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# Delivering World-Class E-commerce Customer Service

Tips to Stay on Top of Your Game





## Introduction

If you're responsible for providing customers with top-class service, you've got your work cut out for you. Navigating rising customer expectations for customer service across more channels and via new technologies is no small feat. This guide will help you address your challenges and make the best use of the resources available to you for delivering world-class e-commerce customer service.

## A Day in the Life of a Customer Support Executive

In a competitive, global e-commerce environment, it's challenging to stand out. Since price and product are no longer enough to distinguish your business from the competition, customer service has become a key differentiator.

In fact, exceptional customer support is essential to driving revenues and customer loyalty. Numerous studies illustrate how support impacts the customer experience. That said, while approximately 80% of companies believe they provide great customer service, only 8% of consumers agree. To underscore this reality, note that consumer satisfaction with retail call center interactions scored an abysmal 66 out of 100 according to The 2017 Contact Center Satisfaction Index published by the [CFI Group](#).

Because customer support matters in today's e-commerce environment, you need to equip your team to deliver an experience that stands apart. Simply put, you are charged with enabling a customer experience that supports your company's continued growth. With the numerous responsibilities you must balance, this is no small task. Let's start by deconstructing your typical day.

- 8 am ● As you make your way to the office, wondering if all your agents will be in place and what customer problems await, you play the recording on your phone going through today's action plan.
- 9 am ● Once in the office, you first make the rounds of your support team. Then you check the helpdesk control panel for an overview of yesterday's issues and today's most pressing matters, as well as to monitor customer service trends. Next you check your email and review top industry resources for the latest customer service news.
- 10 am ● You listen live to a few agent calls, choosing a mix of veteran and new agents so you can glean best practices and potential issues.



- 10:30 am ● You host your once-a-week team meeting to discuss agent performance and issues that can only be solved via collaboration or escalation.
- 11 am ● To address cross-departmental issues raised in the team meeting, you make your way to the offices of your counterparts in Inventory Management, Shipping and Web Operations. Certain products are showing in stock on the website even when they're not, some customer orders have not been arriving as promised, and some customers are seeing errors when trying to pay online. After reviewing these issues with your peers and agreeing on action items and timelines, you head back to your office.
- 12 pm ● You grab a quick bite to eat for lunch.
- 12:30 pm ● After catching up on email and spending time in the contact center, you revisit the help-desk control panel to generate a report for this afternoon's executive meeting, where you'll need to present the latest customer service metrics and concerns.
- 1:30 pm ● You present to the executive team. As the one representing the Voice of the Customer, you are pivotal in recommending and introducing service enhancements that pave the way for continued business success. You share the need to better support online shoppers with live chat and via social media, as you have seen a significant surge in those channel requests. You also underscore the importance of better equipping your team and making sure they can efficiently serve customers, no matter which channels or tools shoppers use to reach out.
- 2:30 to 6 pm ● You're back in the contact center until the end of the day, available to help as needed, deliver constructive feedback where appropriate, and share positive reinforcement, particularly after witnessing a stellar interaction or receiving customer feedback.
- 6 pm ● Before heading home, you meet briefly with the night-shift supervisor to review top issues.



## Satisfying Customer Expectations With Best Practices

While you may be doing many of the right things, you might be able to do more of the right things.

World-class customer support never lets the customer down. In other words, delivering a customer service experience that completely exceeds expectations. It starts by understanding those expectations so you know what's needed to deliver on them.

What today's customers demand	Why it's challenging to meet expectations
Choose their service channel (phone, self-service, email, etc.)	Some customer service execs try to enable multi-channel service using disparate, legacy tools. Disconnected tools prevent a single view into the customer history and existing customer service resolutions. Customer service agents struggle to efficiently find the right, best response to shopper inquiries and issues. Moreover, shoppers get frustrated by the lack of modern support options, such as self-service and chat.
Seamless experience across channels	
Personalized service, interactions, and offers based on what your company knows about them	
Fast, accurate answers and issue resolution	

Fortunately, you can call upon the following proven practices to overcome these challenges and exceeding customer expectations.

- 1. Make customer support an integral part of the customer experience.** The first step is ensuring everyone in your company is committed to enabling world-class support as part of the overall customer experience. As Harley Manning, Vice President and Research Director for Forrester, defines it, Customer Experience (CX) is [“how customers perceive their interactions with your company.”](#) In fact, according to Manning, “When customers...call into your contact center...— that’s when they’re making judgments about whether or not you meet their needs, are easy to do business with, and are enjoyable to do business with. That’s when they’re having an actual ‘customer experience.’ ”
- 2. Drive deeper engagement with shoppers by enabling fast, convenient customer service.** Harness relevant capabilities – like self-service and Artificial Intelligence – so you can empower shoppers to resolve their own issues. But don’t just stop at the basics. Enable advanced features like auto-suggest solutions to amplify the impact of self-service options. Take advantage of the convenience of on-page help and mobile apps to deliver faster service.



