



# **BOOST4youth**

online Business and e-commerce cOaching for  
increasing entrepreneurShip among youTh

## **IO1/A5 DELIVERY AND COMMUNICATION**

**Lead Organisation:**

**AKNOW**



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

*This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.*

## REVISION HISTORY

Version	Date	Author	Description	Action	Pages
1.0	30/08/2019	DO	Creation	C	39
2.0	13/09/2019	DO	Update	U	38
3.0	24/09/2019	DO	Update	U	38

(\*) Action: C = Creation, I = Insert, U = Update, R = Replace, D = Delete

## REFERENCED DOCUMENTS

ID	Reference	Title
1	2018-1-UK01-KA205-047672	BOOST4Youth Proposal

## APPLICABLE DOCUMENTS

ID	Reference	Title

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# AGROPRODUCTS

## 1.3 DELIVERY

### 1.3.1 DETAILED DELIVERY TRACKING

#### ABSTRACT

For most customers, sending the item is only half the job, but knowing when it will arrive safely to its destination gives the paying customer and the sender peace of mind. **Tracking** the courier parcel comes in very handy in this situation and using a personalised tracking service could aid the customer, the company and specifically the customer support role of the company.

#### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION

##### Why?

In a digital era, the future belongs to companies that see the opportunity of turning shipping and tracking services into a reliable marketing tool for their customers. Detailed delivery tracking is an essential service for eCommerce companies as there are several benefits to customers. It includes features like shipment tracking, estimated delivery date, frequent updates to allow customers to monitor their online order/shipment. Customers expect to be able to track their items and even receive updates regularly on its delivery status.

Delivery tracking acts as a bridge between the eCommerce companies itself and the **logistics** companies focusing on customer services. The companies can get better visibility and reach a more extensive customer base without worrying about logistics. This ensures efficient working within the company and serves happy customers while focusing only on the quality production of products.

##### How?

Depending on the complexity of the shipping operations and other related factors, companies can either **outsource** their logistics activities to a **3PL** (3rd party logistics company) or **insource** the activities within the company.

##### Scenario A:

###### Outsourcing

1. Collaborate with a delivery company which provides a tracked 24 hour delivery service
2. Provide the customers a tracking number (**QR Code**)
3. Web tracking: tracking info via your website

##### Scenario B:

###### Insourcing

1. Track your routes
2. Provide the customers a tracking number (QR barcode)
3. Web tracking: tracking info via your website

In the field of Agriculture, products are shipped in bulk using a cargo tracking service. For agribusinesses, finding a trustworthy shipping partner is essential with regards to the perishability of the products since it allows you to manage and track cargo anywhere.

The following case study shows a company that operates its logistics internally. However, the connected actions are considering outsourcing logistics.

**Case Study:**

**Dole**

<http://www.dole.com/>

Dole is the world's largest producer of bananas and pineapples, and an industry leader in packaged salads and fresh vegetables. Dole has grown over centuries from its strong ability to produce, transport and deliver high- quality **perishable** products around the world. Dole quality starts right on the farm, and moves through its own refrigerated supply chain.

Dole Ocean Cargo Express provides reliable service to commercial customers on Dole's vessels. It's growing fleet of owned and chartered vessels maximizes the efficiency of marine transportation and addresses the critical issues of moving of time-sensitive perishable products between the United States, Latin America & Europe. Dole provides a detailed delivery tracking service on its website.

**ACTION TYPE**

Actions that have prerequisites and require an investment.

**CONNECTED ACTIONS**

- 1.3.2 Multiple delivery options
- 1.3.3 Prompt response to delivery queries
- 1.3.5 Delivery service evaluation

**TIME REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION AND WHEN POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED COST**

Outsourcing: 1-2 weeks to decide on the logistics company to collaborate with. Cost depends on the 3PL company charges per truck.

Insourcing: 1 month to implement and trial the solution. Cost depends on the number of trucks.

**POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PART OF THE SOLUTION**

**Positive:**

- Cost reduction: Customer complaints can be very costly in long-term as you may need to hire someone or use a bot to respond to individual inquiries. Detailed delivery tracking automates the process, saving money and time, creating more resources to invest in other methods of improving customer experience.
- Meeting customer expectations: Nowadays, customers have a high level of visibility into their orders in such a competitive eCommerce environment. Customers expect to monitor their orders and prevent surprises.
- Order fulfilment: Customers have more control over the order-fulfilment process and can quickly address any issues.

- Engaging customers: Direct customers to your website for tracking to further engage customers after sales.

**Negative:**

- Delays in shipment which can lead to customer dissatisfaction and financial losses
- In case of delay:
- Contact the delivery company immediately
  - Inform the customer about the delay and the new arrival date/time
  - Offer a discount/free product to the customers who have received their products late

**ESTIMATED EXPLOITATION**

Short-term exploitation involves higher customer satisfaction, resulting loyal and happy customers. Long-term exploitation involves higher sales, less cost and more efficient time management.

**ICT COMPETENCE**

N/A for Outsourcing  
Medium for Insourcing

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS**

Basic

**WEBSHOP LEVEL**

N/A

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Amerijet.com (2019). *The Importance of Cargo Tracking for Business Success*. Retrieved from <https://amerijet.com/News-and-Events/2019/03/The-Importance-of-Cargo-Tracking-for-Business-Success>

Deliforce (n.d.). *Bridging the gap between ecommerce and logistics management*. Retrieved from <https://www.deliforce.io/E-commerce-delivery-tracking-management-software>

Lopienski, K. (2019). *Tracking Ecommerce Orders: Meeting Ever-Changing Customer Expectations*. Retrieved from <https://www.shipbob.com/blog/ecommerce-order-tracking/>

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**Dole website:**

<http://www.dole.com>

<http://www.doleoceancargo.com>

**Amazon website:**

<https://www.amazon.com/>

### CROSSBORDER REMARKS

N/A

## 1.3.2 MULTIPLE DELIVERY OPTIONS

### ABSTRACT

Giving consumers multiple delivery options instils confidence in the seller's brand, resulting in better sales and customer satisfaction. If the company offers free-and-easy returns policy, or same and next-day delivery, it automatically creates credibility for the company and its products unlike companies that do not offer particular delivery options where sales may suffer as not all delivery options are suitable for everyone.

