

UNIT 10

Customer service

'The customer is never wrong.'
César Ritz (1850–1918), Swiss hotelier

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STARTING UP

A

Which of the following irritate you the most when dealing with customer service departments? Choose the top three and compare with a partner.

on the phone

- Being put on hold
- Speaking to a disinterested person
- Choosing a series of options during your call
- Finding the customer service number is continuously engaged
- Being cut off

face to face

- Unhelpful customer service personnel
- Stressed or indifferent staff
- Salespeople with poor product knowledge
- Too few staff at peak times
- No company policy on customer service or complaints

repairs and refunds

- Delays on repairs
- Delays in getting money back
- No replacement equipment while repairs are carried out
- Poor-quality repairs
- Disputes over credit notes, 'proof of purchase', etc.

B

Discuss these questions.

- 1 How important to a company's success is customer care?
- 2 Is it possible to have too much customer care?
- 3 In what situations can too much customer service become a problem? Have you ever experienced this?

VOCABULARY
Complaints
A Complete the beginnings of the sentences (1–7) with words from the box. Then complete each sentence with an ending (a–g).

compensation complaints guarantee payment rapport refunds standards

- | | | | |
|---|---|----|---|
| 1 | When you handle, it is important | a) | only way to meet customer expectations. |
| 2 | You can establish a with a customer if | b) | will lose customers. |
| 3 | A money-back if not completely satisfied is often | c) | you know about their buying habits. |
| 4 | Companies which do not meet their of service | d) | to be diplomatic. |
| 5 | Giving promptly and without fuss to dissatisfied customers is one indicator | e) | to retain customer loyalty. |
| 6 | When a company is at fault, a one-off goodwill is a useful way | f) | of high-quality customer service. |
| 7 | Financial for poor customer service is not the | g) | a minimum expectation these days. |

B Match the idiomatic expressions (1–7) to their meanings (a–g).

- | | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|----|---|
| 1 | pass the buck | a) | forget to do something |
| 2 | get to the bottom of the problem | b) | paid far too much for something |
| 3 | the last straw | c) | avoid responsibility |
| 4 | slip my mind | d) | find the real cause of something |
| 5 | ripped off | e) | the last in a series of irritating events |
| 6 | talk at cross purposes | f) | try harder in order to achieve something |
| 7 | go the extra mile | g) | misunderstand what someone else is referring to |

C Use the expressions from Exercise B in the correct form to complete these sentences appropriately.

- The helpline person was very good and spent time with me. She started at the beginning in order to and find a solution.
- He's the person responsible. He shouldn't try to and blame others for his mistakes.
- Several customers have complained about our service contract. They say they're paying far too much and feel they have been
- I meant to send him a brochure, but we were very busy. I got distracted and it
- They wanted to place a larger order. I thought they wanted a bigger discount. We were
- They ignored my complaints, but what made me really angry was when they refused to refund my money. Really, it was
- She was extremely helpful and was prepared to to solve the problem, so I'll definitely use the company again.

D Work in two groups. Choose the five best suggestions from your group's advice sheet. Then form new groups. Negotiate a single list of the six best suggestions from both sheets.

Group A: Turn to page 144. Group B: Turn to page 138.

See the DVD-ROM
for the i-Glossary.



LISTENING

Customer service



Philip Newman-Hall

A You are going to hear an interview with Philip Newman-Hall, Director and General Manager of Raymond Blanc's restaurant Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons in Oxfordshire, England. In groups, discuss the best and worst customer service you have had in a restaurant.

B CD3.10 Listen to the first part of the interview. Would you like to go to Le Manoir? Why? / Why not?

C CD3.11 Listen to the second part and complete these extracts.

I would say that we try to exceed¹, [...] we have to have² with the³ and we have to try and judge each client⁴, so that we sense what they are⁵ for and try and⁶ that service all the time.

We also must provide⁷ of service.

... 'the standards you set are the⁸ you⁹'.

D CD3.12 Listen to the third part and answer these questions.

- 1 What do all the staff at Le Manoir do, and why is this useful when dealing with demanding customers?
- 2 What does Philip say about expectations?

E CD3.13 Listen to the final part. How are customers changing, what are they doing, and how can this be useful?

Watch the interview on the DVD-ROM.



READING

Changing customer service

A Read the article on the opposite page quickly and say if the writer agrees with these statements. Ignore the words in bold for the moment.

- 1 Customer service is very important.
- 2 Good customer service means always being able to speak to a person.

B Read the article again and answer these questions.

