# The Role and Importance of Online Communication in the Business Environment

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**Abstract:** *Business communication has changed in recent years due to the new technologies, the growing demands for intercultural communication skills, the changing person-organization relationship and the global nature of organizations. Both organizations and customers benefit from certain advantages provided by the use of online communication in the business environment, with great possibilities for interaction and individualization. This paper highlights the role and importance of online communication in the business environment, focusing on the way in which online communication between customers and companies takes place. The results of a survey I conducted on this topic suggest that online communication between customers and companies has both advantages and disadvantages, but the positive aspects prevail over the negative ones. The study shows that customers remain loyal to companies with which they have a positive online interaction, more than half of the respondents attaching great importance to the way in which they communicate online with the companies whose customers they are. This article is addressed to any person interested in the role of online communication between a company and its customers, as well as to any entrepreneur who carries out their professional activity in the online environment.*

**Keywords:** *online business communication; communication with customers; advantages of online business communication; disadvantages of online business communication, importance of online business communication.*

## 1. Introduction

Communication skills are considered some of the basic components of a successful career, along with teamwork, leadership, planning and organization, among others. At the same time, the modern professional environment is characterized by new forms of organization, efficient communication technologies, frequent changes, shrinking boundaries between professional and personal life, a more diverse workforce and a greater emphasis on globalism. These changes also have an impact on business communication in quite meaningful ways, which any business should consider.

Over time, communication researchers have emphasized the importance of communication skills for career success and business formation. The advertising platform provided by the online environment is of great help to companies, who can use it to send messages with advertising content very easily. Customers also have various benefits, from e-mail and discussion groups to news and social networks. According to Morozan (2011), the most important benefits that technology and, in particular, the online environment brings to the business environment, and that have been preserved until now, are the following:

1. Maintaining an online presence;

2. Promoting a business - through the Internet, essential information about the company is provided to thousands of potential customers and partners, who will find out about the company's field of activity and how they can benefit from its services;

3. Disseminating business information;

4. Serving customers and providing the necessary information about the company, products, offers;

5. Increasing public interest - one can access the company's website from any location, and thus become a visitor to the site created by the organization and a potential customer for the product offered;

6. Accessing important target markets: the socio-demographic profile of online users is favorable to advertising agencies, which can find out

essential information about users, necessary to bring some products to the fore;

7. Answering the most frequent customer questions: employees who hold positions in the call center departments of companies, or who answer the phone calls of customers or potential customers, often face the situation of answering the same questions. Given that there is certain information that potential customers want to know before making a purchase, which would require standard answers from the call center, the company may include the answers to those questions on its website, thus meeting the potential customers' needs;

8. Creating a permanent information service - given that the work schedule is different depending on the time zone of each country, in case the customers or potential customers are located in a country other than the one where the company is located, the web page can always serve their needs;

9. Updating information quickly and easily, whenever necessary: electronic publications are easy to update, they do not require printing and they bring lower costs than printed publications;

10. Receiving consumer feedback with reference to the product / service purchased, a short period after using the product / service, or obtaining consumer opinions about a product to be launched. As the market must be constantly tested until the company identifies what consumers really want, creating a company website or an account on social networks allows companies to request and receive feedback from consumers much faster, without additional costs.

According to Nina Krey and Patricia Rossi (2018), maintaining customer happiness requires a long-term communication strategy, which can include actions that are easy to accomplish, both online and offline. Indeed, the rapid evolution of communication technologies has radically changed the nature of human communication between individuals in the contemporary workplace. The evolution of communication technologies has completely redefined not only the communication channels in the workplace, but also its structures and

organizational design. As Furnham explains, "The speed of development and spread of advanced information technology is for many organizations the issue to consider" (Furnham, 2005, p. 657). Bland (2005) highlighted the human element: "People management is about interaction and conversation; technology should not dehumanize that interaction" (Bland, 2005, p. 63).

This study aims to investigate the context in which communication between companies and their customers takes place nowadays in the online environment.

## 2. Expert sources consulted

Any type of business depends on the customer, and the product and profit are always influenced by customer satisfaction. That is why every customer must be treated seriously.

Currently, customer satisfaction is a very important issue for the company's product, which measures the level of expectation between the company's product and customer expectations. In reality, customer satisfaction will impact both the company and the product, because a customer satisfied with the price and quality will purchase more products and bring more profit to the company. Therefore, Ali et al. (2021, p. 65) argue that "[t]hanks to research, ninety-nine percent of unhappy customers will never buy a company product again, which means that knowing what satisfies customers is a good way to reduce the unhappy customer and increase profits.". They also emphasise that "[c]ustomer satisfaction is affected by the quality of the product and the services offered by them by companies" (Ali et al., 2021, p. 68). Moreover, Mainardes and Cardoso (2019, p. 6) stress that "[r]esearchers have studied and demonstrated that this communication relationship between companies and consumers on social networks positively influences the trust that increases brand loyalty". Companies are in competition with each other, and customer loyalty will lead to the purchase of a company's products or services to the detriment of its competitors.