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION

#### Why?

Putting an effective shipping strategy in place is one of the most impactful steps concerning eCommerce businesses. Giving consumers multiple delivery options instils professionalism for your company resulting in higher sales and satisfaction.

Strategic shipping options can differentiate businesses from their competitors. This requires identifying the right people to help you shape this strategy and define clear goals to accomplish it depending on the scenario created based on the following factors:

1. Shipping options
2. Shipping destination
3. Size and weight

#### How?

##### Scenario A:

Outsourcing

##### Scenario B:

Insourcing

1. Create a database/list with your existing customers' addresses
2. Estimate the optimal route using a logistic software
3. Rent warehouses/cold storages in other areas/cities, if needed and if possible
4. Rent/buy trucks in order to deliver

Hire sales man/drivers to deliver the products

In regards to agriproducts in domestic trade, both the retail and consumers usually prefer one the following shipping options:

- free in-store pick up

- same/next day delivery  
due to the perishability of the product (short shelf-life).

Storage condition and shelf life depend on the intrinsic characteristic of items, which wholesalers should consider in regards to the refrigerator at warehouses and refrigerator truck (trucks designed to carry **perishable** freight at specific temperatures).

Another important aspect for the companies concerning the delivery is the optimisation of routes. Optimal routing is the process of finding the best path among different locations on the road. It is based on the calculation of the shortest distance between locations based on delivery windows. The implementation of route optimisation might require the creation of storage facilities in areas that are more remote and/or more delivery vehicles, which implies also hiring more sales males.

**Case Study:**

**DHL** - <https://www.dhl.com/en/logistics.html>

DHL offers a wide range of Optional Services - from warehousing to distribution.

**ACTION TYPE**

Actions that have prerequisites and require an investment.

**CONNECTED ACTIONS**

- 1.3.3 Prompt response to delivery queries
- 1.3.5 Delivery service evaluation
- 1.4.3 Delivery/booking details via text messages

**TIME REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION AND WHEN POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED COST**

Outsourcing: 1-2 weeks to decide on the company to collaborate with. Cost depends on the external company's charges  
Insourcing: 1 month to implement and trial the solution. Cost depends from your company's capacity.

**POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PART OF THE SOLUTION**

**Positive:**

- Greater sales: More shipping options result in higher sales. Consumers view delivery choices, and these can inform whether they proceed at checkout or not.
- Save time and money: Route optimisation enables companies to improve the efficiency of their routes while saving money and time
- Differentiation: eCommerce businesses can build brand differentiation using personalised delivery options, including same/next day delivery and free in-store pick-up.
- Loyalty: Multiple delivery options can lead to consumer loyalty, as the benefit of delivery options can lead consumers to place orders more frequently.

**Negative:**

- Concerning storage: Storage condition and shelf life depend on the intrinsic characteristic of items, and wholesalers should consider it. Without fridge storage, most fruits and vegetables will not stay fresh for more than a few days. As soon as fresh products are harvested, they begin to



<p>deteriorate, and dangerous bacteria will start developing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The wholesalers should also note that fruits and vegetables should be not stored together in the same drawer, as many types of fruit produce ethylene gas, which act like a ripening hormone and can speed spoilage.</li> </ul>
<p><b>ESTIMATED EXPLOITATION</b></p>
<p>Short-term exploitation involves satisfied and happier customers. Long-term exploitation involves higher sales and less cost.</p>
<p><b>ICT COMPETENCE</b></p>
<p>N/A for Outsourcing Medium for Insourcing</p>
<p><b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS</b></p>
<p>Intermediary</p>
<p><b>WEBSHOP LEVEL</b></p>
<p>Well-developed N/A in case of outsourcing</p>
<p><b>REFERENCES</b></p>
<p>Shippit.com (n.d). <i>The Benefits of Having Multiple Delivery Options</i>. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.shipp.it/blog/shipping/the-case-for-offering-multiple-delivery-options/">https://www.shipp.it/blog/shipping/the-case-for-offering-multiple-delivery-options/</a></p> <p>The Washington Post (2018). <i>How to keep your fruit and vegetables staying fresh longer - 10 easy storage tips</i>. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/food-drink/article/2164807/have-you-been-storing-your-fruit-and-vegetables-wrong-10-tips">https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/food-drink/article/2164807/have-you-been-storing-your-fruit-and-vegetables-wrong-10-tips</a></p>
<p><b>ADDITIONAL RESOURCES</b></p>
<p>Big Commerce.com (n.d.). <i>Ecommerce Shipping: Your Step-by-Step Guide to Shipping Profitability</i>. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.bigcommerce.com/blog/ecommerce-shipping/#a-quick-easy-outline-to-an-international-shipping-strategy">https://www.bigcommerce.com/blog/ecommerce-shipping/#a-quick-easy-outline-to-an-international-shipping-strategy</a></p> <p><b>DHL</b> <a href="https://www.dhl.com/en/logistics.html">https://www.dhl.com/en/logistics.html</a></p>
<p><b>CROSSBORDER REMARKS</b></p>
<p>Cross-border in ecommerce requires a clear understanding of how international shipping works given the regulations, rules and risks in each country. Agriproducts like fruits and vegetables have limited life time, thus they need a very finely-tuned customs and transport set up to achieve international standards.</p>

### 1.3.3 PROMPT RESPONSE TO DELIVERY QUERIES

#### ABSTRACT

Prompt customer service is important for keeping customers content. It is the best way to retain them and to attract new business. Though prompt customer service has a number of benefits, the overall advantage is customer retention and the recruitment of new clients—which is crucial since no business would be able to exist without customers.

#### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION

##### Why?

People don't like to be told to wait for anything, especially consumers. This is what companies need to understand if they want to have happy and satisfied customers. Reducing response time by providing a prompt response to your customer queries with helpful and relevant information is the key to customer service success.

Prompt response to customers for delivery queries depends on your delivery service team; either you **outsourcing** or **insourcing** your **logistics** activity. However, professionals who are working behind the scenes managing the delivery service support should be carefully selected by your HR department or your 3PL collaborator.

eCommerce stores should provide prompt response to delivery queries not only to reduce their customers' stress but also to offer solutions to their problems by addressing their concerns regarding delivery issues. Since eCommerce customers lack the opportunity of physical interaction with the products, they expect to receive answers immediately. Offering excellent customer service results to your brand being more popular with satisfied customers who can trust your company.

##### How?

##### STEPS:

1. Strength your customer service team
2. Train professionals with the right skills
3. Use a CRM platform
4. Leverage multi-channel servicing:
  - phone call
  - live chat through your website
  - trigger emails based on keywords
  - bot programmes - auto reply messages on your social media accounts

##### Seek customer feedback

In the field of Agriculture, it is wise to provide customers with multiple channels to contact you for delivery queries to reach a higher number of customers. Although there are a lot of free and inexpensive ways of delivering effective customer support (such as email, phone lines, live chat, social media support and forum support), it is recommended that social media and forum support for delivery orders be avoided prevent any mistakes.

In order for customers to easily contact you through the channels created for delivery queries, ensure that you have listed the options under the contact tab on your website. When your customers are not satisfied, they will leave for your competitors.

#### ACTION TYPE

Actions that have prerequisites and require an investment.

### CONNECTED ACTIONS

1.3.5 Delivery service evaluation  
1.4.1 Robust customer service  
1.4.2 Live chatbot  
1.4.3 Delivery/booking details via text messages  
1.4.4 Responding to direct messages in social media  
1.4.5 Customer personal advisor  
1.4.6 Customer service phone lines

### TIME REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION AND WHEN POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED COST

1 month to decide on CRM and train the professionals.  
Cost depends on the CRM subscription fee, if any.

### POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PART OF THE SOLUTION

#### Positives:

- Greater sales: Prompt response to delivery queries speeds up the buying process
- Trust: Professionalism leads to a trusting relationship between customer and company
- Loyalty: Customers who received answers immediately are always coming back

#### Negatives:

- Lack of personal touch: Undoubtable, no matter how good a product is, you don't have the advantage to convince your customers behind a screen
- Site crashes: One of the issues where you have to reckon and be able to give alternatives ways to your customers (e.g. phone lines)

### ESTIMATED EXPLOITATION

Short-term exploitation involves happier and loyal customers.  
Long-term exploitation involves positive reviews and higher sales.

### ICT COMPETENCE

Medium

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Advanced

### WEBSHOP LEVEL

Well-developed

#### REFERENCES

Agile CRM.com (2016). *4 Ways to Automate E-commerce Customer Support*. Retrieved from <https://www.agilecrm.com/blog/4-ways-automate-e-commerce-customer-support/>

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Shephyken (n.d.). *Quick Response Provides A Customer Service Advantage*. Retrieved from <https://hyken.com/customer-service-strategies/quick-response-provides-customer-service-advantage/>

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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Steven McDonald (2019). *5 Ways to Reduce Customer Service Response Times*. retrieved from <https://www.superoffice.com/blog/response-times/>

#### CROSSBORDER REMARKS

Customer service team should be able to speak English fluently. Any other language can be considered as an advantage.

## 1.3.4 FLEXIBILITY IN RETURNS-POLICIES

### ABSTRACT

Almost any retailer would agree that customer loyalty is key to a profitable business. Likewise, many would also agree that product returns kill those profits. Flexible return policies present opportunities for sellers to find success in long-term customer care and stronger consumer engagement. Also, flexible return policies can lead to fewer returns. For many customers, a liberal return policy makes them think they're shopping at a good store.

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION

#### Why?

The very first step to ensuring a lifelong loyal customer is the implementation of easy and customer friendly return policies. Providing various options as well as money-saving options for your customer is a must have for you and your company.

For providing goods that have an expiration date, your companies' return policies should be implemented within a logical timeline. Considering the fact that a faulty batch could occur, a 'plan b' should be ready to take place. Thus, developing a comprehensive plan can actually reduce the resources you might spend on returns.

For instance, every online platform of the business should include a well written description of the company's products (you can also use pictures or videos), so that you could avoid any possible misunderstandings of what you offer to the customer. Apart from the products, your company's return policies should be clearly stated in your website and social media pages. In case of a refund or return request, your company should be clear on how these issues will be resolved out from your side.

However your return policies shouldn't be too strict since a customer is more likely to engage to a purchase if they do not feel the pressure of having a 'to the point' return policy. A return policy could possibly be the reason that customers prefer your company than your competitors.