- 1 How has customer service changed?
- 2 What did some customers not like at first?
- 3 What can companies do with customer data?
- 4 Why do a lot of customers have bad experiences?

C Summarise paragraph 5 in one sentence. Then compare your summary with a partner. Finally, discuss whether you agree with the position taken by the author of the article.

D Find idioms in the first and last paragraphs that mean the following.

- 1 to say that you support or agree with something without doing anything to prove it
- 2 while physically close to someone
- 3 information you get by someone telling you

E Complete these sentences using the idioms in Exercise D.

- 1 I'd rather explain, not on the phone.
- 2 is one of the best ways of getting business.
- 3 Some companies don't really care about career development, they just to it.

Customer service is changing the world: Up close and global

by Mike Betzer, President of Relationship Technology Management at Convergys

Customer service has changed. Thirty years ago, for example, service was personal and familiar and when issues arose, they were typically handled face to face with a local manager.

Now, global corporations have millions of customers. By using customer service experts and the latest technology, these companies were able to focus on **dealing** with their bread-and-butter business. The thinking was that **by refocusing** in this way, productivity and innovation would increase, enabling organisations to bring new products to market more quickly.

This approach generated its share of bad press. It took many customers a long time to get used to **speaking** to customer service representatives based in other parts of the world or mechanical systems that didn't offer the right choices.

A new approach was called for. Businesses needed to adapt locally in order to capitalise globally. They needed to take the traditional, personal approach and apply it to their customer service strategy across the world. They needed to get personal while operating on a global scale. For example, confectioner Thornton's listened to customer feedback and developed a more personal service, using a new gift service to drive sales of its high-end products.

Companies need to use all their resources effectively. The familiarity of technology today means customers no longer recoil from voice and touch automated services, as long as they meet their requirements, whether they are requesting account statements or need to replace a broken phone. The response also has to be personal. This means **pre-empting** the customer's needs and **acting** intuitively to minimise the time they spend on the phone.



This is where the customer insight, mentioned above, coupled with the means to deploy this with the front line, comes in.

Companies need to collate and analyse the huge amounts of customer data they store, creating a central repository that can build profiles of customers. Using insights into their location, previous purchases, personal data and other information, customer management systems can react as soon as a customer contacts the business. A bank customer rings an automated number and is prompted to enter an account number. Triggered by the unique number, the technology 'knows' what services the caller already has, what issues they may have inquired about in the past, and then builds a profile of the customer and offers choices or remedies to suit their individual needs. Behind all this waits an agent, monitoring several calls. Should a customer become irate or frustrated, the agent can intercede and provide a valuable human contact, knowing exactly what the customer is trying to achieve.

Using analytics can be the difference between a positive and a negative experience for the customer. Yet businesses often don't make the

best use of these insights. Companies seem happy to rely on canned, scripted responses, poorly trained agents and clunky systems to deliver customer services. It's therefore no surprise that so many people have horror stories. While 30 years ago, word may never have leaked out about a poor customer service incident, now it can be found as easily as **searching** on Google.

What companies need to remember is that **maintaining**, or perhaps even **acquiring**, an outsourced customer service infrastructure could be the difference between **maintaining** a cadre of loyal customers during the downturn and **being** first off the line when the race restarts, and being left behind. **Outsourcing** like this is not an indulgence; it is a crucial part of business.

If companies pay lip service to customers, whether consumer or business, they run the risk of **missing** out on valuable profits; those that value their customers and view them not only a source of revenue but also a means to improve as a business can reap the rewards. They can secure continuous business as well as positive word of mouth **by keeping** things personal when working globally.

F Which changes in customer service mentioned in the article have you noticed, and in which industries?

LANGUAGE REVIEW
Gerunds

- A gerund is formed from a verb but can behave like a noun.
 - It can be the subject of a sentence or clause.
***Satisfying** the customer is the aim of every business.*
 - It can be the object of a sentence or clause.
*I hate **listening** to computerised voicemail mazes.*
 - It often follows a preposition.
*They became successful **by listening** to their customers.*

A useful way to use gerunds is in lists. (See page 96, Exercise A, 'on the phone'.)
- Gerunds are formed by adding *-ing* to the base form of the verb:
launch → *launching*; *involve* → *involving*; *get* → *getting*
- *Begin, start, continue* and *intend* can be followed by the gerund or *to* with little or no difference in meaning.
- Some verbs can be followed by either a gerund or an infinitive, but the choice can lead to a change in meaning.
 - *She remembered to update the customer database. (She didn't forget.)*
 - *She remembered updating the customer database. (She has a clear memory of this.)*

 Grammar reference page 150

A The article on page 99 has many examples of the gerund (shown in bold). Find:

- 1 two examples as the subject of a sentence
- 2 one example as the object of a sentence or clause
- 3 three examples following a preposition.

