

HOW TO PROVIDE EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

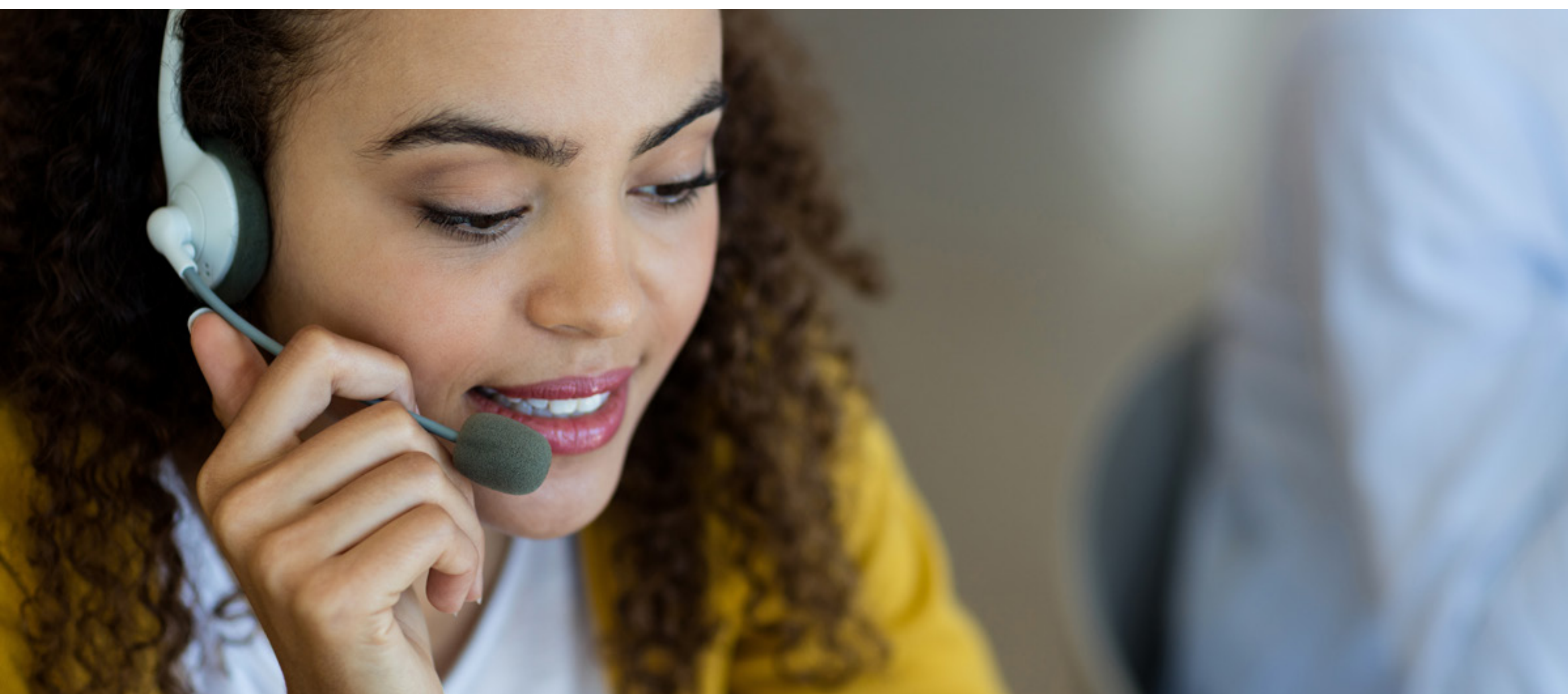


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*We live in customer-centric times. To stay competitive, businesses need to create a positive experience for customers right from the first moment they become interested in a product or service. However, there's one part of the customer experience that is consistently ranked as being more frustrating than anything else: **customer service.***

You may have fantastic products and provide top-notch services, but if your customer support is unhelpful or unreliable then there's little chance that your customers will stay with you for long. In fact, [50% of customers](#) say that they would switch to a new brand after a single bad support experience.

Upping your customer support game is therefore crucial if you don't want to fall behind your competitors. But what does it even mean to provide "excellent" customer support? Moreover, how can you provide each of your customers with the help they need, as soon as they need it?



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01 /05

WHAT EXACTLY IS EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE?

What exactly is excellent customer service?

