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# THE DISCIPLINE OF SOCIAL CUSTOMER SERVICE

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## The new world order

There is a fundamental change in the way customers are consuming information, interacting with companies publicly and buying products.

In today's internet driven world, people truly hold the power. It is very easy for customers to do research, compare products & services and chooses what is best for them in a given set of constraints.

**An estimated 67% of consumers now tap social networks for #CustomerService #SocialMediaServicing.**

The ubiquitous social media has empowered customers even more. They now have a greater say in relationship-building, as well as the direction of products and services.

**Marketing has already noticed this paradigm shift.** Brands have made internet marketing and social media a strategic part of their marketing plans.

We have seen innovative ways in which the potential of social media and the internet has been leveraged by marketing function.

But when it comes to customer care, few are taking full advantage of social media's potential. Most companies just see social channels as an extension of their traditional sales and marketing channels.

## Customers are turning to social media for everything

Social media is a way of life. It is already the top internet activity, leading ahead of email, messaging, and gaming.

The *social generation* is using it for sharing every experience they are encountering. Instant gratification is the new norm for them.

This also holds true in the world of customer service as well.

Consumers expect ubiquitous real-time customer service that is transparent, authentic, and most of all, fast.

**95.6 percent of consumers are affected by other customer comments on a brand's social pages**

## Consider these statistics;



More and more people are contacting brands via social media and they expect a helpful and human response. All signals indicate that brands shouldn't just adopt social customer service, they should make it a major priority.

While most companies know these facts and understand the importance of social media in the lives of their customers and their businesses, they struggle to integrate customer care in their overall digital and business goals.

# Use of Social Media in customer service: Best Practices

These are some best practices that can help brands in capturing the full potential offered by social media in taking care of customers and **delighting them in a full public display of exceptional customer service.**

## #1. Pick the right channel

A right channel for one business could be a wrong channel for yours. Instead of blindly using the channels other businesses are using, find out *where your customers are*.

It is always good to do a little research about your customers. Send out a simple one-question survey using a free service like [Typeform](#) or [Google Forms](#). You can also use emailing services like [MailChimp](#) to track the opens and clicks on your emails.

This little research can be highly rewarding as it can point you in the right direction.

By being actively present where your customers actually are, you can deliver a support experience that's native to their preferred network.

## #2. Respond faster

Whether it's a positive or a negative feedback, the response times should be very low for both. Customers expect almost immediate responses on social media.

Delays in even small issues can cause tremendous PR disasters. In the online social world, negative events can gather social steam with such wildfire that the delay can become more of a problem than the actual issue.

In the social customer care, fifteen minutes is an acceptable, reasonable response time.

In case a quick response is not possible, inform customers by posting hours when someone is available for immediate response and what customers should do for fast answers when that option isn't available.

## #3. Train social media responders with customer service skills

Social media customer service is your traditional customer service in real time at lightning fast speed in the open for the world to see and share. But at its core, it is still customer service.

Hence, you should assist online customers as energetically and effectively as you do through traditional service channels.

Train your social media teams, who are managing your social media customer service with the skills crucial for managing an irate customer.

Your social media team needs to be every bit as customer-centric as your other support/response channels. If not, it's bound to hurt your brand rather than help it.

## **#4. Make active social listening a habit**

Monitoring social media mentions and actively listening to social media conversations can provide intelligent data about the sentiments, topics of conversation, positivity/negativity and frequency, helping companies to identify and prioritise where to use their resources.

Social media monitoring tools like [The Social Hub](#) and [LiveOps Social](#) can help in identifying, prioritising and routing customer problems so customer service teams can respond effectively.

Since social listening can be very overwhelming, companies should prioritise gathering social data that indicate trigger events.

Companies should also have a clear focus on important metrics like first response time, time to resolution, customer satisfaction (collected through surveys), and in-channel resolution.

## **#5. When it's necessary, take issues offline**

While it is important to listen and respond to your customers on social media, not every issue can be easily resolved online just through a tweet or post.

Technical issues, concerns where sensitive information of a customer is required or when a customer has many complaints, it is wiser to take the conversation from a public page to a private message, or perhaps offline altogether.

It's okay to transfer the issue to another channel like email or phone but it's important to do this right. Ensure that changing channel is not frustrating for the already fuming customer.

As many as [37% of people get frustrated](#) due to getting passed around.

# Conclusion

Social media has given customers a level playing field from where they can voice their frustrations to an increasingly connected population. Generally, the negative conversations on the internet have a longer shelf life. One voice of disappointment can be a potential PR disaster.

Hence it is very critical for companies to ensure that every customer experience begins and ends on a positive note.

To encapsulate entire article in a bite-sized format, here are important points.

## **Use of social media in customer service is growing;**

- Social media has become a way of life.
- Consumer preferences have changed. **33% customers prefer to contact with brands** using social media rather than the telephone.
- 24x7 connected generation wants the real time resolution.

## **It should be a priority for companies to focus on social customer care;**

- There is a greater chance of users advocating a brand through retweeting or sharing a good experience throughout the network.
- Customers who encounter positive social customer care experiences are nearly **3 times more likely to recommend a brand**.
- Additionally, 42% of people will tell their friends about a good customer experience on social, while 53% will talk about a bad one.

## **These are important points to remember while devising a successful social customer care strategy;**

- The conversations are taking place in full public view.
- Identify and be present where your customers are.
- Speedy response and resolution times are a key driver of customer satisfaction and success.
- Equip your social media responders with customer care skills. The most successful social media interactions are personal, genuine, and relevant.
- Social listening is an important part of delivering delightful customer service.
- Determine when to take an issue offline.

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