B Match these sentences (1–6) to their meanings (a–f).

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 I regret telling you ... | a) I am sorry about the bad news I am about to tell you. |
| 2 I regret to tell you ... | b) I told you and I wish I hadn't. |
| 3 We stopped producing the Alpha model. | c) We stopped the production of something else in order to produce the Alpha model. |
| 4 We stopped to produce the Alpha model | d) We stopped the production of the Alpha model. |
| 5 I tried speaking to Customer Services. | e) I couldn't get through to anyone there. |
| 6 I tried to speak to Customer Services. | f) It didn't resolve the problem. |

C Complete these guidelines for improving customer service with suitable gerunds. Add some tips of your own.

Improving customer service
Recommended ways of improving customer service include:

- 1 *returning* calls promptly.
- 2 research to find out what customers need.
- 3 staff training programmes in customer care.
- 4 quickly with complaints.
- 5 the customer is happy with the outcome.
- 6 from complaints.
- 7 a rapport with customers.
- 8 about customers' buying habits.
- 9 refunds promptly to dissatisfied customers.
- 10 customers who are worried.

SKILLS

Active listening



- A** How do you know if someone is not listening to you? How does it make you feel?
- B** Which of the following do you do to show people that you are listening to them? Can you add any other suggestions?
- Look people directly in the eye at all times.
 - Nod your head often to show interest.
 - Repeat what the speaker has said in your own words.
 - Be aware of the speaker's body language.
 - Interrupt the speaker often to show you are listening.
 - Think about what you are going to say while the speaker is talking.
 - Use body language to show you are attentive.
 - Try to predict what the speaker is going to say next.
 - Ask questions if you do not understand.
 - Say nothing until you are absolutely sure that the speaker has finished.
- C**  CD3.14, 3.15, 3.16 Listen to three conversations in which people are talking about customer service and make notes under these headings.
- The product or service involved
 - Reasons why the customer thought the service was good or bad
- D**  CD3.14, 3.15, 3.16 Listen again. Tick the words and phrases in the Useful language box below that you hear. Then add other words and phrases of your own.
- E** Work in pairs. Describe the best thing that you have ever bought and say whether you were influenced by the service you received. When your partner is speaking, make an effort to listen actively. Use some of the language from the Useful language box.

USEFUL LANGUAGE

SHOWING INTEREST

How can I help?
Really?
That's interesting.
Right/OK/Mmm/Yes/No
Mmm, let's hear the full story ...
OK, go on ...

SHOWING EMPATHY

I know what you mean.
How awful!
I'm not surprised you're upset.
I really understand how you feel.

ASKING FOR DETAILS

So what happened?
What did you do next?
How did you deal with it?
What did you like especially about ... ?
What else impressed you?

CLARIFYING

Yes, that's right.
Are you saying ... ?
What (exactly) do you mean by ... ?
Could you be more specific, please?
Have I got this right?

SUMMARISING

(So) you think ...
(So) you're saying ...
(So) what you're really concerned/
unhappy about is ...

REPETITION / QUESTION TAGS

A: We've reduced customer complaints by 30%.
B: 30%? / Have you?
A: Our department gets at least 20 complaints a week.
B: Wow! Twenty complaints a week?
A: We believe the customer's always right.
B: Always right? Do you really believe that?



HURRAH

airlines

A US budget airline receives a lot of communication from its passengers. It needs to prioritise its response and ensure customer satisfaction wherever possible

Background

You are members of the Customer Services Department of Hurrah Airlines, a budget airline company based at JFK Airport, New York. Hurrah Airlines offers low ticket prices for flights to Europe and limited services. It makes up for the low ticket prices by charging for extras like food, priority boarding, seat allocation, excess baggage, etc. You often receive correspondence, telephone calls and voicemail messages from customers who are unhappy with your service. Callers seem to forget that you are a budget airline, so you must keep operating costs low in order to provide passengers with cheap tickets. However, you have to deal diplomatically and effectively with these dissatisfied customers and to come up with solutions to their problems.

