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Building a Successful Online Customer Support Program From Scratch

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INTRODUCTION

- I have spent my career in identifying, developing, and delivering world-class customer experiences.   I am passionate about business development, and believe that the customer relationship is one of the most critical pieces to success in any consumer facing business.
- My career has covered a global footprint including: The US, Russia, Poland, India, Philippines, England, Luxembourg, UK, France, Germany, Mexico, and Ireland.
- In 2001 I joined AOL, Inc. where he spent 8 years in various positions focusing on the global execution and delivery of Customer Support to a customer base of over 36 million. I have worked at an executive level for 3 Fortune 500 companies, started and sold my own company, served as an advisor to the board of directors, and managed global customer support models for customer audiences of over 100 million.
- I am the founder of STARTWITHCARE.
- In April 2009, I joined BioWare as the Director of Customer Service.

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WHY BIOWARE? WHY GAMING?

Amazing Team
Amazing Leadership
Amazing Opportunity

- **Build from Scratch** – Make My Own Mistakes!
- **Vibrant**, **Creative**, **Growing industry** – Art and Science Combination!
- **Incredible Customer Base**: Highly Social, Interactive Community, Highly Technical, the Perfect Test-Bed for the Future of Customer Support!
- **Unique Challenges**: Volatile Customer Loyalty, Deep product, Huge Contact Propensities!
- **Paradigm Shift:** A Chance to Bring in Fundamentals and Core Customer Service Best Practices and Experience.

…a chance to exceed expectations!

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HOW WE BUILT BIOWARE [2]

- Joined BioWare in April 2009
- Placeholder Plan Review – New Strategic Plan and Budget Established
- In May of 2009, I engaged with the Irish and Dutch authorities to review various options for a European Support Site.
- In March of 2010, BioWare announced the engagement of an agreement with the IDA to establish a support studio in Galway Ireland to support 200+ jobs.
- In June 2010, I opened the BioWare/EA Ireland office.
- In September of 2011, BioWare Ireland's official building location was inaugurated and opened by the Prime Minister of Ireland Enda Kenny.
- On the same day BWI announced an additional 200 jobs (bringing the total to 400).
- Beginning in October 2011, we began building out our BPO support teams of 1200+
- In December 2011, BWI successfully launched support for SWTOR.

WHY ARE YOU HERE?!

Building a Successful Online Customer Support Program From Scratch

"One of the often forgotten and underestimated requirements for launching a game product is the amount of thought and work necessary to deliver customer support and engagement at launch. It doesn't matter the size or type of game, you will engage with your customers or they will engage without you."

- **Guidelines on how to build or improve a customer support organization.**
  - **Three-point strategy on building and improving the organization.**
    - **Key processes and guidelines for making critical decisions.**
- **Components needed in building a successful customer support solution.**
  - **Futurology.**

…a FRAMEWORK *for ANY GAME or STUDIO – No Matter the Size!*

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1. PLAN

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KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Build to YOUR needs.
- Do the ROI – What makes sense?

1. Plan:

- Build a Budget – *Know your Ratio – Cost to Revenue*
- Strategic Approach – *What are you doing!?*
- Construct Some Models – *Know Your Drivers*
  - Ratios vs. Actuals Planning! – *DUH…*
    - Propensity to Contact (Percentage of Contacts)
    - Efficiency (Contact Duration)
    - Productivity (Agent Utilization)
  - Know Your Targets – SLAs

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1. PLAN

- ## Form Your Strategic Approach – Review your Options:

  - ### Technology vs. Talent
    - Which is better?
  - ### Today's Challenges
    - Social, Product Complexity, Insight, Big Data
  - ### Support Types
    - Tech Support? Billing? In-Game? TOS? Etc.
  - ### Support Channels
    - Online Support Portal, WebChat, In-Game KB, In-Game Chat, Email, Phone, etc.

