

## How to have good customer service on social media

Delivering great social media customer service is a layered approach. It can be defined as a pyramid, which is based on a foundation of organization and skills.

You can be as nice as you'd like to an unsatisfied customer on Twitter. However, to truly offer best-in-class service on social media, you must get the whole team on board and build a robust customer service strategy where no detail has been left unconsidered.

### An integrated set of changes can help companies achieve social media servicing excellence.

Areas for change, with each change building on the ones below



Source: McKinsey analysis

McKinsey & Company

Source: [McKinsey](#)

### Set expectations

Your overarching social media customer service strategy should start by

defining your platform presence and service windows. What hours will you be available on Twitter versus Facebook? What response times are reasonable for your team and respectful to your audience?

It's a good idea to align these goals to platform characteristics. For an always-on, quick-and-chatty site like Twitter, a brief yet fast response is going to be valued more than on YouTube.

Your team should have time goals for acknowledging social media posts (e.g., "Thanks for your message... our support team will be in touch within 24 hours") and for resolving basic queries.

Once you've locked in your internal time expectations, let your audience know, too. "We're online 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. PST to help!" or "We respond to all customer service requests within 20 minutes" lets consumers know what to expect and alleviates frustration before it can begin.

### **Set up a dedicated handle for social media customer support**

Your customer service team can likely address client questions faster and in more detail than your social marketing team can. The social media and customer service stats above show a customer service Twitter account is more likely to respond within 15 minutes.

That's why it can be a good idea for brands to use separate social media accounts to offer social media customer service solutions. This helps filter out support and service issues from your primary channel. It also ensures you assign the right teams to monitor the right types of incoming public messages.

If you create a dedicated social channel for customer support, include that

handle in your brand's other social profile bios. This lets people know where to reach out for support-related requests.

People will still use your main social marketing handles to contact you with support and service issues. They might simply use the brand handle they already know rather than looking at your main profile to check for a support account.

If a service request comes into your main social channel, pass it along to the right team and respond from your support account.

### **Find and monitor conversations relevant to your business**

Of course, many people will also post messages about your business online without tagging any of your social accounts. Some of these posts might warrant a customer service response.

That means you can't wait to be tagged in social media customer support requests. You need to monitor conversations about your brand. Then you can respond to customers who have a service issue—even if they didn't reach out to you.

### **Create social media guidelines**

Social customer support has different challenges and opportunities from social marketing. But it's no less important to have social media guidelines in place.

Your brand guidelines for social customer support should cover things such as:

- Tone of voice
- Answers to frequently asked questions
- Protocol for escalations or other customer issues
- A message approval procedure and a permission management system
- [What to do in a social media crisis](#)

These should align with your company values and with the social marketing team.

### **Be proactive**

If customers regularly have the same questions, that's a clue you need to provide some self-service information resources.

Your social media customer service channels are great places to share educational content. For example, you could create a how-to video or best practices blog post. It's all about helping customers learn how to get the most from your products. If you offer an online service, you could also post updates about any known service issues.

These resources will help reduce the number of support requests that come in. They're also an easy place to refer people with simple support questions.

Pinned posts and Instagram Stories highlights are great places to provide self-help resources.

### **Manage customer expectations**

Customers don't expect all companies to offer the same levels of customer service on social media. The world has very different expectations for a

mom-and-pop shoe store versus, say, Amazon.

How companies use social media for customer service will vary based on the size of the available team, but whoever you are and whatever you can offer, the most important thing is to set customer expectations appropriately.

Make it clear when your service team is available (Apple, for instance, is available on Twitter from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. PST), and how long it might take you to respond. If there are other resources they can use to get answers faster, let them know.

### **Always respond**

This may sound obvious, but it's a rule not all companies follow.

People asking questions about your brand on social media may or may not be your customers (yet). Answering all questions on social channels shows that you have responsive customer service. This proves to potential customers that you care about your clients' needs.

Even if someone suddenly posts a question about the comfort of your shoes on a meme of Rihanna, it is customer service's job to confidently let them know: yeah, they're comfortable.

A potential customer who reaches out for support and doesn't get it will likely move on to your competition instead.

### **Respond quickly—with templates for common questions**

Simply responding is not enough. When customers reach out to brands on social, they expect a fast, friendly response.

Your Facebook Page reveals right upfront whether you respond quickly to customer messages. If you respond to 90% of messages and have a response time of 15 minutes or less, you'll get a Very Responsive to Messages badge.

Your social customer service may not be available 24/7, and that's okay. You just need to set customer expectations appropriately.

Make your social customer service hours of availability clear. Let customers know when you're going offline. Provide links to self-help solutions. Direct them on how to reach other customer service channels (like your call center) in the meantime.

On Facebook, use Away Messaging to provide an automated response when your social customer support team is offline. Messages received during your Away times don't count towards your Very Responsive status.

You can also use Instant Replies on Facebook to send a canned response to all initial messages—Quick Replies are a similar feature available on Twitter, available through select partners. This is especially useful during busier-than-normal times. You can set customer expectations in terms of when you'll be able to reply personally.

You can find step-by-step instructions on how to set up both Away Messaging and Instant Replies in our Facebook Messenger guide.

Instagram has a similar feature called Saved Replies. You can pre-write answers to common questions so you can reply quickly with just a couple of taps.

## □ Try a chatbot for common service requests

Chatbots are a great way to offer basic social customer service 24/7. Always-on capability was the top benefit of AI-powered chatbots in a survey of global banking and insurance customers.

Chatbots can give customers the information they want immediately. That's an important resource when your team is offline. Bots tend to work best for simple questions that you get often.

## □ Take public conversations private

Customers may contact you on social with questions or requests that would be better addressed through a private channel. For instance, you might need confidential information like a booking number or account name.

On Facebook, you can respond to a public comment with a private message. This takes the conversation to Facebook Messenger, where you can interact more confidentially. Below the customer's comment, just click Message to respond privately.

Once you send your message, a note will appear under the comment that says, "Page responded privately." This shows other users that you addressed the request, even though your response is not visible.

If you respond by DM on Instagram or Twitter, add a comment so the customer knows to check their DMs. Others can then also see you reached out privately to resolve the issue.

## **Analyze your social customer service regularly**

Your social media customer service is an opportunity to learn and get better... but it's hard to see progress if you don't take a step back every once in a while.

Taking a big-picture look at your social customer service—whether weekly, monthly, or annually—is a chance to recognize patterns and see what problems come up again and again. It may also be an opportunity to identify what roadblocks are slowing down your service team... or see who your customer-service superstars are and what they might be able to teach the rest of the crew.

## **Take the high road**

There are going to be some wild emotions flying through your social media customer support queue, but good customer service (on any channel) never stoops to anger or frustration. You are calm, cool, and collected at all times.

While this is obviously an important element of business in any capacity (the customer is always right, etc, etc), online, there is the added risk of a snarky comment or clash getting the ol' screenshot treatment. Even in private messages, your best and most graceful behavior is essential. If a customer (or troll) is getting under your skin, reach out to your team for backup and guidance.

When in doubt, remember this old chestnut: if you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all.

## **Add a personal touch**

Responding to people by name ("Thanks for letting us know your quesadilla



wasn't cheesy enough, Brian!") and signing off with your name or initials helps humanize an interaction.

Even the spiciest of interactions can be diffused by reminding the other person that real people are reading their comments on the other side of the internet.

If it's a fit for your brand voice, humor, emojis, or gifs might even be a fit for social media customer service responses.