Task

- 1  CD3.17, 3.18 Work in pairs. One of you is the Customer Service Manager and the other is the Assistant Customer Service Manager. Read the written correspondence on the right and on the opposite page. Then listen to the telephone conversation and the recorded message, and make notes on the key points made by each customer.
- 2 Because you are so busy, decide which complaints you will handle now as a priority, and which you will leave until later.
- 3 Discuss how you are going to deal with the complaints that you have prioritised.
- 4 As one group, discuss how you could improve the service you offer to your customers.

1

To:	Customer Services Department
From:	Martha Gómez
Subject:	Complaint

I'm writing to you because I can't get through to your helpline. I've been trying all week, but I get put on hold and then no one answers me. My problem is, I flew from New York to London last week on your airline, but when I got to the airport, I couldn't find my suitcase at baggage reclaim. I told someone at your desk. They promised to investigate and call me. Since then, nothing. I'm Brazilian, a single woman and on my own in London. I must get my suitcase back. It's got some expensive clothes, some important documents and some jewellery. I've no insurance for the items. And I don't think I've got any bills for the things I brought.

Please help me.

2

To: Customer Services Department
 From: Robert MacKenzie
 Subject: 27 June

I'm writing to complain about the poor customer service you've given me and my family. I called your airline to change our flights to Indonesia – there was an emergency there and I was advised to delay my visit. I e-mailed you several times and called your service desk, but got no answers. In the end, I had to go to the airport to change the flights – the journey cost me \$40. I booked new flights for two months' time, and was amazed when you made me pay a \$300 penalty for the new booking. You said the new booking had to be within 14 days of the earlier booking. I'm disgusted with the way you've treated me and my family. What are you going to do about it?

4

FAX TRANSMISSION

Is this what you call customer service? I pre-booked seats 32B and 32C for me and my ten-year-old daughter. I wanted an aisle seat because I'm pregnant and you often get a little more room in an aisle seat. When we got on board, someone was already sitting in the aisle seat and the seat next to it. I had to sit in a window seat, even though I complained to the stewardess. My daughter was put in a seat far away from me.

My seat had no cushion, just the bare seat base. The stewardess wouldn't let me look for another seat. The flight was turbulent, it was a nightmare for me. On my arrival in Warsaw, I contacted your desk. Your representative wasn't interested in my story – 'What do you expect, we're a budget airline,' she said to me.

Krystyna Kaminski

3

To: Customer Services Department
 From: Jacques Duperrier
 Subject: September 3

I'm a disabled man. At the airport, your company charged me \$30 for the hire of a wheelchair to get me on the airplane to Paris. I cannot believe that a company with annual profits of over \$300 million refuses to provide disabled people with wheelchairs free of charge. I'm not going to put up with this. I've contacted the Disability Rights Commission, who are willing to take this to court on my behalf. I've also talked to a national newspaper, which is interested in publishing an article about what's happened to me. Does your airline really want to be involved in a court case and to receive unfavourable publicity?

5

I've flown with your airline several times and have never had any problems. You have to pay for your food and extras, but I expect that. You get what you pay for in this world.

However, I didn't expect what happened to me last Sunday. I got to the airport, went through departures and checked the departure board for the flight to Philadelphia. Delayed! One hour later, delayed! Then the flight was cancelled. I stood in line with a lot of other unhappy passengers for about three hours at your desk. When my turn came, you refused to put me on a later flight. The earliest flight you offered me was 7.30 p.m. on Wednesday. That was too late for me. I tore up the ticket and went home.

I've heard nothing from your company about a refund. I should point out that the taxi to the airport cost \$38, the hotel room near the airport was \$100 and the ticket \$220 return.

I look forward to hearing your comments with interest.

Yours sincerely,

Kirk Danson

Watch the Case study
 commentary on the DVD-ROM.



Writing

Write a short report for the Director of Customer Services summarising the problems that customers have experienced and make recommendations for improving the service to customers.

➔ Writing file page 131

OUTLET VILLAGES

Before you read

Retail outlet villages, out-of-town shopping centres selling branded goods at a discount, are becoming important around the world. Which outlet villages do you know?

Reading

Read this article from the *Financial Times* by Hannah Kuchler and do the exercises that follow.

FT

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY ●●○

Bargain-hunting tourists find an outlet

Hannah Kuchler

Foreign tourists are fast becoming the primary customers for many of Britain's outlet villages. Some centres are even sending teams to emerging markets to lure wealthy tourists to plan trips that snub London's Bond Street and opt for their discounted designer brands instead. The number of Chinese consumers visiting Bicester Village in Oxfordshire has almost doubled in the past year, with tourists from China now making up more than a quarter of all shoppers at the village.