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2. STRATEGIC APPROACH

1. Launch Support
- Build an extremely agile and flexible model for the CS support for launch.
- Meet or exceed all CS targets out of the gate.
- Launch with the best suite of people, tools, and management available.

2. Capture the Beast and Tame it
- Accurately begin capturing customer key data points from launch.
- Build historical modeling and forecasting for workforce management, retention, and proactive strategic opportunities going forward.
- Understand who our customers are.

3. Maximize Efficiencies, Minimize Costs
- Using aggregated data, implement proactive opportunities to extend customer lifecycle.
- Maintain a VOC to deliver back to the business silo's retention opportunities – LIVE SERVICE!
- Seek out the right opportunity to proactively sell product.

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3. VISION

Set a CLEAR STRATEGIC VISION:

- Clear Goals
- Sell it, Sell it, Sell it. Communication Up and Down.
- Get a Vision Statement

BioWare Customer Support Strategy:
Deliver: Support experience **on par** with BioWare's reputation.
Premium self-support options.
Maximized efficiencies in staffing.
Exceptional tools support.

Intelligent blending of external-industry best practices, along with the best-in-class support features of current MMORPG's and beyond.
Intuitive self service capabilities at all touch points
Hybrid Approach to Staffing (Internal/External split).
Maximization of productivity through efficient, dependable, scalable tools strategy.

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Quality in our Workplace

- *The best tools and training in industry.*
- *Clear performance planning and mentoring programs.*
- *Loyalty, rewards, and retention programs.*

Quality in our Products

- *Clearly defined and managed Customer Satisfaction and Quality scoring.*
- *Delivery and maintenance of in-game policy for the studio and customer.*

Quality for our Investors (Our Players)

- *The fastest ever in-game support experience in an MMO ever.*
- *Deliver In-Game Self-Service and KB.*

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4. BUILD IT

My Organization:

CS OPERATIONS:	CS SERVICES:	CS RISK – FRAUD PREVENTION:	CS GLOBAL COORDINATION:
Global Internal and External Customer Support	*Workforce Management, BI, Reporting and Analytics Learning and Development, Program Management, Quality Control, Operational Improvement*	*Internal Fraud, External Fraud, Terms of Service Enforcement, PCI Compliance, Business Continuity*	*Project Management, BWA Interface, Live Services*

CS TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGY:

UDS, CRM, Game Integration, All CSR Facing Tools, Reporting, etc.

- Design your Organization
- Talent : Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing
- Technology: Needs vs. Wants

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A WHOLE NEW COMPANY!

Building a New BioWare Business Unit from Scratch – In Ireland!

CORPORATE OPERATIONS:	HUMAN RESOURCES:	RECRUITING:	SITE ADMINISTRATION:
Making sure we have money to do stuff with. Keeping the Lights on.	Keeping us Happy.	Attracting, Reviewing, and Collecting together the greatest talent on the planet.	Office Management, Administration, Facilities, IT Support, Payroll

LEGAL

FINANCE

ADVISEMENT

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TALENT STRATEGY

3 Models:

- ***All Internal*** (Blizzard)
  - Complete Control, Costly, Limited Flexibility, Stagnant
- ***All External*** ("Old"EA)
  - Lack of control, Attrition Impacts, Deviation, Savings at Cost
- ***HYBRID MODEL*** (BioWare)
  - Stability, Flexibility, Quality, and Value
  - ***Managed Attrition Impacts***: Maintain Core Competencies
  - ***Managed Control:*** Testing, Critical Processes, Turnaround
  - ***Managed Risk:*** Partner Development, Distribution of Support

BPO Selection Criteria:

- Ability to Scale
- Long Term Partner Potential
- Historical Performance and Experience
- Previous Client List
- Gaming Experience
- Pricing

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TOOLS STRATEGY

- **Self-Help/Deflection**: All CS Help touch points will maximize self-help capability, balanced against customer satisfaction.
- **Efficiency:**   Simple single intuitive knowledge base and Single CRM suite: easy to navigate, user-friendly UI, intuitive, self-driving, and dependable.
- **Cost:** Most for our money. SaaS vs. Hosted.
- **Scalability**: Proven. 12 million plus.
- **Flexibility:** Ability to absorb and flex to meet constant tool addition and product changes.
- **Dependable:** 24X7X356 operation schedule: maximum uptime possible.

