
How to Measure the Quality of Customer Service E-Mail

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The kind of e-mail that keeps contact center managers up at night ...

Customer's e-mail:

My (permanent) Maryland disability placard expired in March. How do I go about renewing it? The number of my placard is 12345678. Thanks, Jane Doe

Customer service agent's response:

JaneDoe,

In regards to your e-mail obtaining a current first-time update disable placard, one would need to complete a VR-123 (can be down load from the web, under forms) and taken to any full service MVA office, Monday - Friday ,8:30 - 4:30 p.m. , (If cannot get to the doctors, then the form will allow one 6 months to have the doctors to complete (still will received a placard) If cannot come in , one may give nortize power of attorney.



Presentation overview

- The seven traits of well-written e-mail to customers
- How to measure the quality of your agents' e-mail using E-WRITE's Customer Service E-Mail Scoring Tool
- Six strategies for improving agents' writing skills



We know a lot about the *quantity* of e-mail agents answer

- Number of e-mails answered per hour, day, week
- Response time for each e-mail
- How long it takes an agent to answer each e-mail
- Other quantitative measures?



What do you know about the *quality* of agents' e-mail to customers?

- Percentage of e-mails with first contact resolution?
- How e-mail service affects customer satisfaction scores?
- Affect of e-mail service on customer purchasing behavior?
- How the e-mail from your contact center is viewed by others at your company?



Fact: without *quality*, *quantity*
means nothing ...

Fact: poor quality e-mail leads
to higher e-mail volume...



The seven traits of well-written e-mail to customers

1. Provide a correct answer to customer's question(s).
2. Provide a complete answer to customer's question(s).
3. Write in a personal, professional tone.
4. Write at the appropriate level of complexity for the customer.
5. Use formatting to enable customers to scan.
6. Be free of punctuation, spelling, or grammar errors.
7. Offer other options for getting help.



Customer's e-mail to Local Govt

From: Jane Doe
Sent: Monday, April 11, 2005 1:31 PM
To: Local Govt Solid Waste Services
Subject: Question about request for special garbage pick-up

Dear Solid Waste Services -

I recently completed the online request form for a special garbage pick-up. I have about 18 cans of old latex paint I want to get rid of. Do you pick up latex paint? Please confirm whether you will take this kind of garbage.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe



Agent's e-mail response

From: Meyer, Joan
Sent: Monday, April 11, 2005 4:29 PM
To: Jane Doe
Subject: **Confirmation of Special Collection no. 602556 pick up day Wednesday April 13th**

Ms. Doe -

Thank you for using our on line special request service. I have scheduled your special trash. Please have your materials at the curb prior to 7:00 a.m. on your day of collection. If you have both special trash and scrap metal to be picked up, you must separate it as two separate trucks collect the specials. The crew will only collect the items you indicated on your request for pick-up. Also, check our website for complete information on preparing items for collection. That information for a trash special can be found here: Sorry we do not collect paint, or wood you need to bring those items to the Transfer Station on RTE. 123 and Main Street.

http://www.localgovt.gov/swstmpl.asp?url=/content/dpwt/solidwaste/collection_services/trash/special_collections.asp

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How to assess the quality of an e-mail response

E-WRITE's Customer Service E-Mail Quality Review Tool



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Measure the quality of your agents' e-mail

- Conduct a holistic review of e-mail quality
- Evaluate e-mail quality using a 100-point scale
- Practice using E-WRITE's Customer Service E-Mail Scoring Tool



Give the e-mail a quality score

Standard	Points Earned	Possible Points
1. E-mail provides a correct answer to customer's question(s).		20
2. E-mail provides a complete answer to customer's question(s).		20
3. E-mail is written in a personal, professional tone.		20
4. E-mail is written at the appropriate level of complexity for the customer.		15
5. E-mail uses formatting to enable customers to scan.		10
6. E-mail is free of punctuation, spelling, or grammar errors.		10
7. E-mail offers other options for getting help.		5
TOTAL		100
Quality Rating		



Don't use call monitoring standards for e-mail monitoring

- “Keeps conversation going with appropriate pauses and silences ...”
- “Provides an end-of-call summary of actions to be taken ...”
- “Asks clarifying questions, helps customer identify the problem...”



