



**GROWING YOUR  
COMPANY THROUGH  
CUSTOMER SUPPORT**

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# INTRODUCTION

Whether through marketing campaigns, advanced advertising, or business deals, the main goal of any company is to grow by gaining new customers and retaining existing ones. Many of these strategies can be expensive and do not utilise a company's best marketing and advertising tool, its customers. A business's customers are the most influential force a company can have.

Customers share both positive and negative interactions they have with an organisation with their family, friends and social media followers. These shared exchanges play an essential role in attracting or deterring new customers; however, customers are more likely to share negative experiences. 95% of customers share their bad experiences, whereas only 87% share their positive experiences.<sup>1</sup> If customers are more motivated to share negative than positive reviews, then a bad customer experience is more likely to stunt a company's growth.

An organisation's customer support team deals with customer issues, needs and complaints. For this reason, a support team is essential to ensuring that customers have positive experiences with a company. As your customer support team is the main point of contact, the quality of that department directly affects your company's customer retention and growth.

If a representative reacts negatively during an interaction with a customer, that customer may switch to a different provider. After conducting a comprehensive survey, Esteban Kolsky, CEO of Think Jar, found just how powerful an effect customer support has on retaining customers. He discovered that 66% of people have switched to a different brand because of poor customer service.

Against these odds, the GoTo customer support team behind GoToConnect (formerly Jive Communications), maintained a 99% customer retention rate.

Good customer support starts by applying two key principles: **listening to the customer and resolving customer needs in a timely manner.**

To help your team effectively apply these two principles, your department needs to implement three tactics:

- 1. Shape a network of channels**
- 2. Create a positive culture**
- 3. Measure customer support success**

We believe implementing these two key principles and three tactics will help your customer support team deliver better results.





# KEY PRINCIPLES OF GOOD CUSTOMER SUPPORT

How do customers determine what poor support is? Research found that the way customers are treated ultimately determines how they measure the quality of their support. Harris Interactive, a market research company, revealed that the two reasons for customers switching brands are that customers feel they are poorly treated or agents fail to solve customers' problems quickly.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, a good support team must listen to the customer and resolve their needs in a timely manner.

## 1. LISTEN TO THE CUSTOMER

Listening is a powerful tool; just by listening, many small conflicts can be resolved before they grow into major issues. However, regular listening is not enough when interacting with customers. According to the Wall Street Journal, people need to practise "active listening". Active listening involves being fully engaged and present in the situation, rather than partially paying attention.<sup>4</sup> Customer support representatives who actively listen decrease the opportunity for miscommunication.

With less chances for miscommunication between agents and customers, agents are better qualified to form the best solutions for each individual customer. This results in representatives being able to resolve the conflict at the first interaction, rather than passing the customer to different representatives. 72% of people blame a bad customer service interaction on having to explain their problem to more than one person,<sup>5</sup> and 30% of people switch to a different company after being passed to multiple representatives.<sup>6</sup>

Agents who actively listen to and understand a customer's problem are more aware and better equipped to serve the customer's needs.

At GoTo, we found that active listening allows our support team to focus on the customer experience. As our support team focuses on the customer and their issue, our representatives are able to overcome a negative situation and create a stronger relationship with that customer. Overall, active listening encourages our support team to treat customers not like a number, but rather like an individual, which is why GoTo excels in customer support.

# 72%

of people blame a bad customer service interaction on having to explain their problem to more than one person.

# 30%

of people switch to a different company after being passed to multiple representatives.

## 2. RESOLVE CUSTOMER NEEDS IN A TIMELY MANNER

One of the best ways to show you value a customer is through short queues. Forrester Research found that 73% of people say valuing their time is the most important aspect of good customer service.<sup>7</sup> Customer frustration steadily grows the longer a customer is on hold and the longer it takes to resolve the issue. When a problem is handled in a timely manner, it demonstrates that the company feels the customer's time is important.

After the short queue, support teams should ensure that a customer talks to a live agent. 75% of customers feel it takes too long to connect with a live agent. If you offer any type of support, whether live chat or phone, replies should be given within two minutes.<sup>8</sup> These replies should be answered by a human and not an automated machine because the number one reason people do not like calling companies is because they cannot speak to a real person right away.<sup>9</sup>

Our customer support team answer phone calls on average within 15 seconds, which is two or three rings. We've found that answering the phone within two or three rings gives a person the feeling they're not waiting in a queue.

We also have agents who are available any time or day of the week, so that customers feel like they're the priority.

**THE BEST WAY A SUPPORT TEAM CAN ACT RAPIDLY IS BY EMPOWERING ITS REPRESENTATIVES TO KNOW HOW TO FIX EACH CUSTOMER'S PROBLEM.**

Once a person is in contact with a representative, our agents solve customer issues quickly because GoToConnect educates employees to be problem solvers. The best way a support team can act rapidly is by empowering its representatives to know how to fix each customer's problem. To do this, GoTo does not give our agents scripts; we train them to listen and we educate them enough about our product to resolve the issue directly. A dedicated support team shows its customers that their time is important, which is an essential aspect of treating customers as individuals.