#### How?

Use your perspective to create return policy a unique to your company; don't use a 'fixed' and generic one, because that will probably not work towards your company's best interest.

- Does the customer need to re-package the product or is the packaging you offer able to be reused?
- Should the customer include a receipt of the purchase in the returned product?
- How much time does the customer have from the day they receive the product, to return them?
- Do you offer exchange, store credit, or refunds?
- Do you give them a choice on which of the above they prefer?
- Who will pay for the return shipping?

More than half of online shoppers say that they avoid stores with a strict return policy. A very important step to take before you implement a return policy is to seek customers' feedback, search, ask, quiz your customers if needed, try and understand the majority's preferences when it comes to return policies.

Testing different options along the way can be very beneficial in the end of the line for your company. Getting the perfect way of working around return policies can be very tricky and takes time. Test a few different combinations between time limits, packaging and payment deals till you figure out which

works better for you and the products you have to offer. You could try some of the below:

- Offer a package that can be reused in case of a return, but make it clear that the customer has to pay for the return shipping.
- Increase the time limit of the return, but ask the customer to include the receipt of the purchase in the package.
- Offer a full refund if the return takes place within 24 hours of the purchase.
- Give every first time customer a free one time trial of the products.

Once you find the return policy that works best for your company, don't be afraid to change it once in a while, if for example it is for a loyal customer, customize the policy to give to your client the feeling of uniqueness, to ensure that they will be coming back after a mishap.

**STEPS:**

1. Reform return policies on your website
2. Create clear product description
3. Increase return time window
4. Offer free returns/trials
5. Seek customer feedback

**ACTION TYPE**

Simple actions that can be implemented immediately without an investment.

**CONNECTED ACTIONS**

N/A

**TIME REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION AND WHEN POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED COST**

1-2 months of trials.

**POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PART OF THE SOLUTION**

Well-developed return policies could save your company from a lot of unwanted problems, dissatisfied customers but most importantly money.

**Positives:**

- A good return policy could attract more customers than any other feature in your business.
- Will ensure that no time is being wasted on resolving problems, that possibly the customer doesn't care to resolve.
- Will help you and your staff understand with ease your customer's intentions, (if for example a person seeks to create problems, whether it is for money or whatever other reason, or if they are honestly interested in what you have to offer).
- Advertising the company. A clear and customer friendly return policy could become one of your best features, since return policies are one of the first things consumers search for.
- In the long run a good return policy will earn more money than what will be 'wasted' on actual returns.

**Negatives:**

- It could potentially take some time until you figure out which policy best suits your company.

- In the beginning, it will seem like you spent more money on returns than what you actually earn.
- Failures. You will fail from time to time to meet every customer's needs.
- Possible loss of customers. Some customers will not be satisfied with your return policy so it is possible that they will not return to you company next time around.

Possible loss of products. Some products could go 'bad' by the time they ship them back to you.

### ESTIMATED EXPLOITATION

Short-term exploitation involves satisfied customers.

Long-term exploitation involves less product returns, resulting higher profit and increase brand visibility.

### ICT COMPETENCE

Medium

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Intermediary

### WEBSHOP LEVEL

Established

### REFERENCES

Chambers, S. (2018). *How to Write and Promote a Return Policy Customers Love (Includes Example Refund Policies From Real Ecommerce Businesses)*. Retrieved from <https://www.bigcommerce.com/blog/create-a-returns-and-exchanges-policy-that-sells/>

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Ward, S. (2019). *Small Business Return Policy: Customer Service Tips for Product Return*. Retrieved from <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/tips-for-handling-store-returns-2948453>

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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Termsfeed.com (n.d.). *Sample Return Policy for Ecommerce Stores*. Retrieved from

<https://www.termsfeed.com/blog/sample-return-policy-ecommerce-stores/>

### CROSSBORDER REMARKS

N/A

## 1.3.5 DELIVERY SERVICE EVALUATION

### ABSTRACT

The delivery service evaluation is vital for any organisation as it is a reflection of its services and always allows room for improvement within the company. Some factors that contribute to the positive evaluation are the price of the delivery service, the time of delivery of the shipment, the possibility to track the shipment and guarantee of security of transport.

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION

#### Why?

Evaluation, in general, should be conducted after a product is delivered so that the customers can leave comments, mention suggestions or address issues. The delivery service evaluation is vital for any company as it can improve the effectiveness of the current situation.

A well-known method for measuring the customer's view of the services provided is through a customer satisfaction survey/questionnaire. The purpose of requesting feedback from customers is to gather subjective information that cannot be measured.

#### How?

The first step is to decide on the criteria/indicators, as there is no one right way to conduct an evaluation.

In the field of Agriculture, evaluation should be focused on the following aspects:

- Quality of products: agriproducts are consumable, tangible and **perishable** products.
- Price: there is a huge market of agriproducts out there, and the prices are very competitive and of course vary based on the quality and the origin of the products
- Time of delivery: consistency means professionalism. Being on time is extremely important when it comes to agriproducts.
- **Tracking** system: The tracking system should be as accurate as possible, especially when your customer (like a fruit market) is out of stock.

Moreover, it is important to decide on the distribution method (e.g. via email) and of course the availability of an evaluation form online, on your website. Another crucial decision concerning evaluation is the motivation. The company should send the evaluation form when delivery service is completed, kindly thanking them for choosing them and asking for their feedback. It is essential to give customers a reason to complete your evaluation form (e.g. a voucher or a prize).