In theory, providing good customer support is simple. Your new and existing customers reach out to you whenever they have a question or problem, and your job is to help them out as best as you can.

*So what does it mean to provide **excellent** customer support?*

First off, there is no universal way of providing excellent customer service. However, some aspects are so crucial that they should be practiced by every good business — even those with very limited resources.

Many companies are fighting for customers' attention (and money) nowadays, meaning that "good" support will no longer cut it.

Whenever a customer reaches out to your support team, they expect the first person they get in touch with to resolve their problem.

What's more, they expect it to be solved quickly.

#1 Practice active listening

No matter what type of service you provide, listening and responding to what customers have to say is crucial. In order to provide excellent support, you first need to understand how your customers benefit from using your service or product.

If you don't do this the right way, it will be a waste of time for

both you and your customers. Ask questions such as “what’s gone wrong?” or “how can we help?” instead of jumping into problem-solving right away.

Many customers who call you to ask for help have no idea what they’re actually looking for. If you ask open-ended questions, you’ll obtain more information than you would if you just let your customers talk about how they feel.

You may think that your support staff can do this, yet not all of them will know what to ask. A good agent should be aware of the most common complaints that come up so they can better attend to customers’ needs.

#2 Clearly show customers the possibilities for solving their problems

Providing excellent customer support means giving your customers options and solutions. There are countless ways to solve each problem, not just one.

You could start by steering conversations toward problem-solving. Alternatively, you might decide to offer self-service resources such as FAQs where possible (and appropriate).

Sometimes it may seem faster and easier to provide an immediate reply instead of wasting time with a lengthy explanation. However, it’s important to recognize that your customers have different needs and preferences.

In fact, [over 40% of people](#) say they would much rather spend time looking for an answer themselves than ask a customer service agent. By showing customers how they can help themselves, you will be pro-

viding excellent customer service while also saving yourself the frustration of having to help them resolve the same issues again at some point in the future.

Excellent support helps provide answers without taking up too much of anyone's resources, as well as clarifying what exactly each solution entails. This way, your customers will understand what they need to do in order to resolve their issues.

It's best to have answers prepared beforehand so that your responses stay consistent.

#3 Be friendly and empathic during meetings or calls

Keeping a friendly and empathic attitude means keeping your tone light, injecting humor (at appropriate times according to the context), and smiling whenever possible. This will make both parties feel more comfortable. At the same time, it will also help customers feel like they're being heard from start to finish. As a result, everyone will ultimately feel more satisfied than after having an unfriendly conversation.

What does acting friendly mean? Are there any examples?

If you make acknowledgments during a conversation, this will go a long way towards building rapport with customers. Simple things such as "okay", "uh-huh", "I see", or even just a short laugh can put people at ease and make them feel like you're listening.

In addition, it's important to be empathic with your customers by trying to understand how they may feel (e.g. frustrated). This means being able to read between the lines when there are underlying emo-

tions involved that your customers are not expressing. It takes practice for support staff to truly understand what their customers mean, especially whilst trying to remain professional.



For example, if someone says a line like “it doesn’t work”, that could mean potential problems such as incorrect login details or broken links, etc. And if someone says something like “it works, but it’s too slow!”, consider issues such as browser compatibility and page speed, etc.

There are some things that need to happen before empathy can even begin to take place. You must be able to recognize and understand your own feelings, which is known as emotional awareness. If a person on the phone isn’t friendly or empathetic towards your needs, then stand firm by what you believe in — that is, be assertive.

#4 Resolve customers' issues quickly and effectively or show them how to solve problems themselves

When providing excellent customer service, it's important to try and resolve any issues that your customers have as quickly as possible.

It goes without saying that everyone would like their problems resolved right away, but this isn't always possible. If you can't find the solution to a problem immediately, your company should provide a temporary fix. This way customers won't feel helpless or stranded if something unexpected happens. Without a temporary fix, customers could decide to look elsewhere for support rather than stick with your company.



Finally, knowing how your customers usually interact with your company will go a long way towards resolving their issues faster. That being said, don't use guesswork when it comes to your customers — you don't want to make false assumptions and potentially pass over the roots of their problems.

For example, if someone is being rude online, it could be for any number of reasons. Maybe they're frustrated that something isn't working correctly, or for a different reason entirely. But without asking them directly, how would you know? It all comes down to customer service training, which is key to providing excellent customer service at all times.

