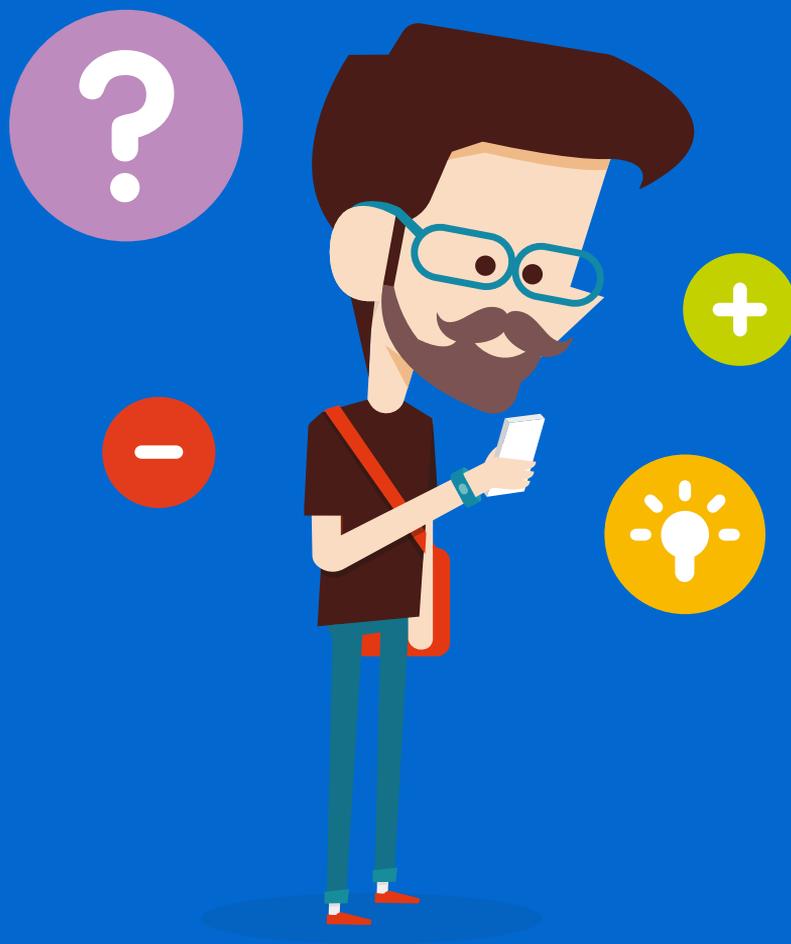


Critizr. for Business

HANDLING CUSTOMER FEEDBACKS



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ABOUT CRITIZR

Critizr is a multichannel customer engagement solution that aims to facilitate interaction between physical stores and their clients. The job of Critizr is to act as a trusted third party between the customer and the store. **For companies, Critizr guarantees the reliability of customer feedback and simplifies processing.**

⌚ Estimated reading time : 20 minutes

INTRODUCTION

Customer relations is a constantly changing field. Customer behavior is changing, as are the interactions they have with brands. Their expectations, their desires and especially their experiences, condition their satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Companies fully understand that to satisfy their customers they must listen and engage in dialogue with them. **Customer engagement has become an essential step at the heart of every company's customer-centric concerns.** Besides increasing customer satisfaction, customer engagement has many benefits: loyalty, business efficiency, innovation, recommendation... Items which were discussed in our previous eBook.

The first step in this process of continuous improvement is **to deploy a multi-channel means of listening to customers in order to collect feedback.** If you are interested in the content of this eBook, it is probably because you have already put tools in place to collect customer feedback, or you plan to do so. What should you do with the data collected? Questions, suggestions, complaints, compliments, quantitative data... do you need to analyze all this feedback? Do you have to reply to a customer who gives you a poor rating? Who in the business should be responsible for this feedback and what should they do with it? These are some essential questions that we will answer in these pages.

The processing of customer feedback is an essential step in your client listening approach, which requires an appropriate and empathetic strategy. **The general idea is to be able to deal with your customers' comments quickly and well.** And if you think you should only deal with negative remarks, you will be surprised.

Within this eBook, we will discuss the key steps to establishing an optimal customer feedback management strategy. Initially it will look at the expectations of the modern consumer. And yes, what do your customers expect when they send feedback? Then we will see who should be responsible for managing this feedback. Is it only the customer service department for example? And finally, we will deliver operational advice on how to respond to customers, especially when dealing with dissatisfied customers.

WHAT DO CUSTOMERS EXPECT FROM CUSTOMER RELATIONS ?

