

# CUSTOMER SUPPORT

## MODULE 6

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- Understanding Technical Support
- Delivering Customer Excellence
- Focusing on the Customer
- Listening to Customers
- Handling Customer Complaints
- Working with Irate Customers
- Managing Stress

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This module reviews all five previous modules by starting with the general work of a Technical Support Specialist and working our way through first contact with the customer, to troubleshooting and solving technical problems, to responding to irate and frustrated customers, to managing your own stress. In this way, you will learn how the previous modules fit together.

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Issues start with the customer calling or creating a ticket, and end with the customer verifying the solution worked.

- **Issue Life Cycle** – Issues come in from customers, issues must be prioritized, solved, and documented; in that order.
- **Prioritization** – Deciding which issues need an immediate response, which do not, and which issues to escalate.
- **Problem Solving** – Listening to the customer, Deriving a solution, Implementing the solution, Asking the customer to verify.
- **Issue Resolution** – Documenting what caused the incident and the solution, in order to detect problems, ineffective solutions, and best practices.

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## Prioritize the following list of issues. Explain why.

- An accountant (Silver Level) called and said that he did not have access to the network in order to close this month's books.
- A Vice President, Gold Level, cannot find the network printer.
- The HR department needs a new user set up as soon as possible, but does not provide any details.
- An operations manager, Silver Level, wants to know if external email is checked for viruses.

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Your customers are why you are needed in your company. They give you opportunities to demonstrate how valuable you are to the company.

- Be friendly and approachable.
- Listen more than talk.
- Explain how long it will take.
- Follow up with the customers to make sure the fix worked.

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The Accountant explains that his laptop cannot access the network and without access this month's books cannot be closed. You walk up to his office and he is on the phone...You immediately:

- Wave "Hello" and say you will be back in five minutes.
- Wait in the hallway until he hangs up.
- Walk into his office to see if his laptop is on and is connected to the wireless network.
- Interrupt a nearby co-worker to see if she can access the wireless network.
- Enter the fact that you responded to the ticket and move on to the next issue.

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Customer service means different things to different people. Interacting with each individual gives you a chance to learn what customer service is to each person.

- Report back to the customer if it has been a while since you last contacted the person.
- Be aware of your facial expressions, even when *on the phone*.
- You are always happy to help.

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You respond to the Vice President's printer issue. You discover that the VP did have access to the printer, but it was turned off and hasn't been printing anything. You turn it back on. What do you tell the VP?

- “The printer is working now. Please try again.”
- “Please wait five minutes and try again.”
- “The print queue is running now. I will be back in a few minutes to see if everything printed.”
- You don't say anything, but discover there are in 22 documents in the queue – all fairly large.

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When following up with a customer, you may have to inform the customer that it is taking longer than anticipated to resolve the issue. When doing so, remember to...

- Show concern for the customer's needs and situation.
- Give a revised estimate.
- Ask if there is anything else you can do.

Why are these points important?

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All customers complain at some point. It is perfectly normal and should be expected. Complaints are worthwhile feedback. Active Listening helps diffuse and prevent stressful situations.

Active Listening is:

- Letting the customer finish her or his explanation without interruption.
- Repeating back to the customer to ensure you understood correctly.
- Having the customer confirm or repeat back what she or he said.
- If you misunderstood, listen again and then rephrase your new understanding.

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The Operations Manager wants to know if emails are scanned for viruses. You walk up to her office and say that you are here in response to her request for help. She explains that she received a large file and doesn't want to open a virus. You explain everything is scanned and...

- ...Ask why is she suspicious.
- ...Offer to escalate the issue to the network security team.
- ...Tell her she should follow corporate policy.
- ...Tell her you've already forwarded the issue to second tier support.

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When you are talking with someone, ensure that you are letting them know that you are listening by...

- Leaning forward with open, receptive body language.
- Letting them finish their statements before interjecting.
- Confirming that you understand what was said by repeating back what you heard in your own words.

Why are these points important?

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When customers are frustrated, the causes can come from repeat problems, lack of response, and many, many other reasons. Several ways to prevent customer frustration include:

- Consistently documenting solutions.
- Identifying problems, which are a series of related incidents.
- Working closely with fellow Support Technicians.
- Listening to the customer.

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You walk into the HR Manager's office to get the details on the new user account. The HR Manager immediately begins to complain why it takes so long to create a new user. And, why does it take so much information to just create a simple account. You immediately...

- ...Explain accounts and security are complex.
- ...Explain the procedure is important but can be reviewed later.
- ...Explain you empathize and wish there was a simpler method, but you are here now to create the user account.
- ...Ask if she has any specific recommendations.
- ...Let her know she is the only one complaining.

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Sometimes you will be asked by a customer to go against standing policy. Following policy is important, but can lead to frustration for the customer. Balancing Customer Focus with job responsibilities requires creativity in problem solving. Several reasons why policies are to be followed include...

- Many policies exist to enforce good documentation habits.
- Many policies exist to prevent making changes to the network and system without appropriate approval.
- Many policies exist to protect everyone's interests.

Why are these reasons important?

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Responding to irate customers requires professionalism and strong communication skills, which include:

- Engaging in the conversation and showing concern for the customer's situation.
- Positive body language, which is leaning forward, open arms, welcoming tone.
- Remaining calm.
- Asking questions and expressing empathy.

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Your boss calls and tells you the Vice President is extremely upset because she missed a meeting because she could not print an important report. You immediately...

- ...Get off the phone and run to the VP's office.
- ...Explain it was a simple printer queue issue.
- ...Explain you've been following up with other issues while waiting for the 22 docs to print.
- ...Explain you should have checked the queue sooner to see if it completed.
- ...Explain you didn't understand the urgency.

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It's inevitable that you will encounter irate customers. Remember that customers...

- Are the number one reason you are needed in your company.
- Give you opportunity to demonstrate your skills
- Are also sources of compliments.

Why are these points important to remember?

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Stress is normal. Your job depends on your ability to handle stress. Stay focused on the problem and remember the customers are not angry but frustrated with their problem.

- Realize when you are stressed and take short breaks.
- Take deep breaths.
- Stay positive.
- Prioritize your work.
- Enjoy the problem-solving aspects of you job.

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- Issue Life Cycle: Prioritize, Solve, and Document
- Your customers are why you are needed in your company
- Customer service means different things to different people
- Listen to Your Customers
- Complaints are opportunities
- Manage Your Stress and Maintain Your Composure

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How would you rank the following list in terms of most important skills for a Technical Support Specialist? Why?

- Listening
- Documentation
- Prevention of Issues
- Following Up with Customers
- Giving Estimates for Completion
- Managing Your Own Stress Level

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- Prioritization of issues helps prevent...
  - Accidentally forgetting or neglecting any given issue.
  - Missing agreed upon service performance levels.
  - Both of the above
- The best method of showing concern for the customer's situation and expectations is...
  - Resolving the issue as quickly as possible
  - Resolving the issue so that it does not happen again
  - Repeating back the customer's issue to make sure your understand it fully
  - Positive Body Language

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