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5. A HYBRID APPROACH

Let's Talk about OUTSOURCING for a minute…

OUTSOURCING
And you thought India was far, far away

- Cloud Resourcing!
  Protecting your CORE!
- RFP Process and Development –
  HUGE Opportunity to sell and You MUST KISS! This is NOT the time for Poker Face!
- Partnership vs. Vendor Relationships
  CSR's are NOT Blade Servers! Dating and Marriage
- Criteria for Selection
  You Get What You Pay For!
- Small, Medium, or Large?
  That is the Question!

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BIOWARE'S CS FOOTPRINT

We had 5 global locations:

BioWare Ireland	Spain	Lisbon	Manila 1	Manila 2	UK
Global Headquarters for Customer Services	German, French, and English Support	German, French, and English Support	English Support	English Support	Gold Spam Mitigation Queue
Tier 3	Tier 1 & 2	Tier 1 & 2 & 3	Tier 1 & 2	Tier 1 & 2	TOS

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CRITICAL:
Integration with Development, Marketing, CRM, Studio

How we approached it:

Policies and Procedures – Run Books
Real-time Reactions:

- GMOD
- MOD
- QPD
- COMMUNITY
- LIVE PRODUCTION
- NOC

A True Proactive Approach

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CS CONTRIBUTION

We SURVIVED launch, hitting key metrics, and maintained. ☺

CS perception went up and down, but better than expected with such a massive support requirement and new staff.

In the 1st 2 Months from LAUNCH - SWTOR Customer Service handled:

1.4 MIL   In-Game Tickets
520 K   Email Tickets
500 K   Phone Contacts

For a grand total of: **2.6 MILLION contacts HANDLED**.

CS Customer Support Forums currently include: 11,500+ CSR Support Posts
CS Knowledge Base Team have created 2500+ Articles and 1000 CSR Templates

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CS CONTRIBUTION

CS GMOD Escalations to Live since Launch:

141 Resolved Issues
32 Ongoing Issues
22 Tools Related Issues
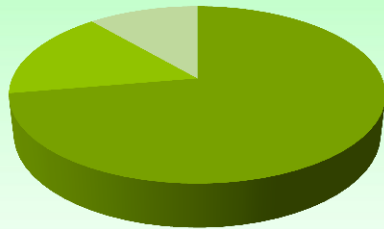
- Resolved Tickets
- Ongoing Tickets
- Closed Tools Tickets

Fraud and Risk Prevention

- Fraud Reports, Escalations, and Actions
- TOS Enforcement
- Gold-Spam Mitigation 3000+ Accounts Banned

Alpha Squadron

- Over 2000 Handled

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EA Action Awards

LEARN AND GROW

Finalist: BioWare Ireland

THINK CONSUMERS FIRST

Winner : SWTOR Live Services Team

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5 Steps to a differentiating **Customer Experience**:

- *Solid Customer Support Business Intelligence*
- *Exceptional Communication Capabilities Through Social Channels*
- *Tight Product Integration*
- *Quantify the IMPACT!*
- *It's Never Too Early to Start!*
- *Executive Sponsorship - Stand Your Ground!*

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8.FUTUROLOGY?