**3. Be present where and when your customers are shopping and offer multiple support options.** Offer multi-channel, around-the-clock support by taking advantage of an integrated support solution featuring automation. Available anywhere, anytime – on any device and channel. According to The Northridge Group's *State of Customer Service Experience 2017 Report*, “While phone is still the preferred customer service channel, this preference is declining year-over-year, which means that companies should focus on creating a seamless and integrated experience across their alternative channels. Customers will gradually migrate to these alternative channels as they become more effective and easy to use.” For starters, you should listen on social media and respond immediately when needed.

**4. When complicated issues arise, respond as quickly as possible,** even if to say you’re looking into the issue. Whether an order delivery is delayed or you are no longer able to fulfill the order for a certain item, don’t leave shoppers in the dark. Simply communicating that you’re aware of the issue and are taking steps to resolve it goes a long way in the minds of customers.

**5. Take advantage of tools that streamline and automate customer support.** There’s no justification for relying on outdated tools or ones that aren’t purpose-built for support. Your role is to equip your customer support agents with the tools that will enable them to deliver world-class service. Empower agents to do this based on contextual information collected via integrated systems, such as your e-commerce order management, ERP, and CRM tools.

**6. Deploy a centralized helpdesk to consolidate all customer interactions and respond more quickly to customer requests.** More and more customer service leaders are turning to such a solution as a proven way to modernize their operations and agilely keep pace with changing customer demands. The ideal helpdesk includes chat and phone options built in for true centralization. In fact, with the right helpdesk and culture in place, your organization can provide proactive, personalized support. Simply put, this will position you to welcome customer interactions rather than “handle them,” solving customer issues before they become problems.

**7. Measure and continually improve on your customer support and satisfaction metrics.** The best-performing organizations rigorously identify, track and report on quantifiable, actionable metrics that align with their strategic goals. They also support, motivate and reward employees for delivering exceptional service.



## An Inside View into Winning Customer Service

While best practices can prove valuable, it's also smart to consider the experience and insights of those that are already addressing the key issues facing e-commerce customer service leaders. Here we share the wisdom of Arun Mani, Freshworks' Managing Director Continental Europe, based on his real-world experience.



**Arun Mani**

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### **Q. What are the essential characteristics of a modern customer service leader in e-commerce?**

A. A modern customer service leader needs to be an empathetic listener to understand the needs and problems of the customer, and provide a good solution and great customer experience. Being a good listener and sharing experiences and best practices also makes for an effective team coach. A good leader also stays on top of market trends, follows other customer service leaders to stay relevant, and strives for consistency to continuously deliver on success goals.

### **Q. What distinguishes top e-commerce customer service leaders from the rest of the pack?**

A. Successful e-commerce companies are able to provide more than just a good solution to the customer's need or problem. They stand out from rest because they are able to deliver experiences beyond customer expectations. They largely do that by proactively reaching out during key customer journey points and reduce effort on the customer's part, creating events that wow. It's about not looking only for problems to fix, but better knowing each customer and finding ways to delight them before problems occur.

### **Q. How can e-commerce customer service leaders take advantage of Freshworks' experience to date working with e-commerce companies?**

A. Knowing what goes into delivering an exceptional customer experience has helped us shape our offerings, and deeply understand the needs and problems our customers face. Built with a scalable API-first approach, our platform offers a seamless cross-product experience with 360-degree coverage for an e-commerce company's service strategy. Our product teams continually enhance our helpdesk performance by decreasing response-to-resolution time, making customer data easily accessible through integrations, providing tools for better collaboration and faster delivery, automations and more.



**Q. What do you advise customer service leaders looking to position customer service strategically within their companies?**

A. Customer service isn't transactional; it's all about personalisation and establishing an emotional connection with the customer. Providing great customer experiences fosters customer loyalty and retention. It opens doors for more business and revenue streams. Customer service is no longer a back-office support function and cost center. Instead it's a full-blown, revenue-influencing, front-office function. Customer service is the new marketing.

## **Conclusion**

Modern customer service has moved beyond product and technical capabilities. Service today is about how customers feel when interacting with your business. To meet customer expectations, service leaders need to see past agent efficiency or the task at hand, and provide exceptional experiences to create "wow moments." Leaders need to find ways to make it easy for customers to reach the business, explore ways to improve service (such as offering more self-service options), and be aware of the customer pulse by listening on social media. The effective customer service leaders are those that adopt a proactive approach to customer service and activate it through the right processes and tools.

For more ways to stay on top of your game, [subscribe to the Freshdesk blog](#).