Where they were formerly dependent on the goodwill of businesses, “modern” consumers have become leaders, upsetting the relationship that both sides maintained. The digital revolution and the digitization of the world have significantly altered the behavior of individuals. Today, the consumer is better informed, sometimes is even very knowledgeable. They can find out about, compare or choose a product without going to a store or to a store’s site. **Since clients themselves can research, compile information and share their opinions, the customer has become a true expert in purchasing.** As a result, there is a certain contradiction between brands using unilateral communications and consumers in search of meaning and transparency.

So how can brands reinvigorate the relationship with their customers? You may have designed the most beautiful product in your market, the most useful service...but it is not the supply as such that counts, but the link that the company manages to build with its customers. Today, 75% of complaints relate to the customer experience, not the product. **It is your ability to sustain a strong bond over time that will allow you to guarantee the success of your business.** In particular, this requires an active listening approach to understand what your customers expect.

1. *The customer expects a response*

Customer relations is too often associated with solving problems. Companies sometimes forget that customers are not always dissatisfied, and listening to customers enables them to get compliments and suggestions for possible improvements, as well. And when it comes to dissatisfied customers, a large majority of them **simply want to know that their problems have been heard, taken into consideration, and that the company is striving to solve them.** Be aware that solving their problem is not the first thing the customer is looking for, **taking their complaint into account is what is most important.**

The goal is simple: **100% response rate.**

Charming compliments or virulent complaints, each client feedback must be answered. If you don't have a solution to offer them in the short term, it doesn't matter, but you have to respond to your customers to show them that you acknowledge and are considering their feedback. Faced with people who don't speak to companies enough, consideration (through a guaranteed response) is a lever to help expression.

2. *The customer expects a quick response*

Companies don't really have room for error if they want to keep their clients. Replying to all your customers is not an easy task, it's detailed and daily work. But when you know that **64% of consumers switched providers because of unsatisfactory customer service** (Accenture, Client 2020), the stakes are high.

Of all the changes brought about by digital, immediacy is key to optimization. Relational immediacy, notably resulting from the social networks, has become a key driver of satisfaction. In addition to providing an answer to every feedback from your customers, **you must respond quickly.**

What is a quick answer ? This is a very relative question because the response rate depends on the type of media which the customer used to contact you. A customer speaking via live chat expects an almost instantaneous response, but they will be more patient if they contacted you by email. You need to **set an “acceptable” response time** to the client, according to the customer listening tools deployed within your ecosystem. At Critizr example, we recommend **a response time of less than 24 hours** when a client gives feedback via our services. **Longer than that, you risk your client feeling ignored.** Responding to your customers is the basis of your customer listening strategy but your efforts could be quickly undermined if your response time is too long.

According to a study by Diablocom, a company **must respond within 24 hours to an e-mail, less than 4 hours to a private message on Facebook and less than 2 hours when it comes to a tweet.** Your ability to be responsive is key to customer satisfaction. Some companies have understood this and every day try to optimize the processing times of their clients' feedback.

3. The customer expects a personalized response

When a customer has taken the time to give you feedback, they expect you to respond to them, to show your gratitude. They expect you to respond quickly in order to show your recognition. And the customer's final major expectation is to **feel valued through a thoroughly contextualized exchange.** There is nothing more frustrating for a customer than to get a standardized response, something that could be sent to any client.

Proximity and customization are the keywords for optimal processing of customer feedback.

You have to be able to humanize the interactions you have with your customer, **show them that their feedback is unique. Even if it is similar to that of many other customers.** Behind the idea of a better contextualization, we also find the notion of continuity. If you need to interact repeatedly with a client following an initial feedback, **all the exchanges must be consistent and they should always further the customer's request.** The consumer will be even more disappointed if they have to explain the "why" of their feedback all over again during their third exchange with you.

Always respond, always respond quickly and always respond individually. These three elements are inseparable and complementary. Their implementation will ensure you optimize the management of your customer feedback and increase customer satisfaction.

Now that you know the customer's main expectations in terms of customer relations, we are going to look at who in the company should be responsible for the collected feedback. At Critizr, we have a very interesting view on this.

WHO IN THE COMPANY SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR CUSTOMER FEEDBACK ?

96% of dissatisfied customers do not tell the company directly (Understanding Customer). This is explained primarily by customers' lack of time. Especially when the listening mechanisms in place don't make it easy for them to express themselves. Second, **lack of trust in companies often stops customers expressing themselves.** Why? Faced with companies who struggle to engage in dialogue and build a real discussion with their clients, they have no confidence in how their feedback will be treated.

Who will deal with my request? Will it be dealt with by the right person, or will I be pushed from one person to another? Which shows how important the choice of the respondent in your company is.

So, should it be the customer service department or the point of sale?

This choice has to be the result of truly strategic thinking because it is different for each company. A large company cannot listen to its customers in the same way as a start-up, which is much more flexible in its organization. Your human and material resources or autonomy are what define the choice of the respondent.

