
Good Service, Every Time

A practical customer service handbook for Nigerian shops and online businesses

OBUSKKO

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SAMPLE

Introduction

A customer walks into your shop to ask about a product they saw on Instagram. The staff member at the counter gives one price, but the person handling Instagram quoted another. On WhatsApp, a buyer has sent proof of payment and is waiting for confirmation. Meanwhile, someone whose delivery is late has messaged again: “Please, what is happening with my order?”

The owner may be able to sort everything out. But what happens when the owner is buying stock, attending to another customer or unavailable?

Good customer service should not depend on one person being present. It should be a shared routine: a clear way of answering questions, checking information, keeping promises and solving problems.

That is what this handbook will help you build.

Who this handbook is for

Good Service, Every Time is for small business owners and staff in Nigeria who serve customers across the counter, on WhatsApp, through Instagram or through a mixture of these channels.

You might run a clothing shop, sell phone accessories, supply household goods or manage another small retail business. You may work alone, with relatives or with a team covering

different shifts.

You do not need a customer service department or expensive software to use this handbook. A notebook, a shared reference sheet and clear responsibilities can be a useful starting point. What matters is having a routine people understand and can follow.

If you work alone, the same tools can help you keep track of requests during busy periods and prepare for someone else to assist you later.

The problem is often the routine, not the person

Many service problems begin with missing information or unclear responsibility.

A staff member says, “I thought you had replied.” A customer is promised delivery before anyone checks with the rider. Someone agrees to an exchange, but the next person on duty knows nothing about it. An angry buyer has to explain the same problem three times.

These situations can leave customers frustrated and staff under pressure. They can also lead to lost orders, complaints and poor reviews.

Telling everyone to “be polite” or “reply quickly” is not enough. Your team needs to know:

- Who is checking each channel?
- What information must be confirmed before making a

promise?

- What can staff decide without asking the owner?
- When should a customer receive the next update?
- Where should an unresolved request be recorded?

Clear answers make good service easier to repeat, even on a difficult day.

What you will be able to do

By the end of this handbook, you should be better equipped to:

- **Set practical service standards.** Define what a helpful greeting, timely reply and clear explanation look like in your business.
- **Keep information consistent.** Give staff access to current prices, stock information, delivery arrangements and approved policies.
- **Handle enquiries and orders clearly.** Confirm what the customer wants, explain the full payable amount and verify payment through your own business records.
- **Keep customers informed.** Send useful updates about collection, dispatch and delays rather than waiting for customers to chase.
- **Manage returns and complaints calmly.** Understand the concern, check the facts and explain the next step within your authority.
- **Follow up respectfully.** Offer useful after-sales support

and invite honest reviews, repeat purchases and referrals without pressure.

These routines cannot prevent every complaint or guarantee more sales. They can help you reduce avoidable confusion, respond more consistently and give customers a clearer understanding of what to expect.

Use this as a working handbook

Read with your own business in mind. Think about recent enquiries, delayed orders and complaints—not to find someone to blame, but to identify where your routine needs support.

Adapt the examples and templates

The sample replies give you a starting point. Change them to match your products, business hours and natural way of speaking.

Before sending any template, check its facts. A polished message is still unhelpful if it contains the wrong price or a delivery promise nobody has confirmed.

Complete the worksheets together

Use the service standards sheet, request tracker and handover checklist with the people who will actually use them. Ask what is realistic during busy periods and agree who owns each next action.

For the returns and refunds policy, adapt the example carefully and check it against applicable consumer rights.

Seek advice from a qualified legal adviser or the relevant consumer protection authority where needed.

Practise, then review

Read replies aloud. Act out a difficult counter conversation. Practise handing over an unresolved WhatsApp complaint.

Start with a few routines, use them and review what happened. The aim is not perfect wording. It is a dependable way of helping customers—whether the owner or a staff member is serving.

Chapter 1: Decide What Good Service Looks Like

A customer asks for the price of a blender on Instagram. One staff member replies immediately but forgets to mention delivery charges. Another gives the full price but responds the next afternoon. At the shop, a third says, “Madam, wait,” without explaining how long the wait will be.

Everyone may believe they are providing good service. The customer experiences three different businesses.

