 5 Keys to Outstanding Customer Support



Set SLAs and stick to them



Manage expectations from the outset



Take a unified approach to customer support and align resources



Communicate clearly with your customers



Think positive (reviews)



of customers rate an "immediate" response as important or very important

60%



of customers define "immediate" as 10 minutes or less'.

(HubSpot Research)

#### XSELLCO'S 5 KEYS TO OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SUPPORT



The world of eCommerce is now more competitive than ever. Maintaining fast response times is a must.

In the digital age, people expect instant, or near instant, responses. According to research <u>from HubSpot</u>, 90% of customers rate an "immediate" response as important or very important when they have a customer service question. And 60% of customers define "immediate" as 10 minutes or less.

Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are especially important in the eCommerce industry. Marketplaces like Amazon and eBay require sellers to respond to customers within 24 hours in order to have high seller metrics.

For your team to deliver outstanding customer support, it is incredibly important to set SLAs and stick to them. Fast response times allow you to identify potential escalations at an early stage. You can then take steps to rectify the situation before you receive a negative review. The longer you leave a query, the more frustrated your customer becomes.

When an online order goes wrong, customers can feel powerless. By not responding to queries in a timely manner, these worries are exacerbated and can get out of control.

#### XSELLCO'S 5 KEYS TO OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SUPPORT

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COVID-19 has presented a real challenge for online sellers. Many online stores are incredibly busy. The rise in uncertainty means that customers are more likely to get in touch and enquire about their orders. Added to this, restrictions have caused delays in deliveries and many organisations are operating at less than full capacity. It is the perfect storm for support issues, causing a surge in customer queries.

This situation is not unique to the COVID-19 pandemic. Certain times of the year are naturally busier than others. It is vitally important that, during these times, online sellers set expectations during these times. Manage expectations from the outset

#### BE AS TRANSPARENT AS POSSIBLE.

If there are unavoidable delays, let customers know in advance. They will appreciate the heads up. If you don't, you are setting customers up for disappointment. When this happens, more queries will come in and the pressure on resources will increase even further. This sets in motion a vicious chain that leads to missed SLAs, customer frustration and negative reviews.

Auto-responders are great for setting customers expectations. However, it is important to do so carefully. Take for example, Hillary's customer support experience that we shared earlier. On no less than three occasions, the seller provided her with a delivery date that they failed to fulfill. Along with that, each automated message stated that someone would "reply within 24 - 48 hours". With every over-promise and under-delivery, the customer became more despondent.

of consumers say that valuing their time is the most important.

**72**%

of consumers expect the agent to know who they are.

#### XSELLCO'S 5 KEYS TO OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SUPPORT

## Take a unified approach to customer support and align resources

According to research from <u>Forrester</u>, 73% of consumers say that valuing their time is the most important thing a company can do when providing customer service. A separate <u>Microsoft report</u> found that 72% of consumers say that when contacting customer service they expect the agent to "know who they are, what they have purchased and have insights into their previous engagements."

It's clear that when a customer gets in touch with your support team, they have certain expectations. They don't want to have to repeat themselves and expect a level of consistency when speaking with different agents. The best way to ensure this is to take a unified approach to customer support.

A unified approach to customer support includes:

Tracking activity across multiple channels and adopting a multichannel approach. A centralised dashboard ensures consistency across channels be they social media, marketplaces or email. When a customer reaches out, it is vital that your agents are aware of the past trail of communication.

Align your resources. Make sure you understand the events that will impact your support capabilities, workflow management and staffing levels. This involves learning how to manage customer support efficiently during busy periods and over holidays.

Work as a unit. Your customer support team should be working in tandem and not at odds with one another. Within eDesk, innovative features such as Collision Detection play into this. Collision Detection alerts remote colleagues when they are dealing with the same customer query. Workers can also assign tickets to one another remotely and tagteam difficult queries together.

## The root of all evil in customer support - Miscommunication

#### XSELLCO'S 5 KEYS TO OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SUPPORT

## Communicate clearly with your customers

Earlier, we discussed the importance of managing customer expectations and maintaining clear communication with your customer. At the very heart of your customer support strategy should be clear communication with your customers. If there is an issue, let them know about it. Most negative experiences arise from customers being kept out of the loop and left feeling powerless.

When it comes to support, customers expect interaction with real people who show empathy and understanding. The language your company uses should be consistent with the brand image you'd like to portray and you should personalise interactions whenever possible. Take every opportunity to demonstrate the human side to your business – customers gravitate towards authentic voices.

Miscommunication is a prime cause of customer complaints, so ensure you provide as much information as possible. This includes crucial details like prices and sizes, as well as delivery times, reviews, testimonials and your customer support hours. If you can't resolve an issue immediately, let the customer know how you plan to do so and give them a resolution timeframe.

In the example we shared earlier, Hillary was left in the dark about the status of her order. When the order got delayed, the customer support team tried to sidestep the issue. In reality, the situation could have been reversed if customer support had maintained clear communication. Without it, the customer became suspicious, annoyed and frustrated. By the end of the exchange, her trust in the brand was damaged beyond repair.

### \*\*\*\*

In our earlier example, the bedding company didn't follow the keys outlined in this ebook and ended up losing Hillary as a customer. From a customer support perspective, the most frustrating part is that there could have been a much more favourable outcome.

Prior to this experience, Hillary had heard great things about the brand. This first order was a gift but she intended on making several more purchases in the future. Hillary also informed us that she usually leaves positive reviews when she has a pleasant experience. A glowing review could have further boosted sales. Unfortunately, after 30 days of frustration followed by an order cancellation, her review was anything but positive. For this brand, a number of great opportunities went begging due to poor customer support.

