

OXFORD Business English

# English for Customer Care

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EXPRESS SERIES



OXFORD





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# 1

## Introduction to customer care

**STARTER** People have strong opinions about customer care. What is important for you as a customer? Work with a partner to make a list of the kind of services you expect.

Notes



**1** Read about the importance of customer care in the article and find four word partnerships with *customer*.

customer

Can you add any other words to make more partnerships?

Think about the most successful shopping sites on the Internet. What do they have in common? Whether you are booking a holiday, buying books and music or simply doing the weekly shop, the best sites provide the highest levels of customer satisfaction. How do they do it? Why is customer care such a priority?

For most shoppers, customer convenience is the most important factor. Up-to-date technology means that when you return to a site you have visited before, they will remember your name, your profile, and what you bought last time. They also track where you browsed and what you thought about buying. They can also make some recommendations about other places, titles, or products.

We demand customer-friendly navigation and the best sites provide it, continually raising their levels of service. Convenient and efficient payment systems are also essential.

Sometimes, of course, things go wrong but this is when the sites are even better at dealing with customers. You can call a helpline and talk to an agent, email your problem and get a reply within twenty-four hours or even get assistance via an instant messaging conversation. The people in charge of customer relations know that we want to shop, maybe purchase, and then leave with a very positive impression of the site. A satisfied customer is a good customer. Good customers remain loyal and recommend you to others.



According to the article, what makes an online shopping site successful?  
Complete this list.

Notes

1

customer convenience

2

3

4

5

2 Find a word in the text that means the same as:

- 1

profitable
- 2

something of the highest importance
- 3

easy or helpful to use
- 4

fast and organized
- 5

absolutely necessary
- 6

help
- 7

faithful
- 8

suggest

Now use words from above to complete the sentences.

- a

Our customers' satisfaction is our top
- b

If you need

, please contact our call centre.
- c

Good communication skills are

in any customer care job.
- d

And you can pay by credit card, which is very

when shopping online.
- e

We can offer a quicker and more

level of service with our new call centre.
- f

If you are happy with our products, please

us to a friend.

3 You are in a meeting with a possible new customer. Answer their questions.

Q

What makes your company different?

A

We are very proud of our

<sup>1</sup>.

We're especially known for our

<sup>2</sup>.

Q

How do you make it easy and convenient for the customer?

A

We offer convenience to the customers with

<sup>3</sup>.

Q

What is the most important focus for your customers?

A

Our top priority is to

<sup>5</sup>.

Q

How do I get after-sales service?