Value Retail, which runs Bicester and eight other outlet villages throughout Europe, has a team of 30 people who market the centres to foreign consumers. They visit the countries to give presentations to tourist companies and use social media to engage with shoppers directly. Bicester even has its own blog written in Chinese where it uses competitions to entice Chinese bloggers to write for it. "Bicester is better known today in China than

Selfridges or Harrods," says Scott Malkin, chairman of Value Retail.

"We'll get information that a Saudi princess is coming with 50 other women so we'll create special accommodation for them and bring in Arabic-speaking staff," says Mr Malkin. Tax-refunded sales, which are one way of tracking sales from outside the EU, increased 27 per cent in the West End of London last year, but rose 88 per cent at Bicester.

McArthur Glen runs seven outlets in the UK and has seen international customers rise by 50 per cent in the past year, albeit from a lower base than at Bicester. "Our teams on the ground noticed a shift in the number of tour buses, the Chinese became visible," says Henrik Madsen, managing director for McArthur Glen in northern Europe.

Even though they are choosing to buy brands at a discount, foreign customers are not counting their pennies: the average spend per visit of an international visitor to Bicester

is about £1,000 but it is not unusual for them to spend more than £10,000. Outlet village companies believe tourists are not embarrassed to buy discounted goods because of the importance of genuine brands when counterfeited products are rife at home.

Mr Malkin thinks Bicester beats Bond Street not only because of its prices but because it offers greater anonymity and the opportunity to visit Oxford or Warwick as part of a day out. To accommodate the new visitors, retailers have started stocking smaller sizes and some are employing sales staff who speak foreign languages. Value Retail runs courses to teach store staff what Asian customers expect. "The level of customer service has to be very precise because there's the language barrier, the customers take a lot of time and want to see a lot of products," says Jane Soper, store manager for Jimmy Choo.

1 Look through the whole article and find:

- a London shopping street
- an outlet village not in London
- two London department stores
- two companies that own outlets
- their chairman and managing director respectively
- a retailer
- a store manager

2 Look through the whole article and match these figures to the things that they refer to.

- | | | |
|---|--------------|---|
| 1 | 30 | a) the increase in international visitors to McArthur Glen stores last year |
| 2 | 50 | b) the increase in tax-refunded sales at Bicester last year |
| 3 | 27 per cent | c) the number of women that a Saudi princess may bring shopping with her |
| 4 | 88 per cent | d) the amount that visitors to Bicester spend on average |
| 5 | 50 per cent | e) what a visitor to Bicester might spend |
| 6 | £1,000 | f) the increase in tax-refunded sales in the West End of London last year |
| 7 | over £10,000 | g) the number of people employed by Value Retail to market it in Asia |

3 Choose the correct alternative to replace the expressions in italics from lines 1–14, so as to keep the same meaning.

- Foreign tourists are fast becoming the primary customers for many of Britain's outlet villages.
a) first b) main c) youngest
- Some centres are even sending teams to emerging markets to lure wealthy tourists ...
a) attract b) trick c) magnetise
- ... to plan trips that snub London's Bond Street ...
a) go to b) ignore c) take in
- ... and opt for their discounted designer brands instead.
a) exclude b) add c) choose
- The number of Chinese consumers visiting Bicester Village in Oxfordshire has almost doubled in the past year, ...
a) gone up by nearly 100 per cent
b) gone up by nearly 200 per cent
c) gone up nearly twice
- ... with tourists from China now making up more than a quarter of all shoppers at the village.
a) consisting b) consistent c) constituting

4 Find the infinitive forms of verbs in lines 15–29 that could be replaced by these verbs, with no change in meaning.

- manage
- sell
- go to
- employ (occurs twice)
- communicate

5 Look through lines 15–39 and 63–80. Which of these things are not mentioned as part of village outlets' customer service?

- employing staff that speak foreign languages
- employing Arabic-speaking staff
- employing Chinese-speaking staff
- giving language training to existing staff
- getting Arab visitors to write a blog in Arabic
- getting overseas visitors to use social media to talk about their experiences
- training staff in what Asian customers expect
- keeping smaller sizes in stock
- keeping larger sizes in stock

6 Use appropriate forms of the expressions in brackets from lines 40–62 to answer these questions.

- Is the rise in the number of overseas visitors to McArthur Glen's outlets directly comparable to the rise in numbers visiting Bicester? (lower base)
- Is it the managers at head office who have noticed the increase in numbers with their own eyes? (on the ground)
- Has the number of tour buses with Chinese visitors stayed the same? (shift)
- Are overseas visitors watching how much they spend overall? (count their pennies)
- Are visitors happy to buy discounted goods? (embarrassed)
- Are there a lot of counterfeit goods in the countries they come from? (rife)

Over to you 1

What could the retail outlets that you use do to improve their customer service?