CHALLENGING THE NORM
"Where is Customer Engagement Going?"
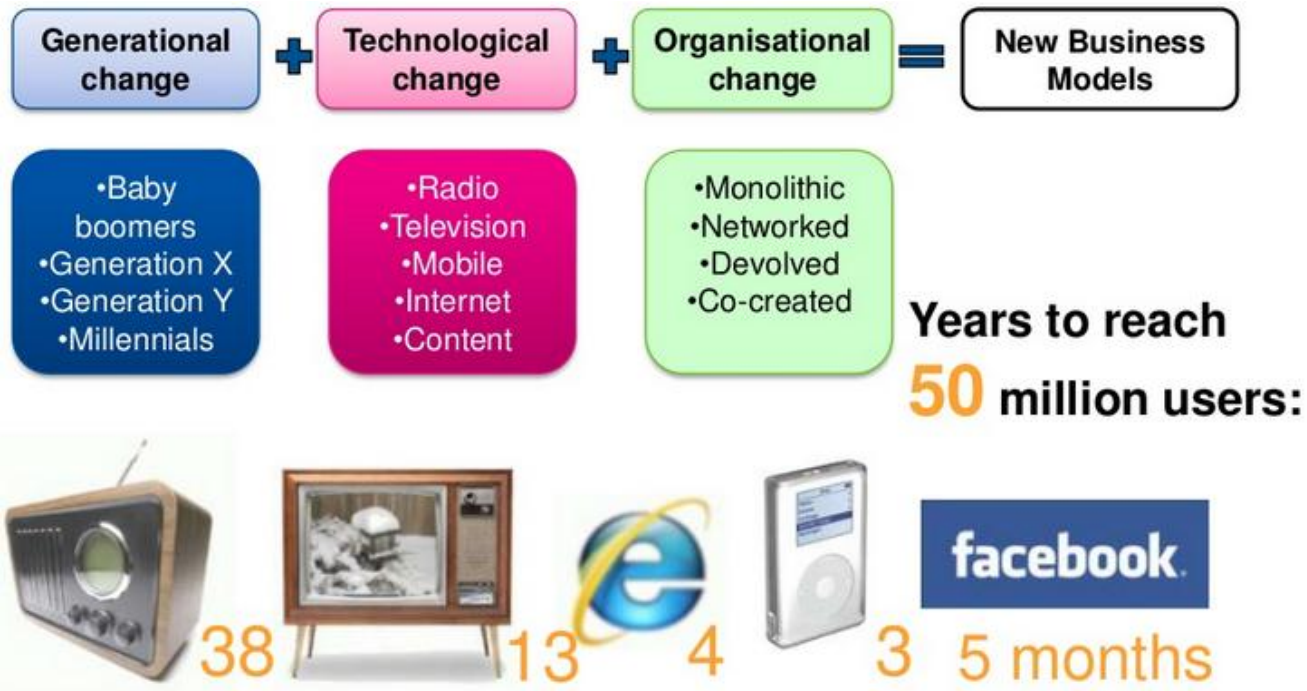
Nicola Millard
-Customer
Experience
Futurologist

http://www.slideshare.net/LetsTalk_BT/clouds-crowdsandcustomersnicolamillard

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8.FUTUROLOGY?
"Customers WILL bypass your organization!"

Only 25% agree
Most of the online recommendations I read on the internet are not very useful

31% agree
I trust the content on customer forums, it's unbiased and reliable

83% agree
I use reviews of products and services on the internet to check quality

51% agree
I trust the content on a customer forum more than an organisations' website

37% agree
I contribute to online forums, online reviews e.g. Trip Advisor etc

Only 24% agree
I trust the content on an organisation's website or forum, it's unbiased and reliable

WHAT CONSUMER
consumer information

get **satisfaction**

Amplicate

http://www.slideshare.net/LetsTalk_BT/clouds-crowdsandcustomersnicolamillard

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SO WHAT?!

The Way That We Seek Advice is CHANGING!

56% of online consumers agree that their calls are more complex as simple transactions are automated.
64% say they would rather use the phone than a website FAQ to sort out problems.