Empower your customers by showing them how to solve their own issues whenever possible. This will allow you to focus more time on other areas while letting your customers find out exactly what went wrong and why.

In addition, this also establishes trust between both parties. If a customer has all of the necessary tools to resolve their own issue, they'll feel more in control of the process. As a result, they will be more satisfied with your customer support.

#5 Make sure that issues are fully resolved and the outcome is satisfactory

Finally, make sure that each customer's issue has been resolved and that they're satisfied with the outcome. If you need to follow up, then simply ask the customer if they have any other questions or concerns. It's best to allow them to bring this up on their own, since some people may simply want to finish their interaction with customer support as soon as possible.

Empathy plays an important role in making sure that customers know exactly what went wrong and why. You don't want someone to think that an issue was their own fault when something did actually go wrong with the product or service or they will keep coming back for help, defeating the purpose of providing excellent customer service in the first place.

02 /05

**HOW
IMPORTANT
IS IT TO
DELIVER
EXCELLENT
CUSTOMER
SERVICE?**

How important is it to deliver excellent customer service?

Why does it matter? Providing your new and existing customers with excellent customer support is one of the best ways to build brand loyalty.

Simply put, customers who are happy with their support experience will often think of you as their brand of choice and come to you first whenever they need something.



Loyal customers are also bigger spenders — they are [50% more likely to try](#) new products and spend 31% more than new customers. And as the icing on the cake, many of your loyal customers are likely to tell their friends about your products or services and promote them for you.

The benefits speak for themselves, so why do so many businesses still struggle with customer support?

There are many reasons.

Some companies don't have enough people, time, or motivation to improve their customer support service. Others think that as long as they can acquire new customers, the level of support they provide doesn't matter much.

The former might be a valid excuse, but the latter is pretty far from the truth. It's easier than ever to make your customers upset or angry these days, which may prompt them to leave your brand for a competitor.



We all have access to the internet from almost any location, and it only takes a few minutes for someone to write a negative review or make a complaint on social media. These actions lead to bad press that could reach many people in the blink of an eye, so what can you do about it?

03 /05

HOW TO DELIVER GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE

How to deliver great customer service

Here are our ten tips on what you and your staff can do to enhance the level of customer support that you provide.

#1 Know your product

The first thing support staff should do is learn everything about the products or services you are selling until they know it inside out. A support team spends whole days answering questions and solving issues related to these products or services, so they need to be experts in any topic that may arise in conversations with your customers. Plus the more your team knows, the easier it will be for them to give customers the help they need.

Of course, that doesn't mean your staff should remember every single detail. Creating an FAQ database with everything related to your offer would be just as helpful, and it comes with the added benefit of helping your customers find the answers they need by themselves without having to reach out to your support team at all.

#2 Know your audience

Knowing your product is one thing, but you should also know who your customers are and what they want in order to provide them with excellent support. A good starting point is conducting a short survey or a social media poll to find out what they like and dislike about your brand. What's more, you'll learn what they would like you to change or offer in the future.

Once you know what your customers are looking for, it will be much easier for you to upgrade or alter the product or service in question accordingly to make it as useful and convenient for them as possible.

#3 Have a positive attitude

Customers can often recognize what mood the customer support agent is in very early on in a call, which influences how they talk with the agent. Customers can't see your support staffs' facial expressions, so they can only guess the mood of an agent from the tone of their voice.



The situation will be even worse if a customer is already anxious or upset. Unless the agent talking to them shows a lot of empathy, positivity, and patience with the caller, it may be difficult to help resolve their problem.

During face-to-face contact, a warm greeting and a smile might be just what the customer needs to calm down a bit. But how can your

agents do that when on a phone call? A good trick here is for agents to still smile while talking on the phone, which naturally changes their tone of voice. Doing so will make them sound more upbeat and relaxed, and callers will be able to sense that.

The same trick can be applied to your emails. If you are friendly and polite right from the beginning then your recipients will feel that you care about them, which in turn will make it easier for them to talk to you.

Another way of looking at this is to use a customer support script. When you have template questions and answers written out beforehand, agents can not only reproduce the same responses every time they deal with similar problems but also guarantee that their tone is appropriate for the situation. This ensures that they will always have a positive attitude towards any problem or question that customers might contact them with.

Even on stressful days when nothing goes right for those assisting others, staying calm is critical when dealing with people who need help.