There are two obvious areas which can manage the processing of customer feedback, the customer service department and the point of sale. Before addressing the operational aspect of customer feedback processing, we will thoroughly examine these two areas by looking at the advantages and disadvantages of each.

1. Customer service department

At a time when the customer relationship is central to the concerns of business, the customer service department has a pivotal role. For a customer, there is nothing more frustrating than being faced with inefficient customer service. Have effective customer service becomes a business imperative, especially when a strategy of customer listening and feedback collection is in place. When your customer's experience with customer service is proving disagreeable, unsatisfactory and maybe even humiliating in extreme cases, it is the health of the company that is at stake.

The role of customer service is to help the client throughout their dealings with the company: before, during and after purchase. So, questions, complaints or suggestions seem to be destined for customer service. And in fact, it is an important player in the processing of customer feedback.

The undeniable advantage of customer service is its processing speed. With a team dedicated to customer support, the company can be reactive in handling feedback. This is not to say that customer service provides an immediate response to the customer's feedback but it can communicate quickly with them to show them their opinion was heard. Customer service also has **an overview of all the interactions which allows them to take into account the whole customer relationship**, and thus have better contextualization.

However, the main criticism that can be directed to customer service is its scope. In effect, a company has a customer service department that has to manage all customer demands, grouping together a lot of shops, in different cities... which actually gives its operators a fairly limited margin of maneuver as they never find themselves facing the customer. This situation does not fulfill the customer's need for proximity. Unfortunately, there are too many standardized, pre-formatted responses...even at a time when the customer is expecting to be valued through contextualized exchanges with the company.

It becomes very important to train the entire customer service team in the best practices to be applied when processing customer feedback, in order to always meet the three key customer expectations (respond, respond quickly, respond individually).

1. Local processing at the point of sale

If your customer service department doesn't meet consumers' expectations, they will not hesitate to go to your competitors. Establishing a simplified, personalized and lasting relationship is one of the keys to the success of your customer listening strategy. So, getting back to proximity in the treatment of feedback is very relevant because it is easier to customize exchanges..

“The less you respond, the better you respond”

Unlike a customer service department that has to process all customer feedback, the store only deals with feedback from its own customers. Local treatment allows the client to feel more valued - they **get a direct response from the shop where they interacted with your brand** and not from a global customer service department. This choice of respondent will help restore confidence because the customer knows that **their feedback will be handled by the right person. This will allow the brand to improve the personalization** of its responses and ensure more customer proximity. Immediate access to customer feedback also optimizes managerial effectiveness through the implementation of quick actions. A very interesting reactivity which can avoid dissatisfaction among customers.

This proximity is **a real direction vector that will help you achieve a high degree of contextualization**. So, please encourage your network of outlets to respond to customer feedback that concerns them. When the problem encountered does not directly concern the point of sale, don't hesitate to do the opposite, and hand over to customer service who will then be entitled to respond.

The main disadvantage to local processing of customer feedback is lack of time. Unlike customer service, whose mission is to help customers throughout their relationship with the company and to process complaints, the store teams do not always have the time to regularly process feedback. This is a task that will add to the work of the teams, so it requires extensive training of teams to be effective. The less you respond, the better you respond: by choosing local treatment **the amount of daily customer feedback is lower and therefore can remain effective** and have the customization sought by the customer in the response.

Critizr's recommendation

Through our customer engagement and satisfaction measuring solutions, we are committed to **more proximity to personalize customer relations**. As it is the management of each store that responds to customer feedback that affects them, the customer experience is better contextualized. Focusing on local removes the obstacles to customer expression by showing them that their feedback will be processed by the right person. This is a real opportunity to regain the trust of your customers.

However, **the customer service/local service combination is very complementary**. When the store processes feedback directly, customer service becomes complementary to their action of proximity by **taking care of things that do not concern the point of sale**. Customer service can also help in certain specific situations, for example, if the customer feedback flow is too high.

The Flunch restaurant chain has no customer service department as it considers that its restaurant managers are the guarantors of their customer relations. But this does not prevent the company combining the complementarity of local treatment with a more corporate treatment.

The restaurant managers personally respond to customers who send feedback about their restaurant (how meals were cooked, cleanliness, staff friendliness...). However, when the customer feedback is not about the local context, and addresses items related to company policy, it gets a response directly from the company.

“

There are two points on which our managers may not respond to the customer: feedback about food safety, and anything to do with ethics (religion, values...). In that situation, it is usually me who responds personally.”



OLIVIER DESCAMPS / CEO FLUNCH

HOW TO RESPOND TO CUSTOMER FEEDBACK ?

1. Train respondents

Whether it is your customer service department or your store, or both, treating customer feedback requires extensive training of your teams. For the customer service department, you can **develop a training guide** which will be sent to each person in charge of processing customer feedback. For more local processing, **it is essential to give this guide to each store** so they can all manage customer feedback in the same way. For example, all of your teams must be able to identify critical customers and treat their feedback accordingly.