Consistent service starts with shared standards: clear actions that the owner and staff agree to follow. “Be polite” is a useful intention, but it does not tell someone what to do when three customers are waiting and WhatsApp keeps ringing.

A practical standard does: **“Acknowledge each arriving customer, explain if there is a wait, and return to them when promised.”**

The aim is not to make every conversation sound identical. It is to make sure customers receive the same basic care, whoever serves them.

Start with what is happening now

Before setting new rules, review a small sample of recent customer interactions. Include successful conversations, not

only complaints.

For a manageable first review, gather:

- Ten recent enquiries from WhatsApp and Instagram.
- Any unanswered messages from the past working week.
- A few recent complaints, compliments or reviews.
- Examples of questions customers repeatedly ask at the counter.
- Orders where customers had to chase a payment confirmation, collection notice or delivery update.

Use business records rather than memory alone. “We always reply quickly” may feel true until you check the message times.

Record your findings in a simple table:

What happened?	What did the customer need?	What made service difficult?	What could change?
An Instagram enquiry went unanswered overnight and through the next morning	Price and availability	Nobody was assigned to check Instagram	Name a person and a backup
Two staff members quoted different delivery charges	A reliable total	Delivery information was scattered across chats	Keep one current delivery reference

What happened?	What did the customer need?	What made service difficult?	What could change?
A customer returned to ask whether an item was ready	A collection update	Nobody recorded the promise to call	Record the update time and responsible person

Discuss the process before judging the person. Ask:

- Was the correct information available?
- Was responsibility clear?
- Did the staff member have authority to answer?
- Was the workload realistic?
- Was there a power, network or account-access problem?

This is not about ignoring poor conduct. It is about avoiding blame when the system itself makes mistakes likely. Correct individual behaviour privately where necessary, and use the team review to agree better working methods.

Also notice what worked. A staff member's clear order summary or calm explanation may provide a useful example for everyone.

Turn good intentions into visible actions

A service standard should describe something you can observe. Replace vague instructions with actions that a colleague could recognise during a conversation.

Welcome the customer

At the counter: Pause where possible, make eye contact and acknowledge the customer. If you are already serving someone, explain what will happen next.

“Good afternoon. Welcome. I’m finishing with this customer, then I’ll attend to you.”

Do not call out a waiting time you cannot reasonably judge. Acknowledgement is helpful; an invented promise is not.

Online: Greet the customer and address their actual question. Avoid sending only “Hello” when they have already asked whether a product is available.

“Good morning. Yes, the two-litre blender is available in black. Would you like collection or delivery?”

Use respectful language without assuming every customer wants to be called “dear”, “boss” or “my customer”. A warm greeting and the customer’s name, when known, are usually enough.

Listen before offering a solution

At the counter: Let the customer finish. Ask a focused question if something is unclear, then repeat the important detail.

“You need a rechargeable fan for a small room, and battery life matters most. Have I understood correctly?”

Online: Read the existing conversation before asking questions. If the customer has already supplied an order reference, do not request it again simply because another staff member has taken over.

Ask only for information needed to help. Do not request payment details or personal information in public Instagram comments.

Explain clearly

Use everyday language. State the answer first, then any important limitation or next step.

Instead of:

“Delivery depends.”

Say:

“The delivery charge depends on your area. Which part of Ibadan should we check?”

Instead of:

“It should work.”

Say:

“I need to check whether this model supports that function before recommending it.”

Explain the total payable amount before payment, including delivery or other applicable charges. Give customers room to ask questions without making them feel troublesome.

Close with a clear next step

A conversation should not end with the customer wondering who will act.

At the counter:

“Your item will be checked this afternoon. I will call you by 4 pm today with an update.”

Online:

“I’ll confirm stock with the shop and message you here by 12 noon today. You do not need to send another enquiry.”

Before closing, check that the customer understands what happens next. Where no further action is needed, thank them without adding an unnecessary sales push.

Set response targets your team can keep

“Reply quickly” means different things to different people. Agree targets based on your staffing, enquiry volume and access to reliable information.

First, publish your customer-service hours on your business profiles, shop notice and automated replies where available.

If your shop opens longer than your online support operates, show both schedules clearly.