A

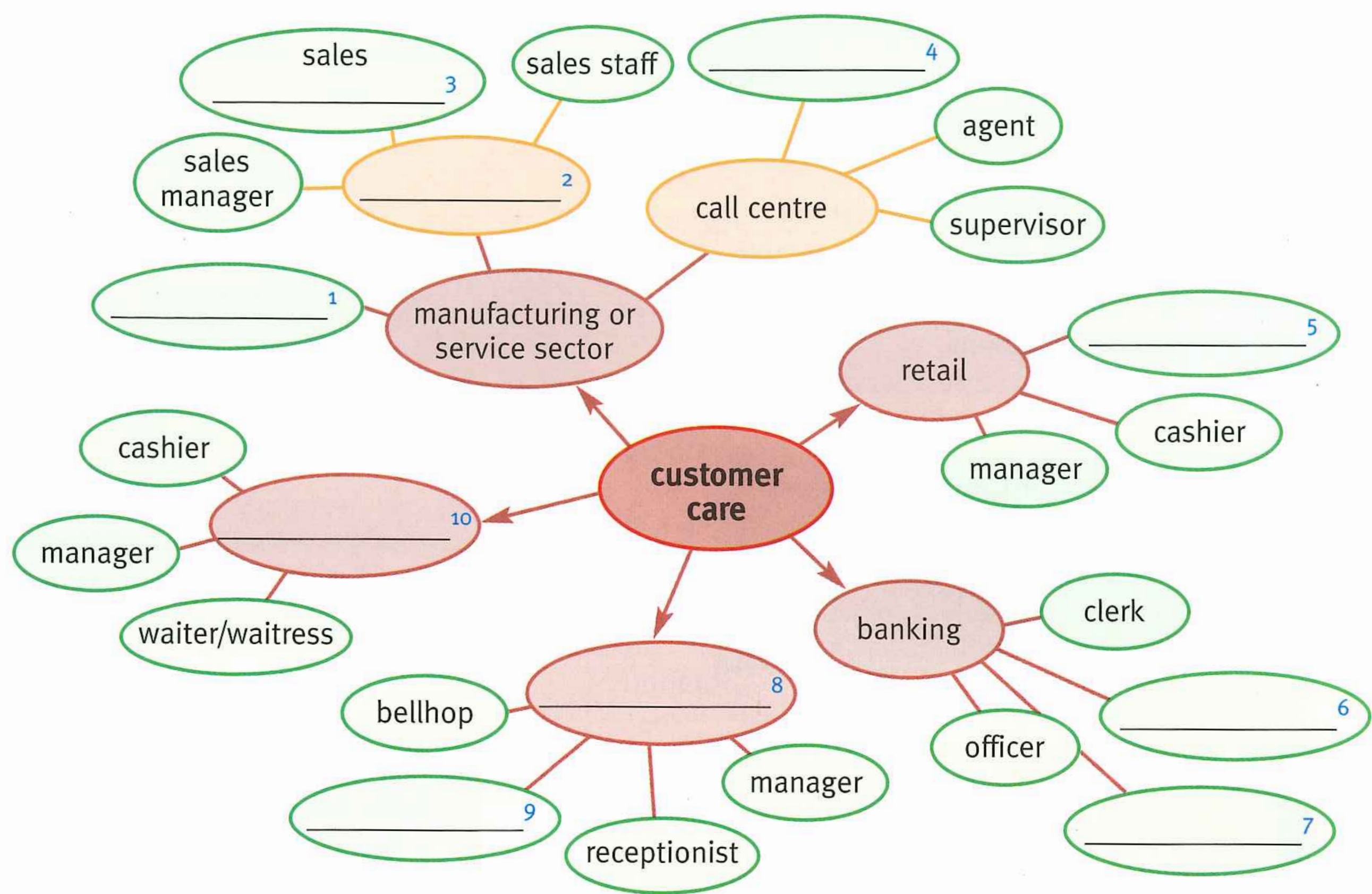
We give efficient customer service by

<sup>4</sup>.



4 Complete the spidergram on customer service-centred businesses and jobs with words from the list.

cashier • concierge • hotel • order entry clerk • receptionist • representative • restaurant • sales • shop assistant • teller



Is your job or business area on the spidergram? If not, add it. Can you add another customer care position?

5 Now find people in the spidergram that complete the statements below. More than one answer is possible in each case. Compare your answers with a partner.

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ deals with customers in person.
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ is responsible for helping customers choose the right product.
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_ handles customer questions or problems over the phone.
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_ takes care of after-sales service.
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_ processes product orders for customers.
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_ often has to write to customers.



6 Look at the news flash and the extracts from five job advertisements. What kind of ‘people’ skills do the adverts mention? Complete the notes.

NEWS FLASH

Are technical skills enough?

Customer care is becoming more and more focused on IT training. It’s true that nowadays technical skills are essential for working with customer service systems. However, this high-tech training is not enough for good customer care. Employees also need people skills so that they can deal with people in all kinds of customer situations.

Notes

good telephone manner

1 You must be fluent in German and English with a very good telephone manner and good customer service skills. PC skills and good communication skills are required.

2 Customer care and communication skills are essential. Ability to perform effectively under pressure and to work as part of a team.

3 Your role is to provide customers with first-class customer care. Duties: handling telephone enquiries and complaints; making calls to customers; dealing with correspondence by email and letter. Computer skills and good writing skills required.

4 We need someone with the ability to communicate clearly with customers and work effectively with both internal and external teams.

5 You will need experience of communicating face to face with customers, using tact and diplomacy.

What kind of skills do you need for your job? Write a job advert for your position.

7 Here are some comments taken from customer service questionnaires. Mark them *positive* [P] or *negative* [N].

- 1 ‘Your sales staff are impatient. They never wait for people to finish speaking and are always in a hurry.’

☐
- 2 ‘The people working at your call centre are always so polite and helpful. And they always take the time to answer all my questions.’

☐
- 3 ‘I wish your employees would be more attentive. They don’t seem to listen to what I say and don’t care about me at all.’

☐
- 4 ‘The bank officer took care of my requests straight away. I didn’t have to wait at all.’

☐



- 5

'When I arrived at your hotel, I was totally ignored by both the bellhop and the receptionist.'

☐
- 6

'The clerk was really rude and pretended not to see me.'

☐
- 7

'The waiter was well informed about the the menu and was prompt in bringing my food.'

☐
- 8

'Your service was more than I asked for. That really made me feel special.'

☐

8 Complete the table with opposites from exercise 7.

positive	negative
<i>to be attentive</i> 1	to ignore somebody
to take the time	2
polite	3
4	uninformed
5	too slow
patient	6
7	unhelpful
8	ordinary

Now use words from the table to complete these sentences from a customer care handbook. Sometimes more than one answer is possible. Compare with a partner.

- a Customers always expect you to be .
- b If you are to customers, they will not do business with you again.
- c Being always makes a bad impression on customers or guests.
- d You should be about the services or products you provide.
- e A call centre agent should never be on the phone and should always be .

9 Tell your partner about one positive and one negative customer care situation you have recently experienced. Make a list of suggestions to improve negative service. Use phrases from the Language Box below in your discussion.

