

# Intro to Soft Skills

Customer service is a critical skill in IT support. I can't emphasize that enough. The techniques we'll discuss in these videos won't only help you with your users, they help you work better with your peers, your managers, and maybe even your own personal relationships. Keep in mind, these techniques don't work in all situations. The reality is that no matter how great your customer service, some situations don't have a good resolution, plus everyone is different. You need to tweak your style when working with users. But the techniques we'll cover are intended to make your IT interactions more successful. In IT support, you work with users to fix technology and improve how people use it. To accomplish this, you need to develop a trust between you and the user. Lots of employers believe that good customer service also builds brand loyalty, which is a key to success. These lessons are meant to give you the foundational skills and techniques of how to deliver great customer service. Customer service practices can differ from company to company. We'll cover the key concepts of customer service in any IT support role. It's important to talk with your employer to understand the company's customer service approach. This will also give you an idea of how much freedom or restrictions you might have in the role. Spoiler alert. Great customer service requires exhibiting empathy, being conscious of your tone, acknowledging the person you're talking to, and developing trust with the user. If you remember nothing else from this lesson, remember those four things. The most important of all of these is empathy. What's the difference between sympathy and empathy? People will say things like sympathy is saying you're sorry. Empathy is feeling sorry. That doesn't really explain it. So let's use an example to drive this home. If someone fell into a dark, damp, dirty hole and you leaned over with a sad expression and said, that must be a really tough situation. Then you are expressing sympathy. You're sharing their feelings, but you aren't experiencing those feelings. If you crawl down into that dark, damp, dirty hole with the person who fell and said, this is a really tough situation, then you're expressing empathy. You're able to see something from someone else's perspective and understand their feelings. The word choice between the two situation is very similar. But the action you take by looking at it from their perspective, is what empathy is all about. Some days it's hard to empathize. I know from experience. Maybe you've had an argument with a loved one before work. Then by the end of the day, you find yourself getting annoyed or upset with users. That's the moment when empathy becomes the most important. Because anyone can showcase empathy when it's easy. But someone who persistently displays empathy will stand out as a kinder human and a more professional and effective employee. Once you have empathy down, you should think of your tone. Tone is historically thought of as how you speak out loud. In this technological age, when many of our interactions over texts and IT support is increasingly done remotely, tone isn't just about how you come off during an in person conversation. It's expanded into how you write, punctuate, and even spell. If your tone is short or blunt, then the user will feel brush off and devalued. But if your tone is friendly and curious, the user's much more likely to have a positive experience working with you. Be careful not to go overboard with the friendliness though, it could be disingenuous. Communicating a good tone is delicate balance. How you ask a question and how you respond to user's question matters. Let's say you tell a user in an email, turn your computer off and on again, and it will start working. They'll probably never respond and your company may have lost a customer because the tone is just too short and pretty unfriendly. Well, it gets to the point. It

doesn't leave the door open to conversation. What if instead you wrote, please try turning your computer off and back on again. This should update the change we made and fix the problem. If that doesn't work, just let me know. It's a little wordier, but it has a better tone of asking versus telling. Inviting them back to connect with you in case the issue isn't resolved, leaves the lines of communication open. Tone can be especially difficult when you're supporting someone in a different region or country. Make sure to familiarize yourself with the local style whether that's more conversational or direct, and adjust your style depending on the audience. In this day and age of text and email, it's easy to ignore what someone says. If a comment seems like a dig or it's just too much information provided, we tend to shy away from responding. It's also really common to forget to tell the user what you're doing while you're troubleshooting. That might leave the user waiting in an awkward silence. Whenever possible, acknowledge the user. This reduces the tension that might build and helps you understand how you're working toward a solution. Let's say you're chatting back and forth with the user. You're asking a lot of questions to better troubleshoot the issue. The user is answering them, but also makes comments like geez, I already answered this in my last email. Or I just want to know what's causing my problem. You choose to ignore this and continue on with your troubleshooting. You think you're close to solving the problem and these side comments are just a distraction. But then the user stops fully engaging with you and only gives you half answers to your questions. Now you're not able to solve the issue at all. The user's unhappy, you're unhappy, and the company's unhappy. It's a bad situation. Instead of ignoring the user in that situation, you could have said, I'm sorry for asking these questions. Sometimes repeating them will help new information and pop up. Or you could have said sorry for the repeat questions, I don't want to give you a superficial cause when we could fix the root issue and you won't have to chat with us again. This helps them to understand your method and become part of the solution. It's important to acknowledge your own actions if you think they might otherwise confuse the user, let's say user contacts you to fix something. After collecting some information, you go radio silent. What's user to do? Would they ask if you're still there? Will they wait awkwardly until you came back on the line, how long would they wait before ending the call or saying something? How would they feel about their interaction with you? Pretty awkward. But what if he said, I need to do some research on this issue. Would you mind waiting about five minutes or less while I do that? They'd probably say sure, and keep themselves occupied while they wait. They'd also feel more confident in your ability to resolve the issue. This leads to the most important thing to remember when working with people and that's developing trust. This is easy to do if you have repeat users, they see you every workday. One bad day isn't going to stop them from trusting that you know what you're doing. But in a transactional user base for the user only contacts the company once or twice. How you interact with each user, each time, is going to break or build that trust. Why is trust so important? Without it, the user could be difficult to work with and could even ignore your advice completely. Empathy and acknowledgment are big part of building trust. Without these, you'll find it difficult to connect with user. By seeing things from the user's perspective, you're more likely to find the solution that will help them specifically. This lets them know that you care and they'll be more likely to be engaged in the interaction. It's also important to follow through on your commitments and promises. If you tell someone you're going to follow up in one hour, then be sure to make it happen. If you don't, acknowledge the oversight and apologize, be sure that any claims you make can be backed up. Don't make something up to a user because you think it will help in the moment. Be honest with the user, even if you think they won't be happy about it and never be afraid to admit when you're wrong. This might be the hardest thing to do with the user, but you'll find that your interactions are more successful this way. Being specific and empathetic with your apologies will give it more meaning. Remember, no one wakes up in the morning thinking, I'm

going to be a jerk today. Well, you shouldn't sacrifice your self respect. Do your best to give the user the benefit of the doubt whenever possible.

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