**73%**

of people say valuing their time is the most important aspect of good customer service.



**75%**

of people feel it takes too long to connect with a live agent.

# THREE TACTICS FOR SUCCESS IN CUSTOMER SUPPORT

Now that you understand the two important customer support principles, to listen to customers and resolve their needs in a timely manner, you must actualise these principles through three tactics. Each tactic plays a different role in customer support. Together, these three tactics create a superior customer experience.

## TACTIC 1: SHAPE A NETWORK OF CHANNELS

In the digital age, providing easy access to customer support is no longer a luxury; it's essential. The more channels your customers have access to, the more accessible your organisation becomes. This accessibility humanises your company as you become part of your customers' daily interactions. As you work to find your customers' interests and become involved in their lives, you will be better able to meet your customers' needs.

### Meet Your Customer on Their Communication Medium

One of the most frustrating aspects for a customer is finding and contacting the right person within a company. For this reason, having multiple channels to reach customers cannot be overstated; however, you need to know your market. If your customers are avid social media users, you should place extra emphasis on support via social media. If they prefer to call in and speak with an agent, you should emphasise your telephone-based resources.

Your support team must be ready to assist customers on whatever communication medium they prefer. Research shows that an estimated 67% of customers now use networks like Twitter and Facebook for customer service.<sup>10</sup> However, more customers, 70%, prefer calling for a fast response.<sup>11</sup> This shows the importance of knowing your market's channel preferences. As you learn more about your market and place emphases on their preferred contact methods, you will see your customer satisfaction increase.

GoTo understands the importance of being accessible to our customers, whether they prefer Facebook, Twitter, email, phone or any other channel. Our agents build valuable customer relationships through social media channels, phone calls and other communication tools every single day. We have the ability to take a phone call and also answer a customer's post on Facebook.

**OUR AGENTS BUILD VALUABLE CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS, PHONE CALLS AND OTHER COMMUNICATION TOOLS EVERY SINGLE DAY.**

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# 70%

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# 55%

of customers who request help on social media are not acknowledged.



## Keep Up with Customer Interactions

Accessibility on different social channels for customers also means that you should be actively monitoring each channel daily - especially social media platforms. As customer support has evolved to a digital platform, addressing and resolving people's complaints on social media channels become an increasingly important part of the customer experience.

While social media grows in popularity, too many support teams fail to adequately meet this increasing need. 55% of customers who request help on social media are not acknowledged.<sup>12</sup> If you acknowledge these requests, your customer support team will excel and reap the benefits. In fact, Conversocial found that answering a social media complaint can increase customers advocacy by 25%.<sup>13</sup>

Building these relationships on different social channels is key because customers often give reviews on these public social media accounts. Word-of-mouth has always been the goldmine for sales. If your customers are recommending and relating their experiences with your product, this positive peer-to-peer publicity can be worth as much as any advertisement. Word-of-mouth on social media and online reviews in today's digital age are key to attracting potential customers.

- 81% of shoppers conduct online research before making a purchase.<sup>14</sup>
- 88% of potential customers have been influenced by online customer service reviews.<sup>15</sup>
- 45% of people share negative service experiences, and only 30% share good customer service experiences through social media.<sup>16</sup>

## TACTIC 2: CREATE A POSITIVE CULTURE

The culture of a company directly affects the work quality of the entire support team. If the company's culture is to "get in and get out", then the support department will also have this mentality. To create a better work culture, a company needs all employees, especially customer service agents, to be involved. Engaging all employees might not be as easy as you think; according to a worldwide Aon Hewitt Survey, only 61% of workers feel engaged at their jobs.<sup>17</sup> To change this mentality and engage a customer support team, a company must empower their representatives to be helpful and to set goals.

### Empower a Culture of Helpfulness

The secret to an effective support team is creating a culture of helpfulness. 82% of people cancel their business with an organisation because of bad customer service.<sup>18</sup> Unhelpful customer support agents who fail to find solutions for customers contribute to high customer turnover rates. Agents are more helpful and generate trust with customers when they demonstrate that they care about the customer's satisfaction.

More than three-fourths of customers, 84%, feel frustrated when a support representative does not have answers.<sup>19</sup> For agents to be helpful, they need to know the right answers to customer concerns. When agents understand that their job is to provide knowledge, it pushes them to continually learn and not dismiss difficult problems.

Training is what drives GoTo's customer support representatives to be helpful and learn more. We do not give our agents scripts or step-by-step instructions on how to resolve common issues. GoToConnect trains representatives to thoughtfully listen and apply their knowledge by roleplaying customer situations and by practising team-building exercises. Our representatives' ability to break from a script is what allows them to be helpful, humanise the customer's experience and build advocacy.

**61%**

of workers feel engaged at their jobs





## Generate Goals that Benefit the Company

Company and department goals are important to encourage employees to work at a higher level. When a person doesn't focus on his or her goals, 30% of that person's capacity and performance potential is wasted.<sup>20</sup> In other words, your company, as well as your customer support team, should be setting goals that challenge it as a whole and its employees on an individual basis.

