

**GOOD
CUSTOMER
MAGICIAN,
BAD
CUSTOMER
MAGICIAN**



Foreword

I recently read the excellent “The Hard Thing About Hard Things” by Ben Horowitz. The book details his sometimes very painful experiences growing technology companies in Silicon Valley.

This is an excellent book and I’d urge anyone building a business to read it. In chapter “Why Startups Should Train Their People”, Ben describes how, at Netscape, he became frustrated by people doing the product manager job differently. So he created a document he called “Good Product Manager, Bad Product Manager” which crisply laid out the expectations and behaviours required in order for employees to be seen as a good product manager.

I thought this was a fantastic idea. It’s so much more meaningful than a job description and it struck me that it would be a really useful way to train customer support people and help them understand what “good” or “great” looks like.

Our customer support team at Customer Thermometer is called The Ministry of Magic. Given what we do as a business, we need to demonstrate effortless and excellent service. I decided, in conjunction with our Minister of Magic – our Head of Customer Support basically – to create a version of this for our customer support people.

Upon completion, a number of people mentioned how useful it has been to them. So in the spirit of sharing, I thought we’d release this as a free resource. I hope it helps you, and if it does, please feel free to share it!

Best wishes,
Lindsay Willott
CEO



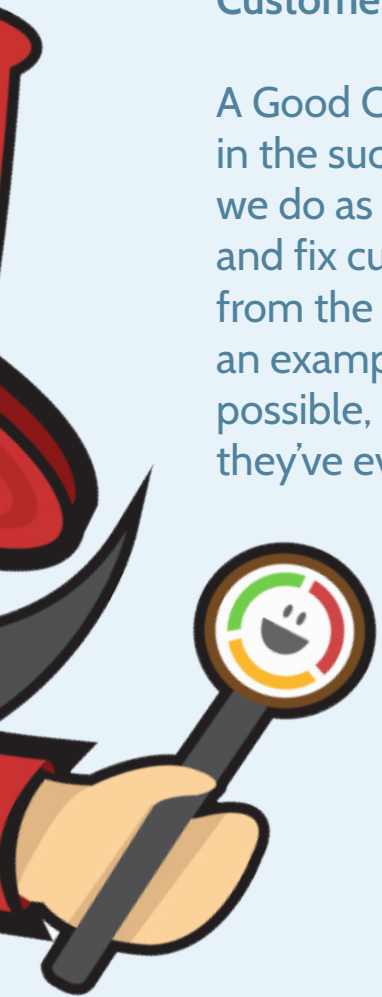
Introduction

A Customer Magician is what Customer Thermometer calls a member of its Customer Support team.

A Good Customer Magician plays critical role in the success of our company. Given what we do as a business (ie help people uncover and fix customer issues) we have to lead from the front. This role is all about setting an example to our customers of the best possible, most friendly and helpful support they've ever received.

As a company, we're on a journey to gain 1000+ true fans. Every interaction with a customer is an opportunity to get closer to those 1000+ fans. Kevin Hale, CEO of very successful SaaS company Wufoo once said that sales and marketing spend is a tax you have to pay because your product and customer support aren't good enough. This is incredibly and dramatically true in our business.

You'll know you're getting it right when customers write back to you or the company at large and tell you how phenomenal you are. See the end of this document for a selection of the comments we get now.



Being a good Customer Magician is incredibly hard and incredibly rewarding. Because customer support is a highly visible position, a bad Customer Magician leads to many other bad consequences, generally including the wrong customer guidance being given, or an undetailed/unhelpful level of guidance, which has a significant impact on our morale, reputation and upsell ability.

There are a number of straightforward principles that Customer Magicians can follow which will dramatically increase their chance of success. Surprisingly, only very few customer support people follow these principles. Part of the problem is that these principles often are not articulated clearly, which this document attempts to address. A final note is that Customer Magician is a demanding and high profile job. Individuals should make sure they're up to the challenge.



Coming Next

- Make magical interactions and experiences
- Put yourself firmly in the customer's shoes
- Make the customer the hero
- Reduce their effort everywhere
- Get more input
- And now add an extra 10%
- Huge discipline & awareness
- Good Customer Magician summary

Make magical interactions and experiences

A good Customer Magician acts like and is viewed as someone who has an innate understanding of, and care for, customers.

A good Customer Magician believes that even routine of customer interactions can be made more useful, more special, more remarkable and more memorable. They understand that great service is part of the product – that they are the voice of an online product and the human face of everything we do. They understand that great service can help with our churn rate, onboarding, upgrading and more. They understand that their service is infinitely more important than even the product itself.