<p><b>Example:</b>  <a href="https://www.surveio.com/survey-template/shipping-courier-service-evaluation-survey">https://www.surveio.com/survey-template/shipping-courier-service-evaluation-survey</a></p>
<p><b>ACTION TYPE</b></p>
<p>Simple actions that can be implemented immediately without an investment.</p>
<p><b>CONNECTED ACTIONS</b></p>
<p>1.4.1 Robust customer service</p>
<p><b>TIME REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION AND WHEN POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED COST</b></p>
<p>1-2 days to design the evaluation form and decide on the way of distributing it.</p>
<p><b>POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PART OF THE SOLUTION</b></p>
<p><b>Positive:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvement: Delivery services can be improved based on customers' feedback</li> </ul> <p><b>Negative:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standards defining quality may not be the same or consistent across countries</li> </ul>
<p><b>ESTIMATED EXPLOITATION</b></p>
<p>Short-term exploitation involves happier customers.          Long-term exploitation involves better customer service and support as well as general improvement.</p>
<p><b>ICT COMPETENCE</b></p>
<p>Medium</p>
<p><b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS</b></p>
<p>Advanced</p>
<p><b>WEBSHOP LEVEL</b></p>
<p>Established</p>

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Zhou, L., Zhu, L., & Ma, Y. (2016). The research on express delivery service quality evaluation system based on customer perception. *Education and Humanities Research*. Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/3d9b/263794127899d7c9db08e982b5924397cb3b.pdf>

#### CROSSBORDER REMARKS

N/A

## 1.4 COMMUNICATION

### 1.4.1 ROBUST CUSTOMER SERVICE

#### ABSTRACT

Managing a business is more than just having a great idea. It is more than just producing a great product or service. Customers are a part of the foundation of a successful business and must be managed carefully. Every business manager and owner should have a robust customer service.

#### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION

##### Why?

Customer service is so much more than just answering phone calls, and replying to emails. Customer service is the backbone that holds the company together. It is a basic tool to keep a business moving forward. Customer service is the process of ensuring customer satisfaction.

There are several important skills required for a customer service employee to have. These include empathy and the ability to understand a customer's emotional state through a phone call, or via email. Every customer has the need to feel that their complaints are being heard and understood. So as to avoid complicating a situation even more, clear communication skills and a friendly approach is always a plus in this line of work. Additional to the above, excellent listening and strong speaking skills are two more important attributes to having a successful and smooth-running customer service department.

##### How?

Being able to compromise to reach a solution, can become very beneficial for a customer service representative. In order for that to be possible some steps should be taken by the employee. For example:

- Training in conflict resolution.
- Employees need to be updated about products and company policies.
- Know the products. Brand names, prices, discounts and offers, time required to prepare and ship the products.
- Recognize products features that can be turned into benefits for the customer.

Every customer service representative will interact with at least one third of customers that call to complain, whether it is for a late shipment, a faulty product or a misunderstanding of the company's policies. In such cases, the excellent listening and strong speaking skills we mentioned above come in place. The employee should:

- Listen first to the customer complaints; after all they might learn something about the products or the company's services.
- Listen to what the customer has to say, confirm the validity of their concerns and offer them a solution.
- Let them know that you appreciate the feedback, both good and bad.
- Follow up with the customers, until their problem has been resolved.

This may entail a few more extra steps for the employee to take, such as:

- Scheduling appointments with in-person representatives of the company.
- Transferring the call to a manager, another department or an expert on the matter/issue/problem.

However, even if the employee just handled a really difficult to satisfy customer, that shouldn't be an excuse to keep other customers on hold for too long, because as they struggle to make one customer happy they might lose two or three more potential returning customers.

Being able to multitask is one of the top skills to have in customer service. A great customer service employee will be able to move easily between different channels and resolve issues in each channel using the appropriate set of skills.

**Templates:**

The use of templates that include some pre-written script is the secret to efficient customer service. The employee could make great use out of these templates, which are like guidelines that provide a helpful structure for the more common responses. The employee could potentially give these templates a personal twist, they could and should use their own way of phrasing the pre-written text and customize it along the way of each phone call, email, text etc. However these templates shouldn't be over used since they alone won't be able to help reach a solution to every single problem a customer might have.

A happy customer is more likely to return and spent more money on your company, so regardless of the issue in hand; any customer that comes in contact with your team should be treated as humanely and pleasantly as possible.

**ACTION TYPE**

Simple actions that can be implemented immediately without an investment.

**CONNECTED ACTIONS**

- 1.3.3 Prompt response to delivery queries
- 1.3.5 Delivery service evaluation
- 1.4.2 Live chatbot
- 1.4.3 Delivery/booking details via text messages
- 1.4.4 Responding to direct messages in social media
- 1.4.5 Customer personal advisor
- 1.4.6 Customer service phone lines

**TIME REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION AND WHEN POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED COST**

2 weeks of training the employees

**POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PART OF THE SOLUTION**

**Positives:**

Good customer service is always valued by customers.

- A customer who values your company's way of approaching them will return and potentially spend even more, next time around.
- Creating a good connection with the customer service department, can eventually lead to great 'free marketing' as that customer has friends, acquaintances, relatives and so on. With some luck they would potentially speak of your company's great customer service, thus advertising

your products for you.

- Good customer service is the key that might differentiate you from your competitors.
- You will be able to track and understand your company's faults and weak points. For example if more than two or three people complain about a late shipment, that could potentially mean that the company you use for shipping is maybe not the right one for your products or customers.

**Negatives:**

Customer service represents your company's policies.

- It is more likely for a customer to leave bad reviews than good, and it is more likely than one mishandling of a customer by your customer service team will lead to bad reputation.
- In case that an employee cannot do their job correctly, a potential customer is most likely lost.