Over to you 2

Value Retail runs courses to teach store staff what Asian customers expect. Imagine that you are running a course for a retailer that has a lot of visitors from your country. What would the course cover?

SOCIAL MEDIA

Before you read

Is it possible to have a personal relationship with a brand? Why? / Why not?

Reading

Read this article from the *Financial Times* by Tim Bradshaw and do the exercises that follow.

FT

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY ● ● ○

Do you want to be friends with a brand?

Tim Bradshaw

When first faced with the prospect of marketing on social networks, many people ask a reasonable question: how many people want to be friends with a brand? The answer – surprisingly, perhaps – is: millions do, on a daily basis. More than 10m people each day become a “fan” of a brand on Facebook. The world’s largest social network – with well in excess of 400m members globally – plays host to more than 1.4m branded fan pages on Facebook. BrandZ Top 100 brands such as Coca-Cola and Starbucks, along with other smaller brands such as Adidas that have each “befriended” millions of people.

Social media have matured rapidly in recent years. Sites such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter offer scale and reach to rival Google – still the most dominant single site for online advertising – and many television channels. The best adver-

tisers use social media alongside these traditional channels for a combination of brand-building, direct sales, customer service and PR. The worst simply ignore them, until they realise the complaints and accusations that unhappy customers are telling other would-be consumers.

“Social media have given consumers a voice to respond, as well as hundreds of channels through which to do so,” says Debbie Klein, joint chief executive of Engine, a UK-based agency group. “These websites have fundamentally transformed marketing from a monologue to a dialogue. Brands cannot hide.”

Eurostar, for instance, recently faced criticism for ignoring Twitter messages – which, unlike most Facebook posts, are usually made public for anyone to read – from angry customers trapped on trains between Paris and London. Eurostar

had failed to grab its brand name on Twitter, and its main presence on the site – named “little_break” to tie into a wider marketing campaign – was still showing special offers rather than information on the disrupted service for some hours after the problems began.

In the fast-paced, “real-time” environment of Twitter, just a few hours is long enough for such criticism to spread widely, be chewed over by its users and, if it reaches a certain volume, be picked up and amplified further by the mainstream media. Kevin Smith, a film director, caused a similar Twitter storm when he complained to more than 1m followers that Southwest Airlines threw him off a flight for being overweight. Southwest later made two public apologies on its blog.

TEXT BANK

1 Read lines 1–17 to find this information.

The number of ...

- a) people who become 'friends' of a brand each day on Facebook.
- b) people overall who are members of Facebook.
- c) brand-related fan pages there are on Facebook.
- d) friends that brands such as Coca-Cola and Starbucks typically have.

2 Complete these statements with correct forms of expressions from lines 1–17.

- a) If you are of something, you may do it in the future, and you may or may not be happy about this.
- b) Something that is normal and not strange is
- c) If a writer thinks that readers may not believe something, the writer can use the adverb '.....'.
- d) Someone who likes and admires a film star, a brand, etc. is a
- e) Instead of using 'more than', you can say '.....'.
- f) An adverb meaning 'all around the world' is '.....'.
- g) A social website that contains particular pages to these pages.
- h) If you make friends with someone, you them.

3 Complete the table with words and grammatically related words from lines 18–41.

verb	noun
	maturity
reach	
rival,
use	
combine	
	complaint
	accusations
respond	

4 Now match the nouns in Exercise 3 to their meanings.

- a) criticisms that may or may not be justified
- b) using a number of things together
- c) the number of people that you can communicate with
- d) when a market starts to grow more slowly, there are fewer competitors, etc.
- e) you make a when you are not happy about something
- f) when you apply particular methods, ideas, etc.
- g) competition
- h) when two people talk to each other
- i) an answer
- j) a competitor

5 Read lines 42–70 and decide if these statements are true or false.

Twitter ...

- a) and its potential have been cleverly exploited by Eurostar.
- b) only showed advertising for short breaks from Eurostar even hours after the trains were delayed.
- c) allows criticism to spread very quickly.
- d) messages are always picked up by the mainstream media.
- e) had a problem when Southwest Airlines threw an overweight customer off a flight.
- f) has apologised about this.

