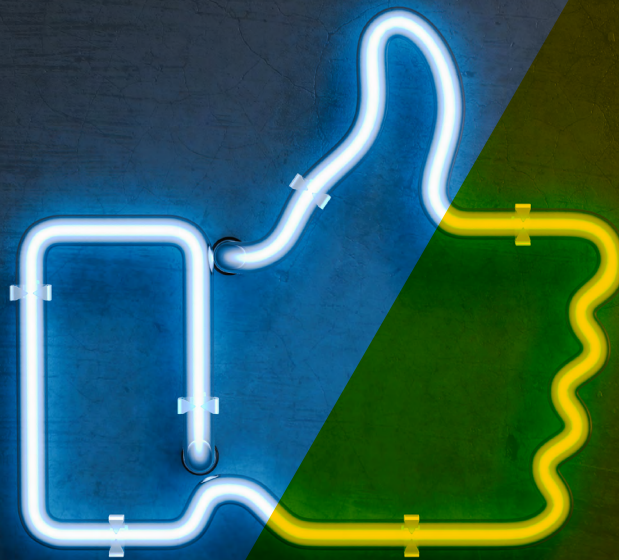


8 Principles of Complaints Management in the Social Media Age





Introduction

Recent customer service trends have turned to using social media platforms as another communications channel to interact with. Within the last couple years alone, Facebook and Twitter have propelled businesses into a field of direct consumer to business interaction, where both parties benefit. To a complaints management team, this means complaints, suggestions, compliments and enquiries are being submitted to businesses via the business's Facebook fan page and Twitter accounts.

Typically businesses set up either a dedicated social media team or a team under the marketing department to monitor and respond to Facebook posts and tweets. These teams need to not only respond with a tone and flavour consistent with social media norms, but they must also need to respond in a manner consistent with the nature of the interaction; a suggestion for a new product or service needs to be responded to in a very different way to a complaint.

Social media platforms like Facebook also provide these companies with a wealth of benefits, allowing them to gather feedback, communicate to people on mass and monitor conversation threads. Yet with those points in mind, many companies still fail to utilize social media platforms to their fullest extent, especially when it comes to complaints management and continuous improvement.

To counter this issue, we've provided you with a brief How-To Guide about the do's and don'ts of social media and your company's complaints management team.

1

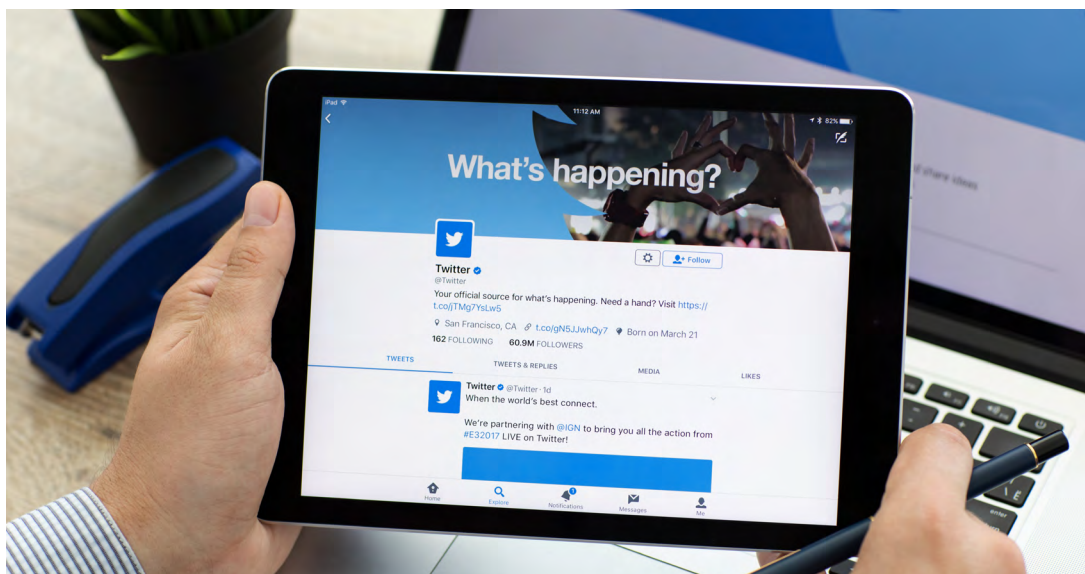
Monitor Social Conversations

Social media complaints are publicly visible and are amplified by other readers contributions (eg: "You think you're upset about the \$50 overcharge on your credit card, I was overcharged \$750, how do you think I felt....")