Good Customer Magicians are viewed by the entire team as people who can delight customers and suggest ways that the company and the product can do even more for them.

Bad Customer Magicians think of themselves as simply response providers.

Bad Customer Magicians think they are simply there to provide a response back to the customer, to maintain the ticketing system or to update customer enquiries. Bad Customer Magicians seek to avoid the strategic element of the service they can provide, and they often write terse, short or sloppy responses to customers that provide insufficient information and/or are misspelled giving a negative view of the company.



Put yourself firmly in the customer's shoes

Good Customer Magicians don't just answer customer questions.

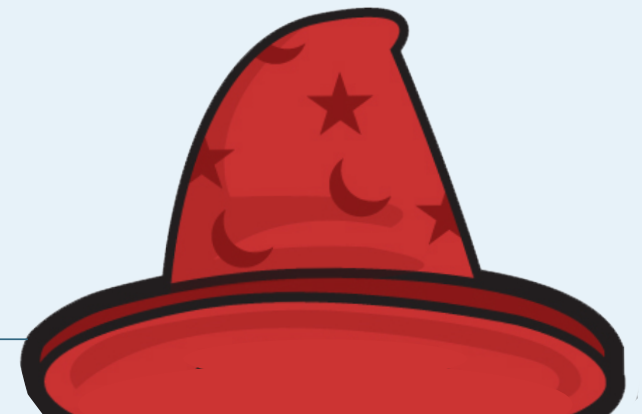
They work hard to understand why the customer is asking the question too. They read between the lines to understand what is the customer actually saying and why are they saying it? Is the email or phone call happy, terse, short, pointed, angry, questioning? And what does the customer actually need to achieve (versus what are they asking in the email or phone call) Often the two are very different.

Good Customer Magicians realise that in many circumstances the customer doesn't know what they need to ask, because they are not yet familiar with the product. A good Customer Magician looks at the query in the round and asks what the customer needs to succeed.

Bad Customer Magicians make their responses all about them:

they simply answer the query at hand without thought to get it off their desks. They don't think in the round about the problem and they don't look for inspirational workarounds, or give more ideas to help the customer succeed.

Bad Customer Magicians says that not enough time to give longer, thoughtful responses. Or they say the customer is an idiot. Or the customer doesn't speak English well enough and is hard to understand. Or our product doesn't do what they want so they can't delight the customer. They need more direction.



Make the customer the hero

Good Customer Magicians look for every opportunity to make the customer a hero within their own company.

They actively seek to provide ideas, links, inspiration and suggestions to help the customer do their job better. Where customers are enquiring about reports or decks for internal presentation, good Customer Magicians think hard about assets their company may have to help out.

Where they don't exist, they consider making them. Where a good Customer Magician has gone out of their way to help a customer, they make it look like the customer did that himself.

Bad Customer Magicians don't care about or consider how the customer comes across to his or her peers.

They actively seek to take glory where it's available rather than framing the customer in a good light. They dodge the opportunity to provide materials that the customer can use to further their presentations or reports.



Reduce customer effort *everywhere*

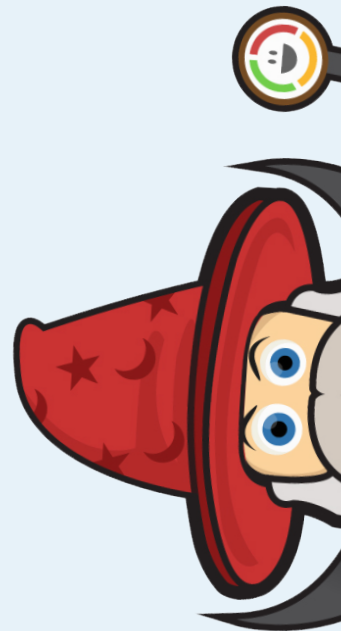
Good Customer Magicians listen to customers but they probe deeper into the underlying problems to get at the nature of the real problem for the customer.

They then proactively try and remove all the roadblocks and go the extra mile to help. If a customer is asking how to achieve something, the good Customer Magician will take specific screenshots and highlight exactly how to do it. Or they will ask for the HTML code and assist in editing it.

Good Customer Magicians know that if a customer sends in a query, they are working on CT right NOW and want a response as swiftly as possible rather than having to wait, when they have inevitably moved onto another task. Good Customer Magicians will create helpful assets where they don't exist and ensure they are added to the CT website.