6 What is the key point made by the article?

- a) Every brand should have a presence on Twitter.
- b) Brand marketing has become a dialogue, and companies have to be aware of this.
- c) Twitter is a good way of handling complaints about customer service.

Over to you 1

Look at the customer complaints in paragraphs 5 and 6 again. What should Eurostar and Southwest Airlines have done respectively a) in relation to Twitter and b) more generally?

Over to you 2

Would you become a 'friend' of a brand on Facebook? If so, which one(s), and why? If not, why not?

VOCABULARY

A

Choose the best word (*a, b, c or d*) to complete each space in the article.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

The way a company approaches customer service is one of the most important factors in determining its future success or failure.

No matter what a company does, it is always in the business of *...providing...*¹ customer service. If you take a look at companies that are not doing well or have gone *.....*², one of their common features is their inability to deliver reliable and efficient customer service. All successful companies, on the other hand, understand and deliver what their customers want and strongly believe in the value of customer service training for management and *.....*³ employees.

Companies which fail to view customer service training as an *.....*⁴ are likely to remain in business only if they manage to keep a large number of first-time consumers. Moreover, they will probably end up losing market *.....*⁵ and experiencing a *.....*⁶ in profits unless they keep introducing new products and spending massively *.....*⁷ advertising.

Successful companies, however, are the ones which have grasped that in today's extremely competitive marketplace, being good is just not good enough anymore. Customers have become much more *.....*⁸ and expect nothing less than *.....*⁹ in customer service.

One of the keys to success is for a company to develop efficient means of communication between management and employees. This invariably has a direct positive effect on the customer. As a matter of fact, a company which is good to work for is usually one which is good to *.....*¹⁰ business with.

- | | | | | |
|----|---------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1 | a) <u>providing</u> | b) giving | c) selling | d) caring |
| 2 | a) away | b) over | c) under | d) across |
| 3 | a) shopfloor | b) foreground | c) front-line | d) workshop |
| 4 | a) earning | b) expenditure | c) interest | d) investment |
| 5 | a) share | b) demand | c) niche | d) place |
| 6 | a) rise | b) drop | c) level | d) plateau |
| 7 | a) in | b) for | c) over | d) on |
| 8 | a) awkward | b) requested | c) complex | d) demanding |
| 9 | a) excellence | b) goodness | c) quality | d) expertise |
| 10 | a) deal | b) do | c) make | d) work |

B

Replace the parts in *italics* with the correct form of an idiomatic expression from the box.

~~to slip somebody's mind~~ (to be) the last straw to get to the bottom of the problem
 to get straight to the point to pass the buck to rip somebody off
 to go the extra mile to talk at cross purposes

- I intended to tell the manager a lot of customers had complained, but she was in a hurry and *I completely forgot*. *..... it slipped my mind* *.....*
- If you are dissatisfied with their service, don't hesitate, *talk about it directly* and tell them what sort of compensation you expect.
.....

- 3 When we are sure we are to blame for a problem, our policy is never to *avoid responsibility*.
- 4 Avoid the Regency Hotel. They have a reputation for *charging far too much*.
- 5 It is not enough just to compensate customers when their complaints are justified. We have to *find the real cause of the problem* to make sure it doesn't happen again.
- 6 Not only did they refuse to admit that the video I had bought wasn't working properly, but they also refused to give me a replacement. That was *the last in a series of unpleasant events!*
- 7 I wanted a refund and they kept offering me a replacement. We were obviously *misunderstanding each other*.
- 8 Pilots have reacted in the right way by once again *making a special extra effort* to solve problems and extend their working duties to maximum legal limits in order to minimise the suffering of customers.

LANGUAGE REVIEW

Gerunds

A Complete the sentences with a gerund from the box.

working	taking	letting	being	ignoring	listening
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- 1 After *listening* to the customer's complaint, we try to suggest a number of solutions.
- 2 She had mentioned as a customer care supervisor before.
- 3 They brazenly admitted all complaints.
- 4 We make a point of not the customer off the line until the query is fully resolved.
- 5 We know that patient and polite always makes a good impression.
- 6 Increasing production may mean on extra staff at the weekend.

B Complete each sentence so that it means the same as the sentence just before it. Use a gerund each time.