Setting high goals pushes companies to improve and not become complacent. To have the greatest success, goals must be communicated and shared within the entire organisation. 69% of companies believe communicating business goals through the entire company is the most effective way to build a high-performing team.<sup>21</sup> As a result, each department needs to know their role in achieving the objective.

GoTo has seen the positive results of setting and communicating goals with their support team. Recently, we achieved a business strategic goal of increasing our net promoter score (NPS). Working towards this goal wasn't easy, especially for our customer support team. Because the NPS score leans heavily on customer support, the support representatives knew their performance would directly impact the company's goal. This motivated the customer support team to be more driven.

To set specific and challenging goals, determine where the company or department is and where you want it to be. This is how GoToConnect's support team created our own department goal: to answer calls within 15 seconds. Once we set that number, GoToConnect's customer support team started to train to meet this 15-second goal. This goal wasn't easy to achieve, but the results and determination of the support team created a positive culture within the department and the entire company.

**TO CREATE A BETTER WORK CULTURE, A COMPANY NEEDS ALL EMPLOYEES, ESPECIALLY CUSTOMER SERVICE AGENTS, TO BE INVOLVED.**



**82%**

of people cancel their business with an organisation because of bad customer service.

**84%**

of people feel frustrated when a support representative does not have answers.

## TACTIC 3: MEASURE CUSTOMER SUPPORT SUCCESS

If a business wants to turn its support team around, it must start by measuring where its department is. To improve your support team, you must measure engagement, wait times, customer experience and more. Once you understand these basic statistics, you can better determine where you want your customer support team to be.

### Measure Engagement of Agents

Measuring employee engagement helps determine the overall success of each individual representative; however, measuring engagement is not enough. You must define what “engagement” means to your team. This can be difficult to define as research shows that 75% of businesses do not understand what engagement means.<sup>22</sup>

To help our support team measure engagement, we use the average speed of answering calls and contact resolution.

**Average speed of answering:** GoTo minimised hold times for customers. To measure this, we came up with the goal of answering phone calls within 15 seconds. Through data, we could quantify how long it takes to answer a call and how long a customer waits to speak to a representative.

**Contact resolution:** Contact resolution is the percentage of calls that agents fix on the first interaction. To better track this number, when a person calls, GoTo analyses what happens during the phone call, how the customer’s needs were handled, if the call was aborted or if the call timed out.

As a phone company, measuring engagement is easy because GoTo’s resources include call analytics. We understand that not every business has access to call analytics; yet, gathering data can be done in other ways. Many services offer analytics tools for phone calls. If a company doesn’t have the budget for an analytics service, phone conversations can be recorded and surveys can be sent out to customers. The options to gather data are endless; you just need to determine what tool will help you find the information you need.

### Use Results to Determine Where You Want to Be

Part of improving is using analytics and customer feedback to determine where your customer support team wants to be. 70% of companies that provide the best customer experiences use customer feedback.<sup>23</sup> As new data and feedback comes in, you must thoroughly review it and be willing to adapt your vision to where you want your team to be.

Once the data is collected and reviewed, the department must measure the progress towards team goals. Monitoring results will assist the team in knowing what is working, scrap what is not working and implement training for the new findings. Measuring, acting and progressing should be tied to the company’s goal. As time goes on, this process will become part of the culture and second nature to the customer support team.

Using the feedback and analytics will not only allow your support team to improve, but it also can enhance your overall company and product. If analytics have been taken when customers come for assistance, the company can identify the strong and weak products, what repeated problems customers are having and even predict a customer’s buying behaviour. Once these issues are addressed this will enhance the company’s overall brand.

**75% OF BUSINESSES DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT ENGAGEMENT MEANS.**

# CONCLUSION

Because of the power customers have over your company's growth and retention, your customer support team cannot be overlooked. A support team is a main communication tool that bridges the gap between your customers and your company. When support teams implement proper principles and tactics to create positive experiences for customers, these customers share their experiences with others.

GoTo has built its support team off of the two key principles of **listening to the customer** and **resolving customer needs in a timely manner**. We have maintained a strong retention rate of customers and have minimised negative reviews. As your company works towards these two principles through the three tactics of **shaping a network of channels, creating a positive culture and measuring success**, your customer support team can achieve similar success.

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# ABOUT GOTOCONNECT

GoToConnect is a unified communications and collaboration platform built on true cloud architecture that ensures higher quality calls, manages risk, and enhances reliability. Its multi-cloud approach improves delivery of service for businesses of all sizes, from the SMB to the enterprise.

GoToConnect integrates the power and reliability of Jive's phone systems with GoToMeeting's web, audio and video conferencing tool for one simple, fast, easy-to-use solution - containing over 100 powerful hosted VoIP and meeting features for one low price.



To find out more, please email  
[tellmemore@bytes.co.uk](mailto:tellmemore@bytes.co.uk)  
or call us at 01372 418500



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