Bad Customer Magicians send back lazy responses.

They respond with the bare minimum of information, or point customers at resources that they know to be ineffective. Their overriding view of the emails and phone call responses they undertake is “that’ll do” rather than “this will be one of the best responses they will ever get”.



Get more input

Good Customer Magicians get as much input and surrounding information on customers or prospects as they can before responding, to ensure they have the full picture.

A good Customer Magician will look up the customer on the internet, look at the country and industry they are in, think about their challenges, check out their website to see what their company does, Google what helpdesk system or CRM system they might have in place. Good Customer Magicians understand the features and capabilities of the competition and know where the competitors can go easily and can't go at all. They may never directly refer to competitors, but their knowledge informs the advice they give.

Good Customer Magicians don't over-promise to customers and they don't ruin their credibility by over-stating their knowledge.

A good Customer Magician is acutely aware of what they know and why they know it, as well as what they don't know. They understand the difference between opinions, hunches, and objective facts.

Bad Customer Magicians make huge assumptions about the customer.

They assume they know it all already and send back basic answers without seeking outside information to truly serve the customer well. Bad Customer Magicians make promises to customers without understanding the ramifications of those, or taking responsibility for delivering on those promises.



And now add another 10%

Good Customer Magicians know there's always something more they can do.

A phone call, email response, online chat – even when a customer is happy – can always have more impact and remarkability. A good Customer Magician knows this, and knows that adding an extra 10% after they've tried their best is the secret to their success. This might be adding a tailored image, offering to check things for a customer, or other thoughtful activities. They understand that their email will be forwarded or that their phone call might be on speaker and they seek to ensure that the response and the content is superb every time.

Good Customer Magicians know that every company has failures and issues, and that an excellent relationship with a customer is worth its weight in gold when things go wrong.

Bad Customer Magicians don't review their work before they send it.

They rush back responses and don't consider the wider ramifications of their content. Bad Customer Magicians don't seek to be friendly and welcoming or to build a relationship with the customer through their interactions.



Huge discipline & awareness

Good Customer Magicians therefore respect a base level of discipline and organization in their work to ensure they keep on top of everything even during the busiest days.

A lot of customer support work is inbound and at customer behest. Good Customer Magicians focus their time on tasks that are critical to customer success:

1. responding to and converting sales enquiries, onboarding, customer technical queries
2. tasks that have a high impact on the likely future success of customers (suggesting improvements to customer support and training documentation, suggesting improvements in auto-responder sequences, ideas for content for the blog that would be useful to customers).

Good Customer Magicians will actively confirm their understanding with their managers and others on their team.

Good Customer Magicians know the advantages of their product cold. They know how their product is better / different than the competition. This comprises a key part of their overall passion from day one. Good Customer Magicians have these advantages written down and are consistent.

Bad Customer Magicians put out fires all day and let important work pile around them.

Bad Customer Magicians complain that they spend all day answering questions from customers and are too swamped to create FAQs or suggest other leveragable assets or collateral. Bad Customer Magicians blindly listen to the loudest customers and do not seek to balance their workload strategically. They make stuff up to get things off their desks, rather than confirming things with their peers and managers.

Really good Customer Magician

Really good Customer Magicians demonstrate Minister of Magic level skills and capabilities while they are still Customer Magicians.

These skills include:

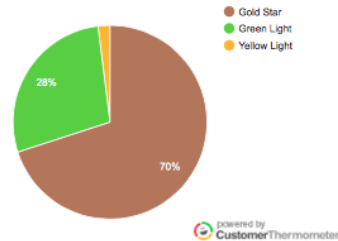
- Use whatever intensity is required to help customers succeed and care deeply about their success
- Get back to customers as quickly as humanly possible but don't rush off a response – especially in sales support, this response time makes the difference between winning and losing a customer
- Be paranoid. Really paranoid. Check every tiny element of the response for the correct details, the correct guidance, the correct screenshots, the right permissions from the customer
- Add masses of value, enlightenment, help and friendship



What Good Magician customer feedback looks like

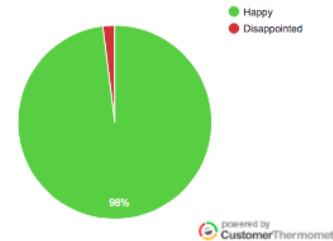
Our Ministry of Magic's real time support ratings

Feedback responses (last 100)



[what's this?](#)

Customer happiness (last 100)