**Good customer service comes with a good paycheck.**

- To achieve an excellent customer service department, you need to pay good money to your employees, since keeping your employees satisfied is the only way to keep your customers happy.
- Customer service salaries can go very high, depending on the hours the employee is requested to work, the overtimes and so on.

**ESTIMATED EXPLOITATION**

Short-term exploitation involves satisfied and happy customers.  
Long-term exploitation involves higher sales and better customer support.

**ICT COMPETENCE**

Medium

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS**

Intermediary

**WEBSHOP LEVEL**

Established

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#### CROSSBORDER REMARKS

N/A

## 1.4.2 LIVE CHATBOTS

### ABSTRACT

A Chatbot is also known as a spy, conversational bot, chatterbot, interactive agent, conversational interface, Conversational AI, talkbot or artificial spy entity. Essentially it is a computer program or an artificial intelligence which conducts a conversation via auditory or textual methods. Such programs are often designed to convincingly simulate how a human would behave as a conversational partner, thereby passing the Turing test. Chatbot are normally used in dialog systems for various practical purposes including customer service or information acquisition. Some Chatbot use sophisticated natural language processing systems, but many simpler ones scan for keywords within the input, then pull a reply with the most matching keywords, or the most similar wording pattern, from a database.

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION

*\* It is worth mentioning that there are 2 types of Chatbots: a. Rule-based Chabot b. AI Chabot. This case examines the AI Chabot.*

#### Why?

The Chatbot is a computer program which has been designed mainly to facilitate customer service support. It is a method of interaction between a machine and a human. Thus, it is important for every eCommerce company as it helps the maintenance of communication in an automated and accurate way and drives more sales. The AI Chatbot promotes an effortless buying experience for web users, and it can effectively leverage technology to provide a more satisfying shopping experience.

There are various reasons why you should use Chatbots for your eCommerce store:

- Users can place an order easier, faster, without any mistakes
- It can be used to recommend other available products to your customers based on their shopping preference
- It responds to customers' queries regarding packing, delivery, cost, quality, etc.
- It can offer detailed information about the products

#### How?

With regards to the Chatbot implementation, Chatbots can be integrated into messaging tools such as Facebook Messenger, Slack, discord, telegram, etc.

The success of Chatbots is measured on its level of usability, engagement and values.

#### AI Chatbots:

- Facebook bot engine – Wit.ai
- Microsoft bot frameworks
- Api.ai

### ACTION TYPE

Actions that have prerequisites and require an investment.

<b>CONNECTED ACTIONS</b>
N/A
<b>TIME REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION AND WHEN POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED COST</b>
1 month to decide on AI Chatbot and implement. Cost depends on the AI Chatbot charges,
<b>POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PART OF THE SOLUTION</b>
<p><b>Positives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt response to unlimited web users at the same time</li> <li>• Provide 24/7 support and chat for hours without the need of supervision</li> <li>• Replace an employee form customer service support team</li> <li>• Ability to understand the meaning of a sentence, not just a word</li> <li>• Automation of repetitive work</li> </ul> <p><b>Negatives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not always understand a misspelled word or an incomplete inquiry</li> <li>• Can't think out of the box</li> <li>• The only information they have is the pre-programmed data entered</li> </ul>
<b>ESTIMATED EXPLOITATION</b>
Short-term exploitation involves time and money saving (no additional staff to do the job). Long-term exploitation involves supporting your business in their relations with customers and giving you the potential to reach a bigger audience.
<b>ICT COMPETENCE</b>
N/A if Outsourcing
<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS</b>
Advanced
<b>WEBSHOP LEVEL</b>
Well-developed
<b>REFERENCES</b>



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#### CROSSBORDER REMARKS

N/A

### 1.4.3 DELIVERY/BOOKING DETAILS VIA TEXT MESSAGES

#### ABSTRACT

An SMS marketing system provides an instantaneous marketing tool for businesses of all kinds. There is no faster way to broadcast new campaigns, customer specials and deals or discounts, and it can be used to further enhance customer satisfaction by directly sending a text confirming a delivery and or booking.

#### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION

##### Why?

SMS is the most practical way to reach out your customers, as people are used to opening and reading texts immediately, contrary to social media and emails where internet connection is required.

eCommerce businesses use SMS for a variety of purposes like:

- Order verification: Some companies call their customers to confirm orders on the phone and vice versa. Alternative, you can verify the order via text
- Shipping details and updates: Sending shipping details and updates in a text is useful and you can let the recipient know when their item is ready to pick-up
- Delivery confirmation: You, as a company, want to know that the customer has received the order
- Payment verification: Verify that your customers received their order.
- Ask for feedback: Asking your customer for feedback via SMS shows that you care about their opinion as you can use their suggestions to improve customer experience
- Send special offers and promote new products

##### How?

##### STEPS:

1. Register in a web-based SMS service
2. List your customers' phone numbers
3. Automate the method for sending messages to the recipient
4. Let your customer request their orders via text
5. Send text messages about offers/discounts to your customers (if they agree)

##### Tips:

- Personalise your message: Include your customer's name in the text
- Include the option for cancelling subscription: It shows respect and trust with respect to your customer's rights
- Include an action for call
- Use keywords to grab the attention
- Do not overdo it: Text message is a recommended strategy but all things in moderation – be effective but not invasive!

#### ACTION TYPE

Simple actions that have no prerequisites but require an investment.

### CONNECTED ACTIONS

1.3.3 Prompt response to delivery queries

### TIME REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION AND WHEN POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED COST

2-3 weeks to decide on SMS service and implement the solution.  
Cost depends on the SMS service provider charges.

### POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PART OF THE SOLUTION

#### Positives:

- Creating better customer experience: Well-informed customers are happy customers and eventually loyal ones. A satisfied customer is more likely to make another purchase and is open to receiving more promotional material
- Increased customer loyalty
- Increased sales

#### Negatives:

- Block your number to stop messages

### ESTIMATED EXPLOITATION

Short-term exploitation involves engaging with customers faster (as it has a higher open rate than emails), resulting higher sales.  
Long-term exploitation involves generating word of mouth to draw more business to your company.

### ICT COMPETENCE

Low

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Advanced

### WEBSHOP LEVEL

Established

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#### CROSSBORDER REMARKS

N/A

## 1.4.4 RESPONDING TO DIRECT MESSAGES IN SOCIAL MEDIA

### ABSTRACT

Social customer service refers to providing consumer support through social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter to quickly answer questions. 69% of customers believe fast resolution of the problem is vital to good service, making social consumer support vital. Social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter have evolved to become more than emergent platforms for marketing and advertising.

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION

#### Why?

“90% of businesses are estimated to use social media for customer service by 2020”

eCommerce businesses recognize the power of social media to reach new customers, as well as engage and reward existing customers. Social media profiles and the shared content is one of the priorities in marketing strategic plan and it can be a significant driver of traffic for websites.

Direct Message marketing (DM): a form of private communication between the company’s social media expert and user. It often used to provide customers with support and quickly answer questions.

Direct messaging gives the feeling of a private communication with the social media user. The most common social media platforms with direct messaging include: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, which are presented below:

- Facebook: the king of social media. Every eCommerce business should maintain a Facebook presence that mirror the company identity, values and activities. Facebook requires a user to like a page before sending a private message. Facebook even rewards pages that respond quickly.
- Instagram: Web users are hungry for visual content and Instagram has been designed, especially for this reason.
- Twitter: building a community of followers that seek to hear you. It allows messages to be sent to 50 users and requires a follow
- YouTube: the king of video search engine. Videos can be considered as the most suitable way to advertise your products.
- LinkedIn: An excellent B2B tool to promote your brand, although quite expensive in comparison with the above.

#### How?

##### STEPS:

1. Create a social media account/page for your company (at least 1)
2. Hire social media executives to manage your account/page (cover 2 shifts at least - 16h/7d)

As a user, you can DM in order to:

- Ask for help: You can send a direct message through a social media page to ask for support
- Reporting problems as a user: Social media users often report issues to social media pages.

As an administrator of a social media page, you should:

- Prompt response and apologise for the inconvenience if needed
- Reply to customers regarding stock availability

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send offers and promote new products through social media</li> <li>• Be informative, make each DM personal and be complimentary</li> </ul>
<b>ACTION TYPE</b>
Simple actions that have no prerequisites without an investment.
<b>CONNECTED ACTIONS</b>
1.3.2 Multiple delivery options 1.3.3 Prompt response to delivery queries
<b>TIME REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION AND WHEN POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED COST</b>
1-2 weeks to hire an expert and set up the social media pages
<b>POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PART OF THE SOLUTION</b>
<p><b>Positives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find new customers</li> <li>• Reward existing Customers</li> <li>• Engage customers</li> <li>• Advertise and promote products</li> <li>• Provide customer services</li> </ul> <p><b>Negatives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deal with many and different situations in parallel</li> <li>• Handle and manage customers' attitudes</li> <li>• Respond to complains within an hour</li> </ul>
<b>ESTIMATED EXPLOITATION</b>
Short-term exploitation involves higher website traffic and social media reviews. Long-term exploitation involves increase of brand visibility.
<b>ICT COMPETENCE</b>
Low
<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS</b>
Advanced
<b>WEBSHOP LEVEL</b>

Established

#### REFERENCES

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#### CROSSBORDER REMARKS

N/A

## 1.4.5 CUSTOMER PERSONAL ADVISOR

### ABSTRACT

A customer personal advisor can cover fully all the needs of a customer as they get to know you, give you more choices, customise to your needs, offer accountability and can provide peace of mind when it comes to your decision making.

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION

#### Why?

As the ecommerce market grows, so do the different options of products. With so many options though, the chances of buying the wrong product or even receiving something completely different than what you ordered, increase. Having a customer personal advisor can improve dramatically your company's credibility.

Customization is the key. That's why having a customer personal advisor is a must for achieving the best customer service, as it is a great way to make your customers feel like covering their needs is your top priority. Especially when it involves new customers that can possibly become returning buyers of your company's products.

#### How?

##### STEPS:

1. Search for experienced personnel
2. Show/teach them what they'll be selling, the company's policies and you're preferable way of approaching the customers put them through a training period before hiring them / make sure that they can engage to the costumers needs and requests

#### A personal customer advisor can:

- Present the variety of products to the costumer, making sure there is no confusion as to what they're about to buy-thus decreasing the likelihood of returning the products.
- Give the customers the different options and customize the order to the clients' preferences.
- Make sure the customers is fully aware of all policies concerning the purchase, shipping and possible returns.
- Lastly, when problems arise, a personal advisor can take action and reassure the customer whilst maintaining calm demeanor.

The Most Significant Factors In Satisfying Customer Experiences (% of Respondents)	
Experience	% of Respondents Wanting
Competent customer service representatives	78%
The communication channels were convenient	48%
The company was proactive in reaching out to me	37%
The transaction was personalized	38%
Source: Genesys, October 2009	

#### A personal customer advisor should:

- At all times keep things at a professional level.
- Be fully aware of the products and their possible downsides.



- Create and maintain a good relationship with possible or returning customers.
- Go the extra mile to satisfy the customer.
- Keep the relationship on a semi-friendly basis, so that the customer can feel the personal touch the company has to offer.