Standard, explanation, score

Standard	Explanation
<p>1. E-mail provides a correct answer to customer's question(s).</p> <p style="text-align: right;">20 points</p>	<p>The e-mail should answer the customer's question(s) correctly, based on current product or process knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifications • Knowledgebase articles • FAQs • Policies • Input from colleagues or managers <p>Excellent: The e-mail answers all the customer's questions correctly and according to company practice/policy.</p> <p>Very Poor: The e-mail contains incorrect information or violates company practice/policy.</p>
	<p><i>Customize this Standard for your company:</i></p>

1. E-mail provides a correct answer to customer's questions(s).									
Excellent		Very Good		Fair		Poor		Very Poor	
20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11
Points awarded out of a possible 20 _____									



Standard's point value represents its e-mail quality "weight"

Standard	Explanation
<p>4. E-mail is written at the appropriate level of complexity for the customer.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">15 points</p>	<p>The e-mail response matches the customer's level of technical knowledge. The response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects the customer's level of technical knowledge, determined by the customer's e-mail or customer data • Avoids jargon, abbreviations, highly technical language for the novice customer • Uses appropriate technical language for the expert customer <p>Excellent: E-mail contains the amount of detail and terminology appropriate to the customer's level of technical knowledge</p> <p>Very Poor: E-mail uses many terms, acronyms, or abbreviations and/or provides guidance the customer can't understand. Or, the e-mail provides a "novice" answer to an "expert" customer.</p>
<p><i>Customize this Standard for your company:</i></p>	

4. E-mail is written at the appropriate level of complexity for the customer.									
Excellent		Very Good		Fair		Poor		Very Poor	
15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6
Points awarded out of a possible 15 _____									



Six strategies for improving agents' writing skills

1. Distribute writing standards
2. Provide writing resources
3. Collect a portfolio of model e-mails
4. Organize peer coaching
5. Offer ongoing training
6. Develop a writing recognition program



Improve agents' writing skills:

Distribute writing standards

- Develop e-mail writing standards comparable to your telephone service standards
- Adapt the writing guidelines used by other departments in your agency: Communications, Publications, etc.
- Use or adapt the E-Mail Scoring Tool (*with permission ...*)



Improve agents' writing skills:

Provide writing resources

- Dictionary
- A writing guide (*Gregg Reference Manual*) or style guide (*Chicago Manual of Style*)
- Company writing guidelines
- A colleague in Communications or Publications to serve as contact for call center writing questions
- Links to online writing resources



Improve agents' writing skills:

Collect a portfolio of model e-mails

- An aid to training new employees
- A concrete product suited to adults' learning style
- An antidote to agents' perception that managers' quality judgments are biased



Improve agents' writing skills:

Organize peer coaching

- Pair agents according to strengths and weaknesses
- Short sessions held frequently
- Focus on one specific writing skill per session
- Ask peers to record any differences of opinion or strategy for discussion during a staff meeting



Improve agents' writing skills:

Offer ongoing training

- Group training
 - In-house trainers
 - Outside trainers
- Self-paced training
- Training modules delivered during weekly staff meetings



Improve agents' writing skills:

Develop a writing recognition program

Connect all recognition to compliance with your published writing quality standards

- Invite an outsider (expert, customer) to do a review of e-mails to recognize excellence
- Recognize specific writing traits:
 - Best answer to complex question
 - Best polite reply to angry customer



Develop a writing recognition program

- Create an annotated collection of excellent e-mails and recognize any agent whose e-mail is included in the collection
- Invite agents who are excellent writers to be a writing judge to recognize peers
- Give agents a gift equal to the value of an excellent e-mail:
 - Use company data on the value of a customer
 - Use your own data on the cost of an e-mail



Develop a writing recognition program

- Reward agents for writing or editing canned answers or knowledgebase entries
- Let agents use the E-mail Scoring Tool to review the overall quality of e-mail at your center. Reward agents for ideas about how to improve writing skills



Download the Quality Review Tool through December 17, 2008

www.ewriteonline.com

E-WRITE's Customer Service E-Mail Quality Review Tool



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Announcing the *Writing Matters* blog

The screenshot shows the homepage of the 'writing.matters.' blog. The header features the title 'writing.matters.' in white text on a purple background, with 'By E-WRITE's Leslie O'Flahavan and Marilynne Rudick' below it. The main content area includes a date 'October 20, 2008' and a featured article titled 'Archiving Back Issues of an E-Newsletter: When is Enough Enough?' by Leslie O'Flahavan. The article text discusses the challenges of archiving e-newsletters in the 'Web 3.0' era. To the right, there is a sidebar with a yellow 'e-write.' logo, a link to 'Email E-WRITE', an 'ARCHIVES' section with links for 'October 2008' and 'September 2008', and a 'CATEGORIES' section with links for 'Blogs', 'Bulleed lists', 'Customer service e-mail', 'E-mail', 'Grammar and usage', and 'Newsletters'. The footer of the screenshot shows a 'BOOKMARK' icon and social media links.

writingmatters.typepad.com



Questions? Comments?

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