## 3. Research methods

The research was conducted by means of a self-completed questionnaire answered by 107 customers of companies that carry out their professional activity online.

The questionnaire consists of 18 questions related to the theoretical issues presented in the previous sections of the paper, as well as to the advantages and disadvantages that one may encounter as an online customer communicating with a company.

In choosing the respondents, it was taken into account whether they are online shoppers, so as to make sure they had had the opportunity to encounter positive or negative situations in the interaction with various companies during the process of purchasing products or services, which allowed me to outline an opinion about how online collaboration between customers and companies takes place.

## 4. Results

Based on the answers to the questionnaire on the situation of online communication between customers and companies in the business environment, the following conclusions can be drawn:
• Currently, the rate of online communication between companies and their customers has increased;
• The majority of respondents attach great importance to the way they communicate online with the companies whose customers they are. Customers remain loyal to companies with which they have a positive online interaction;
• Very few respondents still choose to physically go to the store to request additional information about products;
• In the respondents' opinion, the following updates to company websites would be an advantage for maintaining their interest: translating sites into all languages spoken in the countries where they sell their products; a clearer description of the products; more technical details about the products.

• 95 out of 107 respondents find it important to have access to the feedback of other customers on the company website;

• For 45 respondents it is very important to have the possibility to order products on the company website from companies based in other cities / countries;

• 86% of the respondents are interested in receiving emails on their personal email address from companies, which shows that they are interested in and open to maintaining online communication with companies.

• Strengths of online communication:
- Time saving;
- Access to feedback from other customers;
- The customer can communicate with the company from anywhere;
- Customer problems are solved faster;

• Weaknesses of online communication:
- Not all customers receive a response to emails sent to companies;
- Sometimes communication is poor in case of return;
- Some companies do not communicate effectively in case of delivery errors;
- Limited program of the online Customer Relations department.

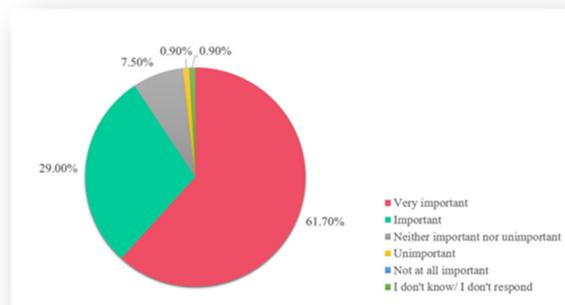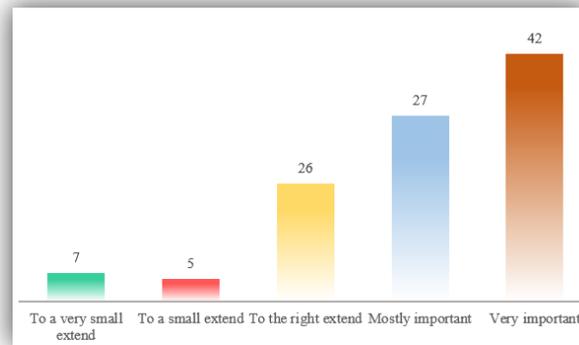**Fig. 1** The importance of how online companies communicate with customers

**Fig. 2** The importance of viewing other customers' feedback



## Conclusion

Today, companies use more devices (and more channels) to communicate with their customers than ever before. Although there are advantages in this approach, companies still face a number of difficulties in organizing and coordinating communication with customers, but these difficulties are not significant. According to research, instead of adopting more communication platforms, companies should strengthen their centralized communication systems and focus on needs.

Given the communication issues mentioned by the respondents to the questionnaire, I believe that, where possible, companies should also synchronize their communication platforms with their systems for recording the information transmitted. The growth of communication channels and devices has added to the complexity of communicating with customers, and companies need to be prepared to attract customers through multiple communication channels. An improvement has been noticed in the field of email communication, the results of the survey showing that customers are becoming more comfortable with the use of email to communicate.

In order to communicate better externally, companies must first improve their internal communications, because the companies that communicate best internally will have the greatest success communicating externally.

The following initiatives can be used by companies to improve online communication:
- introducing a setting that allows marking emails as resolved. If an email is not marked as resolved, the operator will receive a reminder to return to that email.
- rewarding the staff at the online Customer Relations department based on positive customer feedback related to interaction and support in solving the encountered problems.
- extending the online communication service for customers to 24 hours/day.
- investing in the online infrastructure and making regular information updates on the products and services offered.
- moving data concerning communication with customers in the cloud is a move that smart companies in the business environment can address to proactively solve centralization issues.

In conclusion, all the improvements that can be made to strengthen the relationship between the customer and the company must be considered, because online communication between customers and companies is extremely important to the success of any type of business.

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