This means what starts out pretty small can soon escalate due to other peoples anecdotal experiences, effectively causing an Avalanche effect.

The brand damage is then obvious, lasting and significant. Many contributors often quote competitors and how well they solved a similar problem, effectively promoting defection to your competitors and all this is happening directly on your Facebook fan page..

To avoid these problems and to catch any contributor add-on before it occurs, you need to continuously monitor your Facebook and Twitter accounts (we recommend at least every five minutes) so that you can actively identify complaints to process. Not only will your customers appreciate the constant feedback and feel more valued, you'll also be able to prevent any complaint escalation and reference to competitors by acting first.



2

Don't Prioritise All Social Media Complaints Equally

If your company had two complaints related to the same product being defective but one of them came from a member of the public and the other came from a TV personality on a major current affairs program, logic tells us that we should probably tend to the TV personality first if we had a choice to prioritize them. However if the member of the public was complaining that the product caused a death, serious illness or injury and the TV personality was complaining about the colors used in the packaging, again logic tells us to focus on the more serious complaint first.

What this means is that we need to **"prioritise complaints according to influence level of the person making the complaint and the seriousness of the complaint"**.

A. SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER LEVEL

The first of these dimensions concerns the relative influence that a customer might have on a social media platform.

Take Facebook for example. If one of your customers has 600 friends, you should naturally prioritise them before another customer who has only 20. This prioritisation is due to the fact that these 600 people will be able to view their friends' public complaint, and might thus form a negative opinion about your company or even worse, they could contribute to conversation advising of their poor experience with your company or how they had a great experience with your competitor.



2

Ideally, you want to catch both complaints before other people add their own contributions, but just in case, you should always handle whichever complaint can cause the most damage first.

Of course, this doesn't mean that the latter customer should be valued less or receive second-rate service. On the contrary, your company should take care to answer each and every complaint with the same level of politeness and calm. Highly visible public complaints can cause appalling brand damage if you leave them unchecked, which is why you must sort these out first and foremost.

B. NATURE OF COMPLAINT

The second dimension of social media complaint prioritization is decided by the nature of the complaint.

Here, the complaints that require the most urgency and care are those that are extremely impacting to your customer or may be systemic and therefore affect many other customers.

All serious complaints involving death, serious illness, injury or major financial impact complaints should be dealt with the highest priority.

3

Fix the Problem to the Complaints Satisfaction FAST

Going hand in hand with continuous thread monitoring is resolving the complaint quickly. Sure, you can record and read all of your complaints into your system, but actually resolving to the customers satisfaction is another matter entirely. If a complaint is detailed and requires significant time to solve, at least let your customer know that you are actively addressing their problem.

Remember, once the complaint is in public view, everyone can see how slow and unresponsive your company is. The faster you fix the problem the better.

4

Speak Socially but with the Appropriate Diligence

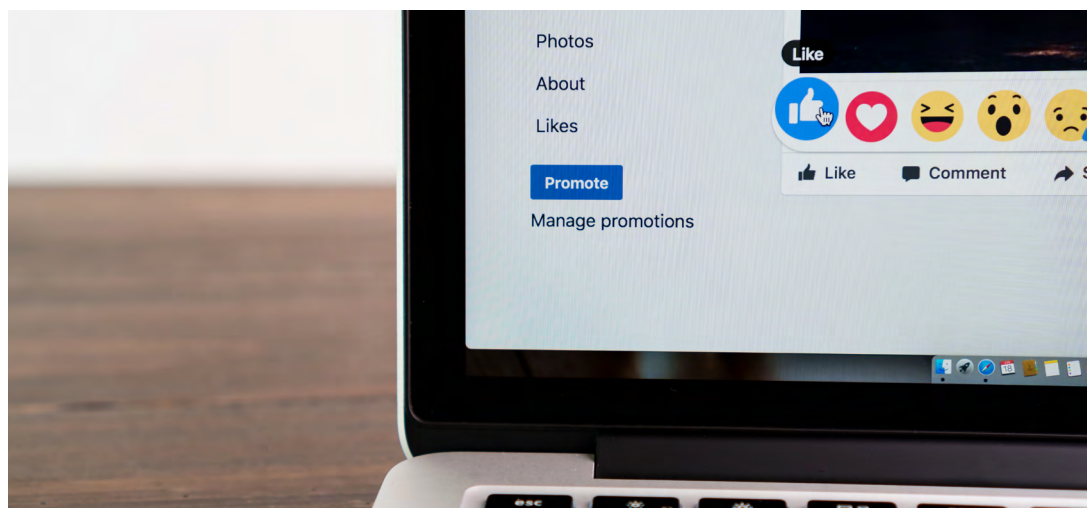
The golden rule to social media management is “Know your audience.”