- 1 You won't go very far if you don't deal with your customers' complaints.
You won't go very far without *dealing with your customers' complaints*.
- 2 We spend a lot of money on training, and that's perfectly alright.
We don't mind
- 3 One thing they complained about all the time was our prices.
They never ceased
- 4 They said they didn't overcharge us.
They denied
- 5 I don't think it's a good idea to promise too much to the customer.
I think we should avoid
- 6 I'm sorry I didn't take the customer feedback seriously enough.
I regret

In which of the six sentences above could an infinitive be used instead of a gerund?

C Circle the correct form(s) of the verb in the text.

NEWS DIGEST

At Deltelfone, staff are encouraged *put* / *(to put)* / *putting*¹ themselves in the customer's shoes and find a solution instead of *opt* / *to opt* / *opting*² for an easy way out.

As a cellphone service provider, Deltelfone endeavours *provide* / *to provide* / *providing*³ its customers with the highest level of service.

Miguel Fernandez, customer services director of the company, says the first priority is *ensure* / *to ensure* / *ensuring*⁴ that customers receive their bills on time and that the accounts are accurate. Most people prefer *structure* / *to structure* / *structuring*⁵ their monthly bill payments, and if bills are late it can inconvenience them, Fernandez says.

Bill / *To bill* / *Billing*⁶ on time requires *have* / *to have* / *having*⁷ the appropriate technology in place. Deltelfone interacts with its customers through its franchised dealer network and through its own call centre.

WRITING
Editing

A Read this short text about demanding customers.

In most of the lines 1–14 there is **one extra word** which does not fit. Some lines, however, are correct.

If a line is **correct**, put a tick (✓) in the space provided.

If there is an **extra word** in the line, write that word in the space.

Demanding customers are certainly not new. What is new is their increasing numbers.

It can be argued that, to a large extent, it is the explosion in the number of people using the Internet which has been a primarily responsible for increased customer frustration. It seems that if the speed of the Internet, and the number of cell phones, websites, and so on and have increased customer expectations. And when their expectations are not met, customers become quite demanding.

What do customers will expect? Customers expect e-mails to be answered in a matter of hours, not for days. Very often, they expect to be able to find the answers to their questions on a company websites. Moreover, they must also expect to be able to talk to a live customer service rep or when they want to, and generally would like their problems to be resolved as quickly.

One thing it is certain: companies that want to survive in the future will have to address these issues quickly.

- 1 ✓
- 2 ?
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14

Letters of complaint

B Unscramble the sentences and re-order them to make **two different letters of complaint**. Write the sentence numbers in the table.

- 1 As a matter of fact, the above invoice was settled on 10 October, i.e., exactly five days after our order had been received.
- 2 As a result, I will have to consider changing my supplier unless you can guarantee that such errors will not happen again in the future.
- 3 As usual, we paid by bank transfer.
- 4 Every time, those errors have had an adverse effect on our production schedules.
- 5 Further to our telephone call this morning, I am writing to complain about a number of items which are either missing or faulty in the above order.

- 6 I am sorry to have to remind you that this is the third time we have had occasion to complain of such mistakes.
- 7 Please find enclosed a detailed list of both missing and faulty items.
- 8 We enclose a copy of a statement from our bank confirming that payment was indeed made.
- 9 I hope you will take the necessary action to resolve this matter speedily.
- 10 We would advise you to check your records carefully.
- 11 With reference to your reminder of 1 December, it seems to us that an error has been made.

TYPE OF LETTER						
Complaint about delivery:	5	7				
Reply to a reminder to pay:	11					

C Complete this reply to the complaint about delivery in exercise B.

BEEBOP FOOTWEAR – Wholesale & Retail

The Golden Boot
 23 Birchington Road
 Chelmsford
 Essex CM4 5FG

Koningsstraat 53
 1020 Brussels

23 May

Dear Mr Hopkins,

We were very sorry to receive your letter complaining*about*.....¹ a damaged and incomplete consignment, order ref. 20G/FF/103.

Our staff have been² great pressure recently to deal with an unusually large number of orders, and unfortunately mistakes have occurred. We have already arranged³ all replacements and missing items to be shipped to you.

You will also be pleased to hear that, under the circumstances, we have decided to offer you a 6% discount instead of the 4% formerly agreed.

Please accept our apologies⁴ the inconvenience caused, and rest assured that we will do our utmost to ensure that such mistakes do not occur again⁵ the future.

We look forward⁶ doing business⁷ you again.

Yours sincerely,

Frans Vierstraete

Frans Vierstraete,
 Sales Director

D Write a reply to the second letter in exercise B.

Use a similar structure as in the letter above: apologise for the mistake, explain how it happened, explain what you have done or intend to do to put the mistake right, apologise again and end on a positive note.