#### XSELLCO'S 5 KEYS TO OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SUPPORT

### Think positive (reviews)

#### **ALWAYS REMEMBER:**

Every customer query is an opportunity to build trust in your brand and stand out from your competitors. Customer support should always be seen as a direct route to positive reviews.

Providing fast, satisfactory customer support for pre-sales queries is essential for converting leads into paid customers.

Adapt a sales mindset. If you answer customer questions quickly when your visitors are in the buying mindset, you can convert them into lifelong customers and advocates of your brand.

Look for feedback. The pressure is always on sellers to achieve a high feedback score as it contributes significantly to your products' Amazon Buy Box and eBay Best Match performance. Take every interaction as a chance to improve your rating.

### **Summary: Your Customer Support Checklist**

Customer support doesn't have to be a laborintensive process. Having a well defined strategy in place and excellent customer support software is the best way to manage it successfully.

Providing outstanding customer support is the foundation of every successful business. Below are xSellco's 5 keys to outstanding customer support.

#### XSELLCO'S 5 KEYS TO OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SUPPORT

1.

1.	Set SLAs and stick to them.	4.	Communicate clearly
	How quickly will you reply to your customers?		Using templates and scripts can ensure
	How will you measure your responsiveness?		consistency of tone, no matter who's working on support.
	Clearly communicate your SLAs to customers.		Always answer the question that's been asked.
2.	Manage expectations from the outset.		If you mean 5 days, but you actually mean 5 'business days' then say so. Better to underpromise and overdeliver. If
	If your SLA's slip, do you have a process for		
	changing your stated response times?		
	Use automated emails but make sure to follow up in a timely manner.		there are delays, get in front of the issue with a proactive message. Most people will take kindly to this approach.
	Make sure your returns policy is up to date.		ина арргоаст.
	Have clearly stated terms and conditions.	<b>5</b> .	Think positive (reviews).
	When there are delays, do you proactively update your customers?		First, make sure you know how to handle negative reviews. Here's a <u>great guide</u> .
3.	Take a unified approach to customer support and align resources.		Leveraging feedback and reviews in Amazon is a critical task for winning the buy box. Amazon has now made it explicitly clear that you can ask
	Do you cross reference customer support tickets across channels?		buyers for reviews and seller feedback. As an Amazon Council Member, we've always known
	Do you have a way to suppress messages to certain customers?		this, but now Amazon has clarified its messaging around it and it's clear - YOU CAN ASK A BUYER
	Make sure all your contact points are live, and		FOR A REVIEW.
	pointing to the right location.		Amazon has made it clear that you can use <b>eDesk</b> to communicate with buyers. The new rule clarify that you can use an approved third party application listed in the <u>Marketplace Appstore</u> —and eDesk is definitely approved.
	Where possible, ensure a single customer view, so that different resources aren't having parallel conversations with the same customer.		



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- 18. 33% of Americans say they'll consider switching companies after just a single instance of poor service. https://about.americanexpress.com/press-release/wellactually-americans-say-customer-service-better-ever/
- 19. U.S. companies lose more than \$62 billion annually due to poor customer service. <a href="https://www.vonage.com/resources/articles/the-62-billion-customer-service-scared-away-infographic/">https://www.vonage.com/resources/articles/the-62-billion-customer-service-scared-away-infographic/</a>
- 20. More than 50 percent of consumers in the U.S. and UK expected ecommerce sites to remember their past purchases. <a href="https://www.linkdex.com/en-us/inked/70-of-consumers-want-more-personalized-shopping-experiences/">https://www.linkdex.com/en-us/inked/70-of-consumers-want-more-personalized-shopping-experiences/</a>
- 21. The estimated cost of customers switching due to poor service is \$1.6 trillion. <a href="https://www.accenture.com/us-en/about/strategy-index">https://www.accenture.com/us-en/about/strategy-index</a>
- 22. 78% of customers have backed out of a purchase due to a poor customer experience. http://ww2.glance.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Counting-the-customer\_-Glance\_eBook-4.pdf
- 23. According to research <u>from HubSpot</u>, 90% of customers rate an "immediate" response as important or very important when they have a customer service question. And 60% of customers define "immediate" as 10 minutes or less. <a href="https://blog.hubspot.com/sales/live-chat-go-to-market-flaw?hubs\_signup-url=blog.hubspot.com/service/customer-service-stats&hubs\_signup-cta=null">https://blog.hubspot.com/service/customer-service-stats&hubs\_signup-cta=null</a>
- 24. 73% of consumers say that valuing their time is the most important thing a company can do when providing customer service. https://www.groovehg.com/customer-service-statistics
- 25. A separate Microsoft report found that 72% of consumers say that when contacting customer service they expect the agent to "know who they are, what they have purchased and have insights into their previous engagements." <a href="http://info.microsoft.com/rs/157-GQE-382/images/EN-CNTNT-Report-DynService-2017-global-state-customer-service-en-au.pdf">http://info.microsoft.com/rs/157-GQE-382/images/EN-CNTNT-Report-DynService-2017-global-state-customer-service-en-au.pdf</a>
- 26. <a href="https://www.xsellco.com/resources/how-to-handle-negative-reviews-on-amazon-ebay-google-and-social-media/">https://www.xsellco.com/resources/how-to-handle-negative-reviews-on-amazon-ebay-google-and-social-media/</a>
- 27. <a href="https://sellercentral.amazon.com/apps/store">https://sellercentral.amazon.com/apps/store</a>



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