#4 Respond promptly

One of the most common customer complaints is having to wait to be served. Customers nowadays have far less time (and patience) than they used to, so they will appreciate speedy replies to their messages especially for urgent issues.

If you can't offer 24/7 customer support, then it's good practice to let your customers know exactly when your agents are working and how long it should take them to answer calls or emails.

For phone calls, IVR might be of great help. After your customers reach the support line, you can play a pre-recorded message informing them of your working hours or that your support team is currently busy solving other queries. Callers then have the choice either to stay on the line and wait for an agent or leave their phone number for an agent to call them back later.

Finally, your customers will love you for having a great FAQ section on your website. Not only does this make their lives easier, but it also shows that you are doing everything you can to help them out whenever they need it.

Keeping at least some of the most frequently asked questions in mind and including the answers to them on your website is a great way to assist your customers. It will also save time for answering all of the other less common questions you receive on social media or on the phone.

#5 Offer a personalized service

People want to feel like they are important to companies they are customers of rather than just being numbers in a database, and that's why they love personalized customer service. An example of this is when a shop assistant greets a customer by name and asks them about the products they bought last week. And with the amount of data you can now have at your disposal, this is an area in which it's possible to really shine.

A great example of personalized support is allowing customers to pick whether they want to get help via live chat, email, or on the phone. This gives customers the ability to reach out to you via the most comfortable method for them and encourages them to reach out to you more often.

Another great way to personalize your customer service is by surveying customers after each interaction with your company. Asking them for feedback on how they felt about their experience will give you lots of valuable data. You can then use this data to improve and optimize all future interactions, ensuring that every single one is as satisfying and positive as possible.

A word of caution though: conducting surveys right at the end of interactions might seem too intrusive or demanding from your support staff. As such, make sure that you only use this method when there's time for such questions or a positive impression created during the conversation might be damaged.

#6 Listen to your customers

Listening to what your customers have to say is actually one of the easiest ways to show that they matter to you. When you do this, you increase the chances of finding out their main issues and providing the best solutions.

For example, some customers will tell you about what they have already done to try and solve their problems themselves. This might indicate to you that the problem lies in a different place than the customer suspected and allow you to pinpoint the issue faster.

What's more, listening to your customers will also make them trust you more. Not only will they feel heard and that your company cares about what they have to say, but by actually dedicating time to their issues your brand is sending an important signal - that you want to help solve any problem customers might face when using your products or services.

Even if you don't find anything particularly useful during these conver-

sations, there are many great benefits of just talking to your customers. These include building loyalty, growing a strong customer base, and having new ideas about how future iterations of the products or services that you offer can be improved.

#7 Keep your word

The worst thing you can do in customer support is to overpromise and underdeliver. Keeping your word and being honest with your customers shows that you respect them and that you can be trusted. Can't fix an issue straight away, don't know the answer to a question, or there's a sudden problem that needs to be taken care of immediately?

In all those situations, it's a much better idea to tell the customer honestly rather than lie or make promises you know you can't keep.

If you don't know the answer to a question, it might be a good idea to ask the customers to be patient while you find out - but only if they have no problem whatsoever with you doing so.

Remember that identifying which you are not able to solve doesn't make you look like an expert. On the contrary, it makes your company look unreliable and untrustworthy, and that's not something you want when trying to provide excellent customer service.

#8 Be proactive

What sets apart "good" from "excellent" customer support? The former means ticking all of the boxes, while the latter means also going the extra mile for customers. Although this could be by offering them discounts or bonuses, proactive support isn't just about sending gifts

to your customers - however nice that might be.

Offering proactive support means predicting customers' questions or issues and dealing with them in advance. This can be done, for example, by creating instructional videos for your new products or an FAQ page.

Instead of offering reactive customer support then, try to be proactive. Doing so will make your customers feel more valued, reduce the number of issues you have to deal with, and may even boost sales.

#9 Follow up with your customers

Customer support doesn't end as soon as their problems have been resolved. For truly excellent customer support, you should also check that everyone who contacts your team is happy with their experience.



You could follow up by simply calling such customers to ask them about the issues they contacted you about recently and if there is anything else they need. Follow-ups can also be made just to thank

customers for their business. A small gesture, but one that makes people feel cared for.

The bottom line is that following up can help turn an “okay” customer support experience into a truly excellent one that makes sure customers feel at home with your brand.