The point of having employees in the position of personal customer advisors is to make your clients feel like they're doing business with a human and not a company. That is a very valuable concept as it can lead to better customer service thus keeping your clientele satisfied. A big part of the job in customer service is "mirroring" the customer's language and tone. Being a 'people person' is a basic skill for every personal advisor as it helps to create a relationship with the customer, but being able to understand – to read – a customer's needs is far more important as it can lead to a better understanding of what the customer seeks.

However being a people person alone is not enough. A personal advisor should be continually review customers' preferences and keep seeking feedback from all possible sources as it is one of the best ways to ensure that they're doing a good job at offering personalization and customization to the customers. It is crucial to keep learning through your line of work and consistently building knowledge, whether it is to become better at what you do, or to be able to offer better, personalized interactions with your customers. After all, the thing that can make a one-time only customer, become a loyal and returning one.

#### ACTION TYPE

Simple actions that have no prerequisites without an investment.

#### CONNECTED ACTIONS

N/A

#### TIME REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION AND WHEN POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED COST

- 2 Weeks to 1 month to search for experienced personnel
- 1 month –maximum- for the training period.

#### POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PART OF THE SOLUTION

Having a personal customer advisor can offer plenty of benefits to you and the company, since they will personally handle all costumers' requests, keeping your mind at ease.

##### Positives:

- **Long Term Solution:** A personal customer advisor, can be a long term solution to avoiding customers complaints and constant misunderstandings between clients and what your company has to offer. They can be the mediator as well as your best marketer.
- **Better customer feedback/reviews thus better sales rate:** if your customers are satisfied with their experience, then great feedback will follow, whether it is on your website, social media pages or even word to word. Depending of course on how well the personal customer advisor handles the customers' requests, needs, and complaints.
- **Personal:** creating and maintaining the personal and up close aesthetic is very important as customers are more likely to return to your business if a connection was created between them and the advisor.

##### Negatives:

- **Time consuming:** finding employees that are experienced in this field can be very tricky. It could potentially take a great amount of time to find the right personnel for this kind of job, since they will have to be trained appropriately and you need to make sure that they'll be engaged enough to keep up and maintain a calm demeanor in whatever situation arises.
- **Costly:** Keeping your customers satisfied by keeping your employees satisfied. Having personal customer advisors working 24/7, covering your clients every needs, can eventually cost a lot of money for your company, since this type of job requires interacting with 'strangers' at all times. This means that the personal advisor will potentially be working even when they're not actually working.

#### ESTIMATED EXPLOITATION

Short-term exploitation involves satisfied customers and better customer experience.  
Long-term exploitation involves loyal customers and trustful relationship with them.

#### ICT COMPETENCE

Low

#### ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Intermediary

#### WEBSHOP LEVEL

Starting

#### REFERENCES

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#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

N/A

#### CROSSBORDER REMARKS



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

2018-1-UK01-KA205-047672

N/A

## 1.4.6 CUSTOMER SERVICE PHONE LINES

### ABSTRACT

In the face of growing customer expectations, businesses face the vital need for using a telephone for customer support strategy. The phone channel plays a large part in customer success and in the quality of the business' customer support. Now more than ever, the phone is an essential channel. Therefore, the relevant technology has evolved accordingly. Being able to interact with a human voice is irreplaceable when it comes to developing a good relationship with a customer. Empathetic customer support is a great way to increase customer loyalty.

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION

#### Why?

Phone support is the traditional way of customer service support and it is still acceptable by most of the businesses and it makes the company seem more trustworthy and legitimate. Customers expect multichannel support and the ability to contact businesses through a variety of channels so they can choose the one that suits them.

Here are some situations in which a phone line would be very helpful:

- If your customers are older, they may feel more comfortable to communicate through the phone instead of email or social media.
- If the question or issue cannot be addressed online
- If you want to create a more personal relationship with your clients

#### How?

##### STEPS:

1. Set a VoIP system
2. Hire personnel - cover 24/7

Deciding if and how to offer phone support is one of the hardest things, especially for small eCommerce businesses with limited staff. The decision to have a phone line will depend on your eCommerce business' specific needs so think carefully before you make the decision, although customers will truly appreciate it.

It is also worth mentioning that your mobile phone number or landline is not suitable for your business, as it looks unprofessional. Adding a business phone service allows you to:

- Track duration
- Keep a track record of customer's complaints to improve as a company
- Reduce hold times by routing a call to the first available representative
- Free calls as the VoIP system requires only internet connection

### ACTION TYPE

Simple actions that have no prerequisites without an investment.

<b>CONNECTED ACTIONS</b>
N/A
<b>TIME REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT A SOLUTION AND WHEN POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED COST</b>
1 week to implement and trial the solution
<b>POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PART OF THE SOLUTION</b>
<p><b>Positives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional Representative</li> <li>• Faster service</li> <li>• Great way to learn from your customers</li> <li>• Build trust</li> <li>• Gently nudge them to buy more</li> </ul> <p><b>Negatives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costly</li> <li>• Outsourcing the staff is not a solution, as the staff member should be able to answer any question and deal with it</li> <li>• Deal and manage human attitude</li> </ul>
<b>ESTIMATED EXPLOITATION</b>
Short-term exploitation involves satisfied customers and better customer experience. Long-term exploitation involves loyal customers and trustworthy relationship with them.
<b>ICT COMPETENCE</b>
N/A
<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS</b>
Advanced
<b>WEBSHOP LEVEL</b>
Established
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#### **CROSSBORDER REMARKS**

Provide an international line as well.