

How to Respond to Customer Service Comments on Facebook

By Jennifer Spivak and Lorraine Tran

Facebook is like a town hall meeting; though you can try your best to steer which direction the conversation goes, audience members ultimately have control over what is discussed. What this means for many brands is that consumers will use your Facebook page as a customer service channel—whether you like it or not.

The worst thing a brand can do when customer service related comments begin popping up on their Facebook page is ignore them. The second worst thing a brand can do is robotically copy and paste “We’re sorry for the inconvenience. Please contact us at 123-568-7890” as a response to every single inquiry.

Superior social media customer service can improve online brand reputation, increase positive word of mouth and even drive purchases. The key to getting it right involves following a set of steps and addressing a series of questions that allow brands to determine the most effective way to respond to each individual comment. The information that follows assumes two things:

- You already have a public comment policy in place, clearly displayed in the “About” section of your page. This policy or disclaimer should detail what is and isn’t allowed on your page and that violations will be deleted.

You have in place a protocol for communicating with your customer service team that allows for quick and easy back-and-forth in-

teraction so that getting the user the answer they need happens in a timely matter.

Is the Comment Positive?

Ignoring positive sentiment on your brand Facebook page can be just as damaging as ignoring negative posts.

Yes: Don’t leave customers feeling underappreciated by ignoring their praise. Craft a customized response thanking them for their feedback, personalize the reply as much as possible and look for opportunities to ask them questions about their experience that will illicit additional praise and allow for a meaningful back-and-forth exchange designed to strengthen the brand-consumer relationship. If the comment is extremely positive, share it with your other Facebook fans as a way of further leveraging this positive sentiment.

Keep Facebook customer service examples on your page whenever possible. This strengthens the online brand-consumer relationship.

No: When users leave angry comments on your page, the first step is to look up that customer in your database (if applicable) and determine whether the product or service they’re complaining about is one they actually experienced and/or purchased. You’d be surprised to learn how many social media users harass brands via their social channels for the sole purpose of getting something for free.

Is the Comment Valid?

In other words, first check if they're crazy.

No: If the comment is nonsensical and/or a clear violation of the public comment guidelines you should already have posted on your page, deleting the comment and even banning the user may be appropriate. If the comment does not violate the guidelines but is still invalid, the best course of action is to respond to the comment with a calm, reasoned, rational response.

Yes: Once you've determined that a negative comment left on your brand community page is in fact valid, it's important to address it correctly as soon as possible. Though you might publicly state on your page that all issues will be addressed within 24 hours (yes, customer service on Facebook needs to happen over the weekends too), you should set a much shorter internal deadline of two to four hours, which is better suited to the immediate nature of social networks.

You should already have a seamlessly integrated system set up between your social media team and your customer support team that allows for quickly determining the best course of action for the user, depending on his or her specific complaint.

Can the Issue be Addressed Online?

Keep Facebook customer service examples on your pagewhenver possible. This strengthens the online brand-consumer relationship, provides a clear benefit to the consumer for using social media to communicate with your brand and saves your company money versus more costly phone calls to your customer support team.

No: Sometimes the need to give or receive private and/or confidential information in order to resolve the customer's issue, like credit card information, home addresses or passwords can make it hard to keep the conversation online. In these situations, there's a clear case for guiding the interaction to an offline

Comment Policy Language Example:

[BRAND]'s social media pages are only for the purpose of [INSERT]. Our Facebook page is a place for sharing comments, articles, advice and anything else that pertains to subject matter deemed appropriate by [BRAND].

[BRAND] is not responsible for the accuracy of information, opinions, claims or advice shared on our Facebook page.

Please do not post any information on our Facebook page that you consider to be private or confidential information. We encourage participation, and ask that you please respect the community and its members. Please know that [BRAND] reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to remove any postings that are: (1) false or misleading; (2) insulting, slanderous, or obscene; (3) in violation of any intellectual property right, law or regulation; and/or (4) deemed offensive be it graphically or in tone. If [BRAND] determines that anyone is violating any of the above rules, it has the right to remove this person from the page and report the user to Facebook for further action. Thank you.

channel. Doing so comes with two important rules:

- Respond publicly. Even though your response will not resolve the user's issue, it will be a clear indicator to others that you are working to address it, and have not left any comments on your page ignored.
- Ask the user how you can contact them, not vice versa. If the user wanted to call your customer service number, they would have done so in the first place. Your public response should include a request for their contact email or phone number via private message so that someone on your team can reach out to them directly.

Yes: In this scenario, your goal is to provide the user with a sufficient response and/or resolution, and ultimately encourage a positive or neutral follow-up comment. Both tone

and language is key here, as it's important to convey wanting to fix whatever problem the customer is experiencing without resorting to any variation of the standard "We're Sorry" messages that brands use on social media all too often.

Whenever possible, keep the response brief and direct the user to a page on your website with additional information relating to their question or issue. Finally, close your response by asking the user if the information you've provided answers their question and/or resolves their issue. Assuming you've handled

the interaction correctly thus far, it is likely that the user then publicly thanks your brand for effectively addressing their issue via Facebook.

Following the exchange, it's crucial to monitor communications closely for the next 48 hours in case of additional follow-up comments, either by the original user, or a different user with the same or similar issue. **PRN**

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