#10 Think long-term

You can either treat customer support inquiries as “one-time” messages or use them to build strong relationships with your customers and encourage them to return to you. By showing that you care about all of your customers and that you are happy to help them whenever they need you, you will come across more like a friend than a regular business.

In other words, customer support should be viewed as a long-term investment in your customers. Treat them well and they’ll keep coming back to you, as well as recommending your brand to others. If done right, this can turn into an amazing marketing tool.

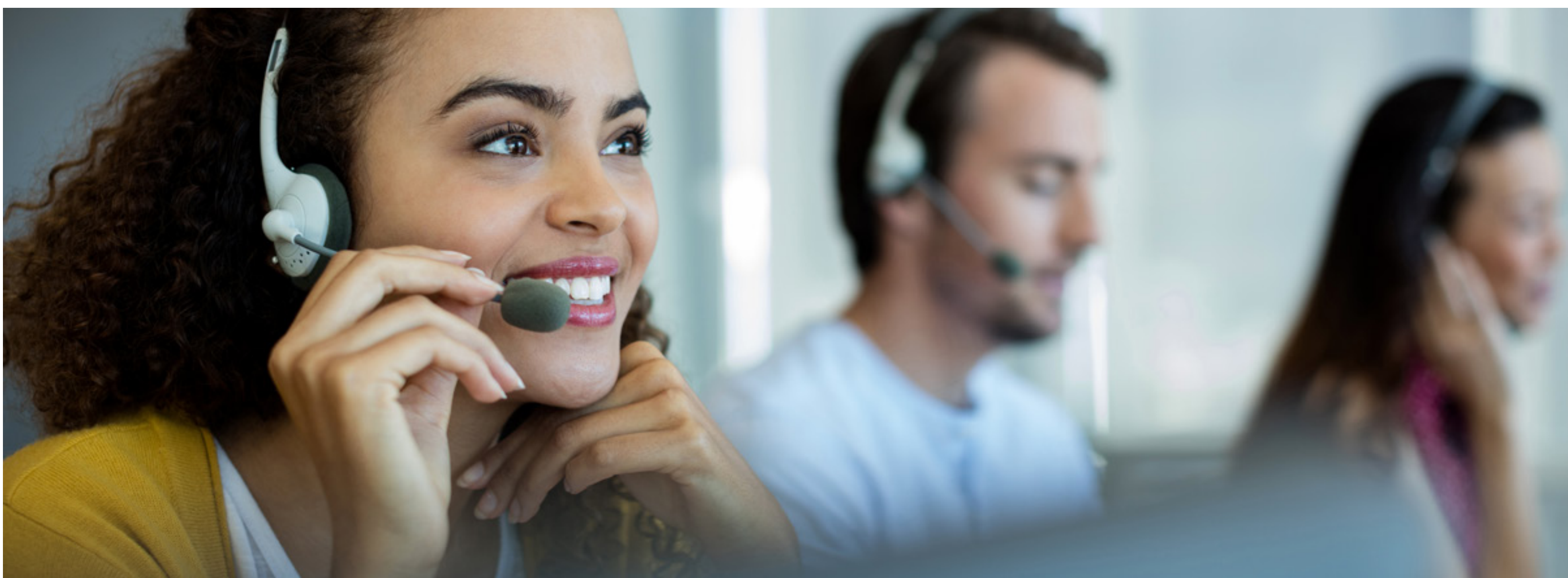
04 /05

**DOES
EXCELLENT
CUSTOMER
SUPPORT
MEAN
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Does excellent customer support mean perfect customer service?

Your customer support does not have to be perfect.

In fact, it is more important that your team knows how to handle mistakes and apologize for them than to get everything right the first time. But the tips mentioned above will help you provide an excellent level of customer service every single day. So when was the last time you thanked one of your agents for helping you?



Doing so will not only make them feel appreciated but will also motivate them to continue providing excellent customer service. And don't forget that the happier your agents are with their jobs, the more they will enjoy doing them. Ultimately that means better support for your customers.

05_{/05}

CONCLU- SION

Conclusion

If you're looking for one clear way to start making more money and stop losing customers, you should definitely look into your customer support. Excellent customer service keeps people returning to your business and makes them stay loyal to your brand for longer. After all, who wouldn't want to use a company that customers find friendly, helpful, and supportive?

That's why doing your best to make your customer support shine is worth the effort - and our tips will help you do just that.



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