Customer Service

Description

A virtual assistant handles interaction with multiple customers on 2 different levels:

- Their own customers that she/he collaborates with (for example companies, agencies, digital content creators etc.)
- Customers of companies that VA provides services for

The contact can go through a variety of channels such as social media platforms, emails, or phone.

To successfully manage the tasks, there are several useful different applications such as Asana, Trello, or Slack (to create tasks lists and manage different projects) and Toggl (a time tracking software).

Investment or cost of entry

To start providing services on customer support as a virtual assistant, the following investment is required:

- Registration of your business (**€**)
- Promotion of services (**€€**)
- Computer equipment (**€€**)

- Phone bill (**€**)

- Software and applications (**€€**)

- Civil liability insurance (**€€€**): it is optional, but it is especially nice to have when working with corporations and big companies.

Environmental Impact

The environmental impact:

- Average spam email (🍃)

- Standard email (🍃🍃)

- Email with heavy attached files (🍃🍃🍃)

Ways to reduce it include:

- Unsubscribe from automatically generated newsletters

- Only send necessary emails (when possible, prefer a phone call or text message)

- Make every email you send lighter (no unnecessary attachments or reduce their size before adding them)

- Use a mailbox hosted by a company that uses greener energy such as GreenGeeks.

Good Practice

To create more inclusive content, it is necessary to:

- **Set the customer's expectations**: let the customer know what you are willing to do for them, and what services you can provide. If you set an expectation and then exceed it, you will have a customer for life.

- **Create templates**: Create email templates for frequently asked questions and submit them to the company for approval. Develop a system that clearly defines how you should communicate with potential clients and where to find answers to more specific questions asked by clients. Work out with the company in which situations you should deal with a potential client, and when you should delegate communication to the business owner.

- **First listen, then speak**: customers want to know you are listening to them. Use active listening, then ask questions, get to the bottom of the issue, and provide solutions.

- **Create customer touchpoints and follow-up after the finished task:** this practice will show that you care about the customer's satisfaction and encourage them to tell others about your company.

Challenges

Customer service can be challenging when:
- Handling angry or time-pressured customers
- Not having an answer to customer's question

- Dealing with service outage crisis

- Transferring calls to another department

- There are no clear guidelines from the company you work for.

VA in customer service

VA AS AN ASSET IN COMPANY CUSTOMER SUPPORT STRATEGY

In 2020
25 %
of customer service operations are run by Virtual Assistants

70 %
reduction in contact enquiries
for companies that collaborate with Virtual Assitants

84 %
of the organisations surveyed planned to increase their invesment in customer service technlogy, including VAs

MANAGING CUSTOMER SERVICE IN ONLINE BUSINESS

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Don't leave any email or message unresponded	Be clear and patient - answer in the way that you would like to receive an answer	Solve and anticipate problems
Provide honesty and admit to mistake when necessary	Treat each customer individually	Frequently ask and thank for feedback

General Advice/ solutions

There are different ways to address these challenges:

- The H.E.A.R.D. Technique (Hear. Emphasize. Apologise. Resolve. Diagnose.)

- Take time and set ground rules with the company that you provide customer support for. If needed, set regular update meetings.

VA MOOC

- Convey to the customer that team is putting all its efforts into getting the service back on track.

- When receiving challenging email or phone calls, take time to process them. Write up a first version of response, then go for a short walk to calm down, and go back to check if what you wrote is the answer you still want to send. This will prevent too fast answers sent under the influence of raw emotions.

- Remember that on the other side of the computer there is also a person who is looking for solutions to their problems. Even if they are frustrated, your job is to make their situation improve.
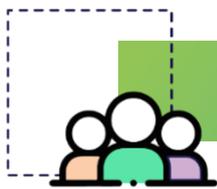
Who is this tool/ activity for?

This is best for people whose goal is to:

- Learn how to work under pressure and manage multiple tasks at the same time.
- Know how to admit and learn from mistakes, because we are all humans and they will eventually happen.
- Always be in touch with other people.

Conclusions

- To start the process of setting up your own business, you should have in mind the costs associated with it. That is including the equipment, and future expenses for professional versions of different applications that will help you manage the tasks better.

- Reducing this activity's carbon footprint is possible by managing your emails better.

- Ensuring to be trained in inclusive communication is a fundamental component of any forward-looking customer service strategy.

- Customer service can be a challenging and at times frustrating job...

- ...but the key to managing these challenges is knowing how to answer effectively and in time.

- Customer service is not about telling people how great you are and giving numbers to prove it. It's about creating memorable customer experiences that speak for you. Always be polite and think about how you would like to be treated if you were in the customer's place.

References

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