Customer support tickets and emails are a convenient way for anyone to request help online. Learn four easy ways to write more effective responses to customer support tickets and emails.

!!!Customer Support Tickets & Emails: The Introvert's Best Friend

I have a confession. I dread contacting customer support by phone. I once let a new wireless router sit in its box for a year before calling customer support for help with installation. That's right. I am an introvert, and I am not the only one. For people like me, calling customer support is a torture we avoid at all costs.

Imagine my joy, then, when the customer support ticket and email were invented. Introverts, rejoice! Now, we can receive help in writing without having to interact in real time with another human being.

Customer support tickets and emails are a convenient way for anyone (not just introverts) to receive help online. Tickets and emails give customers time to describe their need fully, allow support agents to word an accurate response, and create a written record to guide future communication.

However, with convenience comes responsibility--the obligation of support staff to write effective responses to support tickets and emails. This lesson offers four tips for writing solid responses:

* Write Correctly
* Write Precisely, Clearly, and Concisely
* Write Systematically
* Write like a Human Being

!!!Write Correctly

First and foremost, a response to a customer support ticket or email must use correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Why is correct writing so important?

When I am not busy being an introvert, I teach writing, and I always tell my students that whether or not it is true, readers perceive strong writing as a sign of a strong mind. In contrast, they view writing that is full of mistakes as a sign of a less capable person. Of course, this is not a fair assumption, and we know there are Einsteins who could not use a comma correctly if their theory of relativity depended on it.

Nevertheless, grammar, punctuation, and spelling are the nuts and bolts of writing. Just as a machine will not work if its parts are not assembled correctly, a response to a support ticket or email will not succeed if its subjects, verbs, commas, periods, and apostrophes are not assembled into coherent sentences.

Writing correctly is non-negotiable in customer service. To protect their company's credibility and their own, support agents should take the time to refresh their grammatical memory. Study.com offers numerous lessons on the nuts and bolts of writing.

!!!Write Precisely, Clearly, & Concisely

Customer support is fast-paced. Customers want answers quickly and will probably not read detailed responses to tickets and emails. To respond efficiently, support staff should follow the rule of Precise-Clear-Concise (PCC):

__Write Precisely.__ Customers who submit a ticket or email want to be understood. When responding, an agent can greatly increase a customer's satisfaction by precisely identifying the customer's need and, as much as possible, offering a resolution. To reach this goal, agents should quickly but accurately restate the customer's question or need and offer a straightforward solution.

__Write Clearly.__ Customers want to be understood; they also want to understand a support agent's response. To enhance clarity, agents should copy Ernest Hemingway. The Nobel Prize winner kept his sentences short and simple (subject-verb-object). He also chose concrete words (rose) over more abstract ones (nature's most romantic bloom). When responding to customer support tickets and emails, be like Hemingway. Write simply, write directly, and your responses will be clear.

__Write Concisely.__ No one wants to read long-winded responses. Compare these two sentences:

* 'I see that you have submitted this ticket to our IT Help Desk in an effort to determine whether the social media account you created under your name has been compromised by a person or persons hitherto unknown to you.'
* 'Our Help Desk has investigated your claim that your social media account has been hacked by someone you do not know.'

The second sentence is concise and does not waste the reader's time. Message to support staff: get to the point! Customers, fellow agents, and supervisors will thank you.

!!!Write Systematically

Customer support offices have systems in place to prioritize and track responses. Nevertheless, support staff will at times be overwhelmed by tickets and emails. To manage these crunches, agents can develop a personal system for speeding up response time.

For example, an agent may establish personal targets for responding to requests that are faster than the company norm. Or, an agent may group tickets and emails into pools of simple versus complex requests and answer simple requests first, freeing up more time for complex ones.

Writing can be harder to systematize. Everyone has experienced writer's block and faced the cold glare of an empty screen. Unfortunately, the pace of customer service does not allow for writer's block. To systematize writing, agents may want to try the following strategy: draft each response in 5 minutes or less. This draft will be rough, but at least the agent will have words to revise rather than a blank screen.

Another way to systematize writing is to use keystroke apps. In this way, agents can insert common support responses with a click of the keyboard. This idea works well as long as the writing does not sound impersonal or 'canned,' an issue we take up in the final section.

!!!Write like a Human Being

Too many customer support responses sound as though they were written by a robot: 'We at Company X appreciate each and every one of our customers, and we want to thank you for taking the time out of your busy day to contact us regarding problem X.'

Sentences like this are called 'boilerplate'--generic language as fresh as that leftover sandwich left in the break room three weeks ago. Customers recognize (and resent) boilerplate and often conclude that this company does not care about customers. Support staff cannot respond personally to each customer. Some boilerplate must be used. However, this language does not have to sound like boilerplate.

Instead of using boilerplate, try templates. While boilerplate is simply pasted into a response, templates provide a starting point for a sentence or paragraph but allow agents to complete the response in their own words. Customer support offices often provide templates for their agents. If not, agents can ask whether they can develop templates within company guidelines.

Agents will also want to inject personality into their responses. Support staff can personalize responses by varying their word choices, using more than one template for the same type of response, and inserting an occasional exclamation point or friendly turn of phrase.

As long as these strategies are not against company policy, they will let each customer know that a fellow human being took time to personalize a response. These efforts will reflect positively on the company that the agent represents.

!!!Lesson Summary

Although customer support tickets and emails have a longer turnaround time, some customers prefer this stress-free method, which allows them to explain their need carefully and receive a thoughtful written response.

To write effective responses to customer tickets and emails, support staff can follow four simple guidelines:

* Write Correctly
* Write Precisely, Clearly, and Concisely
* Write Systematically
* Write like a Human Being

Customer support agents can greatly increase their credibility by crafting solid responses to tickets and emails. Just as important, they can increase their company's credibility. Taking the time to write effective responses is time well spent. Believe me. Introverts will be grateful!