What is your prefered channel for getting help and advice in using products and services?
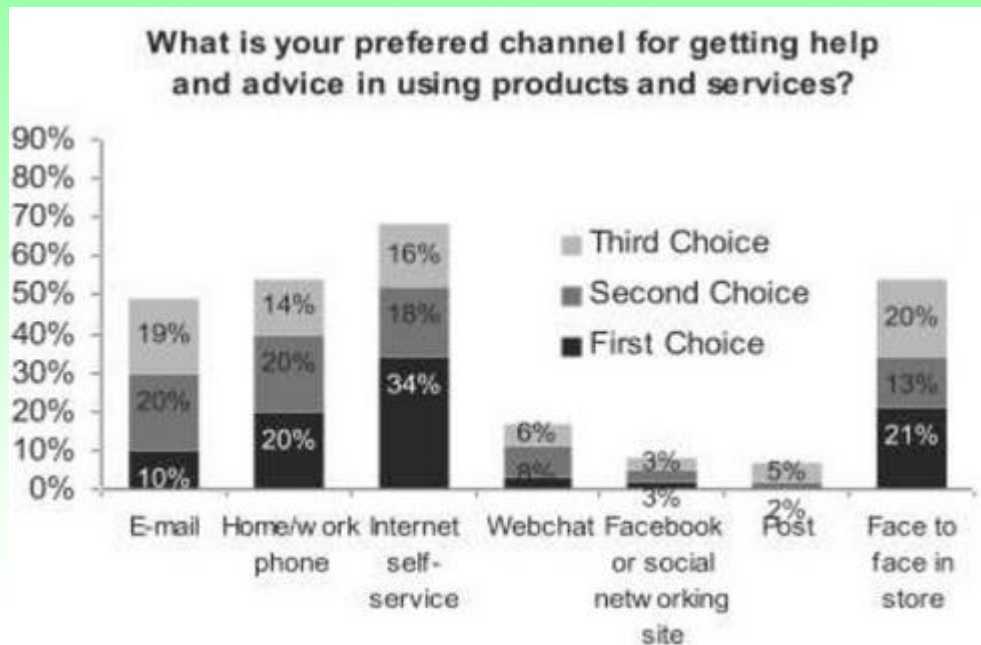
"In this self-service era, it is critical to recognize that satisfaction with a company's web site and voice response system are not as powerful in generating or reinforcing consumer loyalty as the core human touch points" – Strativity Group

http://www.slideshare.net/LetsTalk_BT/clouds-crowdsandcustomersnicolamillard

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SO WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Support has to change, "Churn and Burn" must die. Customer Support is an art, not an entry-level role anymore!

- *Apple's BPO Support Strategy*

The lines between Marketing, CRM, and Customer Care are breaking down!

- *Focus Group Testing vs. Contact Centers!*
- *Apple vs. Zappos*
- *Maersk Example*
- *BIG DATA!*

KNOWLEDGE Retention is critical!

- *Community vs. CS – Listen to the 93%!*

YOU HAVE to be SOCIAL!

- *Customers will bypass you…losing a chance to build the relationship.*

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GORDON WALTON

At GDC in 2003, Gordon Walton gave a talk entitled "Top 10 Reasons Not to Make and MMO"

Top 10 Reasons Not to Make an MMO

1. Too Many are Being Built
2. It Requires a Mastery of Too Many Disciplines
3. A Huge Team is Required
4. Getting a Credit Card from a Customer is *Hard*
5. The Online Industry is Counter-Intuitive to Packaged Goods Company Management
6. Everything You Know about Single-Player Games is Wrong
7. The Internet Sucks as a Commercial Delivery Platform
8. <u>Customer Services is *Hard*</u>
9. There are Lots of Legal Issues
10. They Cost Too Much Money to Build and Launch!