USEFUL LANGUAGE	
<b>Making suggestions</b>	<b>Responding to suggestions</b>
Why don't you ...?	That's right./I agree.
Don't/Wouldn't you agree that ...?	I see your point.
Isn't it a better idea to ...?	I disagree because ...
It makes a good/bad impression if they/you ...	I don't agree. I would ...



OUTPUT

How much do you know about customer care? Mark the following statements **Agree [A]** or **Disagree [D]**. Then read the article to see how your answers compare.

- 1

Customers do not tell their friends and colleagues about bad customer care experiences.

☐
- 2

The product itself is more important than the service behind it.

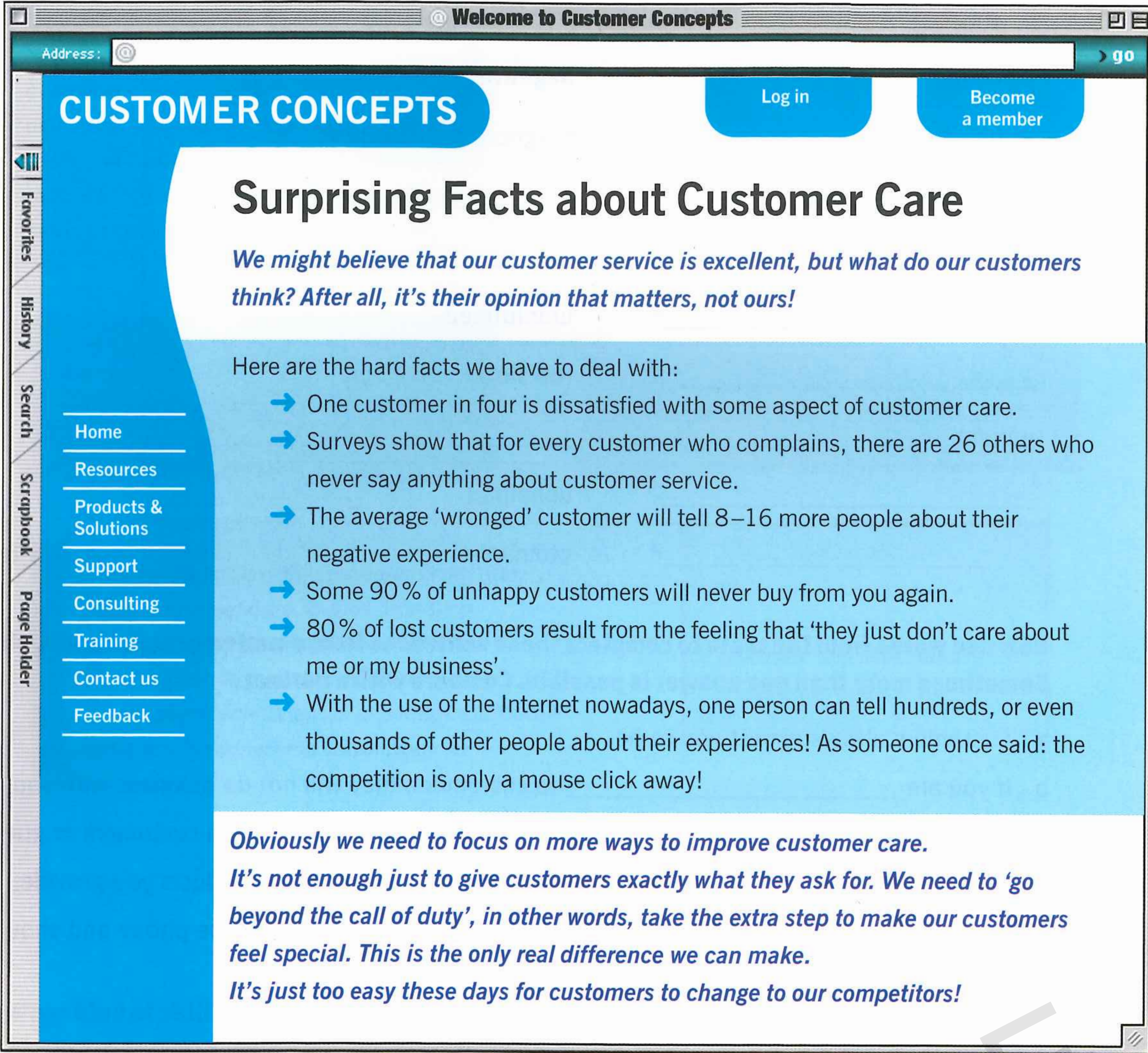
☐
- 3

Good, friendly service will keep customers coming back.

☐
- 4

After the sale is finished, the customer does not need any attention.

☐



OVER TO YOU

- If customer care is so important, why do so many businesses not pay enough attention to it?
- Will there be more of a demand for good customer service in the future? Why, or why not?
- How does your company know if it is giving good or bad service?