Tips for Successful Live Chat – from Velaro

Live chat is a powerful tool that a number of large companies are now leveraging to make their websites better. Aside from improving online customer service, live chat keeps users engaged with the site. Here are a few live chat etiquette tips we've put together from both a user and a representatives perspective to make your next live chat experience a bit more pleasant.

Exchange Names

The first and most basic tip for both parties is to exchange names. This is especially crucial for the chat representative. Some users may not believe that a real person is on the other end of the chat log. By opening with "Hey there my name is John, how may I help you", you add the personal touch required to initiate a productive live chat session for both parties.

Friendliness Still Counts

Positive is neutral – neutral is negative. When you're chatting online, whether you are the consumer or the representative, keep in mind that communicating a sense of positivity is not easily accomplished. In fact, studies show that people tend to react negatively to messages in which the sender had no ill will. In the case of live chat, it's especially crucial to convey positivity!

That's why this catchy little phrase- "positive is neutral and neutral is negative"- is an excellent live chat etiquette rule of thumb. Something as simple as "Hey, thanks for answering my question it was a big help!" seems natural. Whereas, "ok", seems just plain rude.

Miscommunication Can Happen

- **Avoid Sarcasm at All Costs**: Joking around in a business setting can be an effective way to lighten up the mood. However, in a live chat setting sarcasm is nearly impossible to interpret.
- **Put Yourself in Their Shoes**: In a live chat scenario both parties have an agenda. The customer needs questions answered and wants more information. The live chat representative wants to help the user find what they are looking for and make their user experience as pleasant as possible. Bearing in mind what the other party is looking to get out of an interaction is a dependable way to avoid miscommunication.
- **Jokes Get Lost In Translation**: Similarly to avoiding sarcasm, avoiding jokes is a live chat etiquette best practice as well. Often times the receiver may not perceive the joke as it's meant to be. In some cases they may misinterpret what is meant to be a joke as an insult. To avoid inadvertently insulting an innocent soul, avoid jokes in a live chat setting.

Focus on the Answer First and Details Later

Responding in depth is often viewed as good customer service and a display of effort. When you're engaged in a live chat it's generally a better practice to respond with as few words as possible. **You want to be concise**, while still conveying the message you need to. If you absolutely have to add more detail, make sure you answer the question in the first few words, then elaborate. Below are two live chat examples, which would you prefer?

Version 1

User: "Where can I find the contact us page?"

Rep:" The top right hand of your screen on the navigation bar"

Version 2

User: "Where can I find the contact us page?"

Rep: "It's funny you ask that, the contact us page can actually be seen by clicking a number of links on our website. If you scroll to the footer of the site you will see a link to the contact page, there is also another link to the contact page located on the sidebar, finally you can get to the contact page from the navigation bar, all the way to the right"

I think you get my point. In version 2 the chat representative is still trying to be helpful and supportive, but by being so wordy, the user isn't getting the answer they want and they will most likely leave the site. Although detail can be a good thing; in a web chat setting concise is always better live chat etiquette.

Please Do Not Shout

When you walk into a store and you have to return a good or ask a question, it is generally considered rude to shout at someone. We also know that shouting is an excellent way to not get what you want out of an interaction. From a customer representative's standpoint shouting at a customer is surefire way to get fired...really fast. The same ideas apply to live chat etiquette. There is just something UNSETTLING ABOUT BEING SHOUTED AT.

Customers: It's completely understandable that you are frustrated and need help.

Representatives: If a customer shouts at you it's generally acceptable to ask "excuse me sir, did you accidentally hit your caps lock button".

Grammar and Spelling Are Crucial

As we've said a number of times before, a live chat setting is a business engagement. It's not like you're text messaging your friends on the weekends. <u>Communicate on live chat like you would sending a business email, not texting your buddies.</u> Just be aware of common grammatical and spelling errors to maintain professionalism.

If you follow these seven simple live chat etiquette tips you're sure to have a friendly, enjoyable, and most importantly fruitful live chat session.

3 Ways to Make your Live Chat Program Successful

Live Chat is emerging as a must-have medium for online customer service. It's a convenient way for companies to immediately connect with customers, and it helps significantly to reduce shopping cart abandonment rates once customers have already placed items in their cart. It's not just good for businesses, though. Customers like it too. How much? According to a bench-marking study by eDigitalResearch, 73% of customers who used live chat in the past year were happy with their experience.

Customer opinions can have a dramatic impact on how trends develop, and as more and more customers experience Live Chat – and enjoy the convenience it offers – more companies will adopt the technology.

However, as with any new customer experience platform, it takes more than technology to create happy customers; new methods of interacting with customers require the correct type of training program to ensure an experience that will keep customers coming back, again and again.

When your company decides to embark on a training program for your Live Chat system, make sure you incorporate these three key aspects of Live Chat customer service training.

Live Chat Customer Service Training Tip #1: *Understand Your Customer's Mindset*

Before your customer service agents even engage with a "Hello – how can I help you?" Live Chat message, they first need to understand the mindset of customers who choose to interact via Live Chat. Here are a few reasons why customers might choose Live Chat over another customer service platform, such as a phone call or even a message sent to support over social media:

- Live Chat is speedier – offers an instant response
- Personalized service – no canned responses
- No wading through a phone menu system to reach a live person

When you understand why your customers decide to use Live Chat, your customer service reps need to be trained to respond accordingly to customers' desires for choosing Live Chat. In other words, prepare your agents to respond quickly, be resourceful, and process customer requests efficiently.

Live Chat Customer Service Training Tip #2: *Be Customer Centric*

Live Chat, much like a phone call, is perceived to be a one-to-one conversation, where the customer gets the full attention of the agent. Even though your agents may be handling multiple chats at one time, the interaction needs to feel entirely personal to the customer – that is to say, the rep needs to have a customer-centric attitude. To accomplish this, the agent should demonstrate the following:

Examples

- Let the customer know time requirements: "Just give me one minute here while I research that request …."
- Keep the customer engaged: "Do you have additional questions?'
- Be courteous: "Thanks so much for inquiring about our services. We're so happy to have you as a new customer …"

Live Chat Customer Service Training Tip #3: *Take Extra Steps to Convey Professionalism*

"Lost in translation" can be an unfortunate consequence of the Live Chat medium if agents are not trained properly. This means that quick messages back and forth from the agent can come off as rude or rushed, if special care is not taken to convey a professional and positive tone. The farther the customer gets from face-to-face or voice interaction, the more the tone can be misinterpreted, so it's imperative that your customer service agents go above-and-beyond in their ability to convey professionalism. Here are some tips to make sure it happens:

- **Be positive**: Use language that is positive, not negative. For example, "You can do this by …" instead of "You aren't able to do that with …"
- **Be friendly, but still formal**: Live Chat is a more casual communication medium, but you don't want your agents reverting to texting acronyms, such as "TTYL" or "LOL." Agents need to type out their words, striking the balance between friendly and professional.
- **But not too formal …** Live Chat still needs to be approachable, and it can be slightly more casual than language used in corporate communications or email. For example, "Let me look up your reservation," is perfectly appropriate. "Please hold while I inquire for you," is a little too formal.