[what's this?](#)

%age happy customers

98.8%

powered by CustomerThermometer

[what's this?](#)

Last 10 customer comments

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 21 Apr 16 | ● Liz Harvard is a good communicator. I appreciate her patience and time to listen to my suggestions and issues. I love you all! #LivingTheDream #CustomerServiceChamps |
| 31 Mar 16 | ● Feedback on the feedback process: There should be a small cross in this window to exit the screen, as people tend to click on ok even if they don't want to leave a comment. Closing the browser tab on top is not the most intuitive action in this case. Just a tip. :-) |
| 23 Mar 16 | ● Andrew Randall deserves a gold star for prompt replies and great information. Thanks |
| 23 Mar 16 | ● Thanks for the quick response to my query about ISO 27001. Best wishes, Catherine |
| 23 Mar 16 | ● Excellent and useful feedback |
| 16 Mar 16 | ● Efficient, prompt and great service as usual from Jake on Mark's behalf. |
| 15 Mar 16 | ● great responsiveness, very clear |
| 15 Mar 16 | ● Lots of detailed information and a fantastic level of responsiveness from the team. great work! |
| 11 Mar 16 | ● fast response! |
| 10 Mar 16 | ● Thanks for all the help Jake, you're awesome!!! |

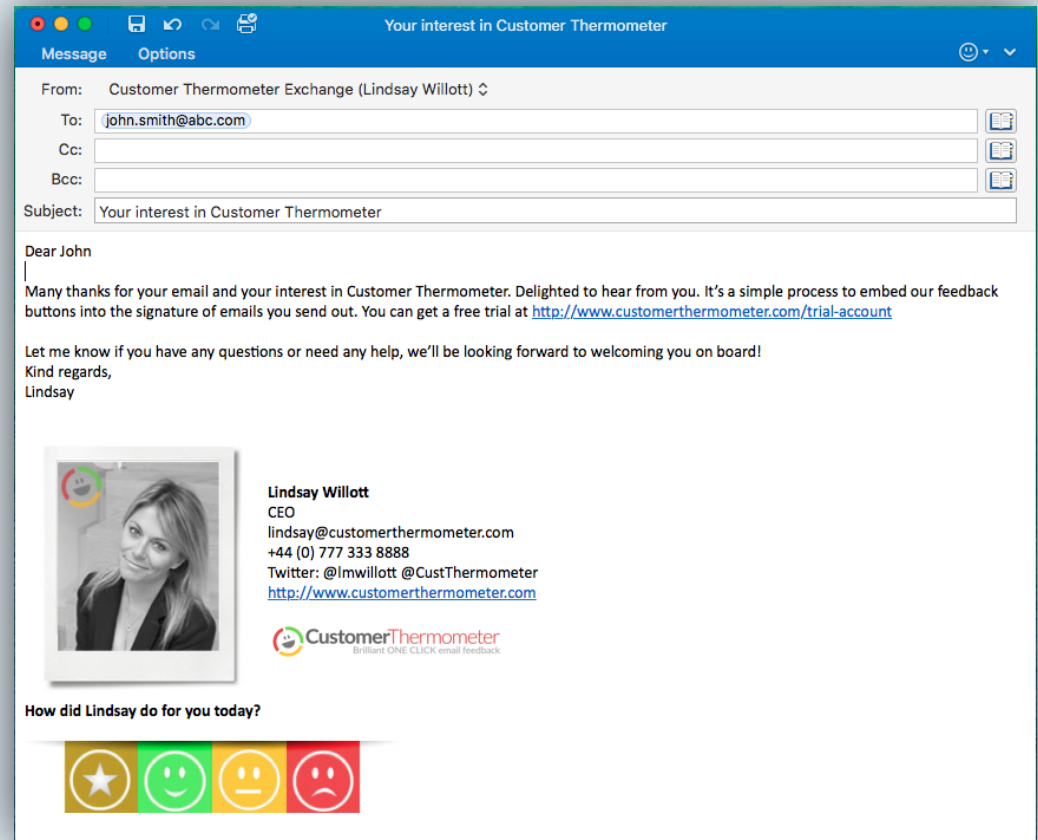
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[what's this?](#)

About Customer Thermometer

Customer Thermometer monitors your customers' views in real time. If you know what they're thinking, you have a fighting chance of fixing it. It's a brave, strong and visible way of demonstrating your service ethos to the world. And the really great thing is, it works across all sectors.

Try the survey customers love, and get incredible response rates.



customerthermometer.com

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