Within this guide, feel free to include a section on **good response practices** (compliments, questions, comments...), which are very operational elements in contextualized situations.

To complement the guide, **get your employees together for a workshop** (or similar). This will let you see if your teams are operational or if they need to be better trained, and promote the sharing of best practices to sustain and animate the mechanisms. As part of a continuous improvement process, you should **carry out regular checks with your teams to hear their feedback**. These are actions that will allow you to improve the efficiency and quality of customer feedback management.

2. Responding to a compliment, a question, a suggestion

Once you implement a customer listening approach, you will collect various types of customer feedback: compliments, questions, complaints, frustrations, suggestions... In order to demonstrate to your customers that you have respect for them, you should try to respond to all feedback, even compliments. How to respond to a compliment? A simple thank you might seem insufficient...but it is essential. Here is a list of items you should use in order to respond well to your customers :

- ✔ Greet the customer
“ Hello Laurence, ...”
- ✔ Thank the customer
“ Thank you for taking the time to give us your feedback...”
- ✔ *Reformulate the main elements of the customer’s feedback in a natural way to show that you have understood what they said*



The content of your response should be adapted to the writing style of the customer (using emoticons if your client does, etc.)



Avoid the feeling that everything is done by machine as that will ruin your efforts



Look for proximity in the interaction, like in a private message. To humanize the exchange with the customer, signing your response with your first name and title is essential.

If you decide to treat feedback locally **don't worry about employees making spelling mistakes**. Customers themselves often make spelling mistakes, it's only human after all. If ever there are spelling mistakes in your response, within reason of course (the idea is not to destroy the English language), it doesn't matter because **your customers will really feel like they are interacting with another human being** and this will strengthen the feeling of closeness.

3. Responding to a dissatisfied customer

In the case of negative customer feedback related to dissatisfaction, your response will be decisive. Complaints processing has become a strategic issue for companies. According to a Capgemini study, **a satisfied customer will tell 3 people while a dissatisfied customer will tell 10**. Don't be Customer Phobic because that negative word of mouth can be avoided. In responding to the dissatisfied customer, you can even turn dissatisfaction into a source of profit. Here is a list of items to be used to respond well to a dissatisfied client :

◆
Target the problem before responding (What is the customer complaining about? Why? Is it our fault or not?)

◆
Greet the customer
" Hello Laurence, ..."

◆
Thank the customer for taking the time to tell you the problem

◆
Reformulate the elements in their complaint to show that the company understands the customer's problem

◆
Empathize (put yourself in the client's place, show that the company understands their problem and is taking it into consideration)

◆
Empathize (put yourself in the client's place, show that the company understands their problem and is taking it into consideration)

◆
If the reason for the customer's dissatisfaction is not the company's fault, apologize and show the customer that everything is being done to solve the problem

◆
In every case, be positive. (More than anything, a dissatisfied customer wants some recognition and to know that the company is striving to solve their problem)

As with all customer feedback, avoid the mechanical feeling that will ruin your efforts, use a similar writing style to that of your client and look for proximity in your interactions.

If ever the customer tells you about their dissatisfaction directly, by phone for example, listen to the end. **Above all do not interrupt them, it is the basis of customer focus.** Once they have finished, go back to the list of items above to respond well.

Feel free to phone when you can. What could be more impressive to a dissatisfied customer than to be called back quickly? Even more impressive when it is the manager of the store on the line !

CONCLUSION

The processing of customer feedback is an essential step in your client listening approach, which requires an appropriate and empathetic strategy.

At Critizr the users of our services give more positive feedback than negative. Handling customer feedback becomes **a way of adding value to the work of your employees, a source of motivation.**

The choice of the respondent within the company is very important because it will determine many elements. Whether it is the customer service department or the point of sale (for local treatment) **it is the human and material resource or autonomy which define the choice of the respondent.**

At Critizr, **we advocate greater proximity to personalize customer relations**. When feedback is linked to experience in a point of sale, and managers are able to interact with their customers, problems can be better identified. Local treatment can bring a more relevant response while strengthening the relationship between the store and its customer.

Companies have to be able to refocus their customer relations, give local stores the chance to speak. **A customer who sees their message has reached the right person will be more willing to give feedback in the future.**

To optimize the processing of your customer feedback, be sure to understand and meet the expectations of your customers. They expect three key things when they take the time to give feedback :

That someone responds to them



That someone responds to them quickly



That someone responds to them individually



There are solutions dedicated to the collection and processing of customer feedback, such as Critizr, which can effectively treat customer dissatisfaction. The return on investment of this customer committed approach is considerable: **recapturing customers, loyalty, business efficiency and significant gain in revenue** (word of mouth, co-innovation...)

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