When addressing your customers, using overly formal or technical language is strongly discouraged. Formal complaints handling legalese should not be used at all. The language used must be appropriate to the social media world and to the people using it.

You can and should be a little informal on these platforms, as formal salutations and phrases will seem out of place. Of course, this doesn't mean you should revert to slang or improper grammar; on the contrary, your message should be clear, concise and well written.

Also maintain a friendly and helpful tone when addressing your customers, with the goal of establishing a positive atmosphere of effective communication.

Most importantly, you must never provide any information that could be considered an admission of fault. Instead, offer polite conversational language that reassures customers of your focus on resolving the matter.



5

Quickly Perform Public Acknowledgement of Receipt of Complaint

Once a complaint is made, you must acknowledge it by responding to it with a statement similar to this:

"I'm sorry that you have experienced this, I will take control of getting this fixed for you, please contact me on help@acme.com or 1800 354..."

Though it might not seem like a crucial aspect of social media, public complaints management allows your customers and their friends and followers to see and appreciate your response.

Other customers on the same thread or page will be able to see how you've handled previous complaints, and will be more assured of a timely and efficient response to their own complaint.

Remember, when a customer complains, they are experiencing distress and suffering on some level, the longer they have to wait to have their pain and suffering recognized often causes more anxiety and increases the perceived problem and compensation demanded.

6

Get the Conversation Off the Public Channel FAST

So what's the first thing you should do in response to a social media complaint from a customer in full public view?

Go private, FAST.

Resolving complaints will most likely require you to gather personal and private information from your customer, which you shouldn't be doing in view of other customers or competitors.

Provide your customer with another communication channel such as an email or phone number, or privately message the customer for more information about the complaint.

Just remember that the internet is forever--what you say is visible to everyone and can be used against you. So keep public conversations short and professional and divert detailed complaint handling conversations to private channels as soon as possible.

7

Remember to Keep Monitoring the Conversation Threads

Even after you've resolved a complaint, keep an eye out for the conversation thread. Other customers or friends of the original poster might choose to comment on them after the fact, so you'll need to make sure you follow up. Also be sure to place positive comments (eg: "We appreciate your patience and are working closely with 'Mary' to resolve this matter urgently") that attempts to neutralise further negative dialog.

Accidently (or purposely) ignoring a complaint, however tedious, might lead to negativity and a barrage of comments that would've otherwise been unnecessary.

Remember if you're not part of the conversation, you can't control or limit the damage.

8

Perform Social Media Wrap-up

The very last step your management team should take is that of closure.

Don't leave resolved comments open-ended; always let your

customers know that you welcomed their feedback and hope to deliver high quality service. These don't have to be on specific comments, as you can always post a tweet or status empathizing with your customers and letting them know that you are happy to help them.

It's important to let people know that you welcome and appreciate comments and criticisms, as their feedback helps shape and improve problems you might have otherwise overlooked.





Social Media Complaint Management Made Easy with Complaints Pro

Social media monitoring and response to complaints can improve customer satisfaction, reduce customer defection and increase customer loyalty. On top of that it can be a source of new product and service ideas. Most complaints management systems in existence today were designed before social media existed. Complaints Pro was designed with this in mind.

Complaints Pro puts you in control of social media complaints by retrieving all posts and tweets and making them visible in an easy to use tool. By retrieving the the number of Twitter followers or Facebook friends that the complainant has, you can immediately prioritize those complaints for the first review. Your social media complaints officers can then review and rank the sentiment as positive, negative or neutral. At the same time you can immediately classify the complaint as serious in nature or standard. Once the complaint is prioritized, it can be escalated if serious or highly influential.

All social media conversations can be responded to directly from within Complaints Pro, thus improving your productivity. Once the complaint is in Complaints Pro the complaint process kicks in but with full visibility of the conversation and thread that is happening live on the social media platform. You will always be in control of what is being said and you can act in a timely and informed way. Finally, with drag and drop reporting, you can mine all of the information collected within Complaints Pro to derive real customer insight.



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About Complaints Pro



Designed with social media and quality assurance in mind, Complaints Pro is a modern complaints handling system that addresses all nine of the costly mistakes straight out of the box.

Request a free 30 day trial today and see it for yourself.

For more detailed information about complaints management, turn to any one of our How-To Guides or check out: www.causia.com.au.

REQUEST A FREE TRIAL