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Communication: Solving an Internet Connection Issue

Jered McClure

Walden University

Communication: Solving an Internet Connection Issue

The first thing to realize, about any problem received from a customer (user), is the technical issue is not the problem. The problem is the fact something cannot be accomplished which the technical issue is blocking. Whether this is the creation of a document, the sending of a picture, or the connecting of a webcam, the problem is that something is being blocked. In this instance the customer is calling because they cannot use their internet.

The first thing to do is to listen, communication starts with listening. Is the user angry, jovial, or neutral? If they are jovial or neutral then I need to mirror their emotional state, it will make the whole process easier. If they are angry/frustrated, find out why, “My internet is down, my daughter is crying because she fell, and I need to send this paper yesterday!” The average technical person will immediately see that the internet needs to be fixed. Wrong, the issue is not the internet, the issue is that the daughter fell down and is crying, making the customer frustrated/angry because they are trying to do something else and cannot give full concentration.

Remember, the person calling from the other end is just that, a person. They are not a machine, an experiment, or something to check off a list (Newmemory Pty Ltd, 2005). Treat them like you would treat a friend, partner, family (to an extent of course). “Is your daughter okay? She isn’t hurt is she?” This statement will let the person know you are listening, and that you can relate, it will most likely calm them down to at least a neutral state if nothing else. Then mirroring can begin in earnest.

First things first, I ask them what they have done. Never begin by telling them what to do, this will frustrate them and probably make them hang up. People generally try to solve issues on their own before calling, and if not, at least you gave them the benefit of the doubt. I cannot count the times I have contacted an ISP only to have them tell me to do something I already did. Following along with this, I then use the Customer Assistance Decision Tree:

Document Problem, and if feasible, make public.

Follow up.

Reassure that you will do what you can, determine actual problem.

Mirror Emotional Mood

Angry/  
Frustrated

Neutral

Jovial

Customer Mood

Work through problem (go to logic tree)

If they have covered all bases, done a restart of their local system, and checked cable connections, I would then follow the following logic tree:

Ping Computer/Gateway

The key thing to remember about any interaction with a customer is to treat them like a human being. Logical problems are not always the issue at hand. It may come down to the fact the person just needs someone to talk to for a while. One thing to note about trees, is that while following one as a general example is great in practice, ensure that you leave your mind open to other possibilities. There is always the chance someone is simply doing a large download causing other connections on the network to slow to a crawl.

Cannot/

No Access

Done

DNS Troubleshoot

Fixed

Contact ISP

Connects

Fail

If some sites connect but not others do a DNS flush and try again. If still no connection, the site may be down.

Determine Site customer is trying to visit and try to connect to it (try several sites).

Ping DNS Server

Fail

Make sure gateway has power.

Neither Ping

Gateway Pings but not Computer

Make sure network settings are correct.

Both Ping

Once this is all done, remember to do a follow up with the customer to see if the fix actually worked. Finally, document the interaction. If the issue occurs again, then there will be notice that this is a recurring issue. At the very least documentation can cover one’s self in case of legal drama.

Reference

Newmemory Pty Ltd. (2005). *Communication and Customer Skills for IT Professionals.* Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra, Perth, and Adelaid: Dimension Data Learning Solutions.