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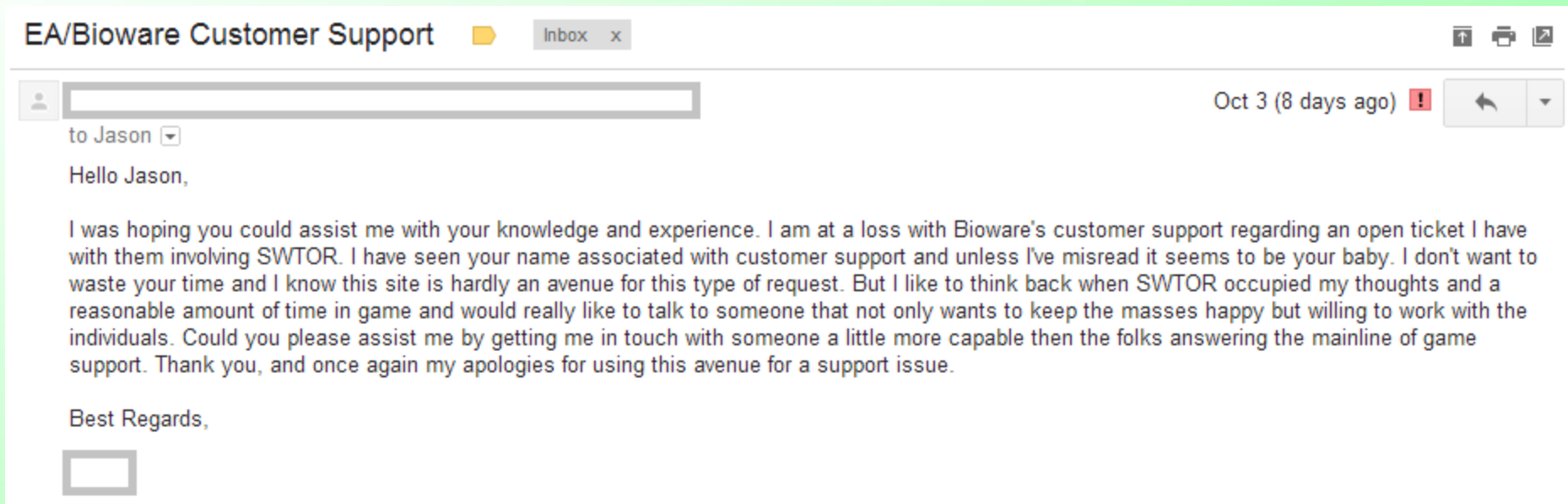
CUSTOMER SERVICE **IS** HARD

Get Help.
Get Expertise…or get burned.

Bring the best practices, policies, procedures, and experience of in-game industry as well as external industries to provide the best customer support experience possible.

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CUSTOMER LOYALTY - BAD AND UGLY

EA/Bioware Customer Support 📁 Inbox x   📤 🖨 ↗

Oct 3 (8 days ago) ❗ ↩ ▾

to Jason ▾

Hello Jason,

I was hoping you could assist me with your knowledge and experience. I am at a loss with Bioware's customer support regarding an open ticket I have with them involving SWTOR. I have seen your name associated with customer support and unless I've misread it seems to be your baby. I don't want to waste your time and I know this site is hardly an avenue for this type of request. But I like to think back when SWTOR occupied my thoughts and a reasonable amount of time in game and would really like to talk to someone that not only wants to keep the masses happy but willing to work with the individuals. Could you please assist me by getting me in touch with someone a little more capable then the folks answering the mainline of game support. Thank you, and once again my apologies for using this avenue for a support issue.

Best Regards,

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I called Customer Support pissed off because I thought I knew the answer to my security question and I was being locked out of my account for no reason (My roommate had the same issue), but the guy who answered (whoever he was, sounded Indian or something) was SUPER nice and polite despite my being pissed off for no reason, solved my issues within 2 minutes, and now I'm getting ready to enjoy this game again. THANK YOU. I FUCKING LOVE YOU GUYS. YOU CAN CONTINUE HAVING ALL MY MONEY. Although I missed out on the pre-order cause I was broke as fuck, and if there was anyway you guys could send me a pre-order crystal in-game, I'll draw you a unicorn with a lightsaber as a horn or some shit and scan it and email it to you guys. <3

03/29/2012
06:17:39

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QUESTIONS?

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I can help…because customer care IS hard.

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