Then distinguish three stages:

Stage	What it means	Example
Acknowledgement	You have received the request and identified the next step	"I'm checking stock and will update you by noon."
Complete answer	You have answered the question fully enough for the customer to act	"Black is available. The price is £45,000, excluding delivery."
Final resolution	The required action has actually been completed	An approved refund has been processed and confirmed

An acknowledgement is not a complete answer. "We are looking into it" is not a resolution.

For illustration, a small shop might agree to:

- Acknowledge online enquiries within 30 minutes during published service hours.
- Give complete answers to routine price and availability questions within two working hours.
- Give a specific update time for matters requiring checks.
- Acknowledge customers at the counter promptly, even when immediate service is unavailable.

These are example targets, not universal rules. A single-person business may need longer online response times. Test

what your team can maintain during busy periods before publishing a commitment.

Explain how outside-hours messages are handled:

“Thank you for messaging us. Our customer-service hours are Monday to Saturday, 9 am–6 pm. Messages received outside these hours will be reviewed when service resumes.”

If an enquiry arrives shortly before closing, give a clear next-working-day update time rather than leaving the customer to calculate “working hours”.

An automated reply can explain availability, but it does not mean someone has reviewed the request. Assign someone to check the queue when service resumes.

Make promises carefully

Customers often become frustrated not because an answer takes time, but because a promised update never arrives.

Use four rules.

1. Check before committing

Confirm stock, payment status, preparation time or dispatch information through the appropriate business record or responsible person.

Do not say “The rider is coming” because someone intended to book a rider.

2. Separate facts from estimates

“Your parcel has been collected. The delivery partner estimates arrival this afternoon, but that is not a confirmed arrival time.”

Honest uncertainty is more useful than false confidence.

3. Give a specific next-update time

Replace “soon” with a time the team can manage.

“I will check with dispatch and update you by 3 pm today.”

The promise is to provide an update, not necessarily to solve everything by 3 pm.

4. Update before the deadline passes

If the answer is still unavailable, say so:

“As promised, here is your 3 pm update. Dispatch has not yet confirmed the rider’s location. I am following up and will contact you again by 4.30 pm today.”

Record that next commitment. Repeated updates without progress also need escalation; they should not become a way to postpone action indefinitely.

Keep a one-page service standards sheet

Keep the agreed standards where staff can consult them. The completed example below is for an illustrative homewares shop. Its targets should be tested against actual staffing and workload.

Service standards: homewares shop example

Area	Our agreed standard
Service hours	Monday–Saturday, 9 am–6 pm. Closed Sunday. Display these hours in the shop and on business profiles.
Greetings	Acknowledge arriving customers promptly. Online, greet the customer and address the question already asked.
Listening	Read or hear the full request. Confirm important details. Do not make customers repeat information already recorded.
Response targets	Acknowledge online enquiries within 30 minutes during service hours. Answer routine questions within two working hours. For checks, state a specific update time.
Outside-hours messages	Use an availability reply. The opening staff member reviews outstanding messages when service resumes.
Tone	Warm, respectful and direct. No sarcasm, blame, arguments or dismissive replies. Explain unfamiliar terms.
Ownership	The staff member accepting a request records and follows it until it is completed or another named colleague accepts the handover.

Area	Our agreed standard
Promises	Check facts first. Label estimates clearly. Record promised updates and send them before the deadline, even if checks are incomplete.
Customers should not chase	Our promised replies, verified payment acknowledgements, collection notices, known delivery delays or agreed complaint updates.
If we cannot meet a standard	Explain the delay, give a revised update time and alert the shift lead if support is needed.

“Customers should not chase” does not mean the business can control every delivery or banking delay. It means the team takes responsibility for communication about the matters it has agreed to handle.

Exercise

Hold a short team session and produce your own one-page standards sheet.

1. **Review five recent interactions.** Include an enquiry, a missed message and a complaint or difficult conversation. Record what happened without naming someone as “the problem”.
2. **Choose three service gaps.** For each, write the missing action: for example, “Nobody confirmed who would send the collection notice.”
3. **Agree observable behaviours.** Write one sentence each for welcoming, listening, explaining and closing a

conversation.

4. **Set response targets.** State your service hours, acknowledgement target, routine-answer target and process for requests requiring checks.
5. **Agree ownership and promise rules.** Decide who records commitments, who provides cover and what happens when an update is overdue.
6. **List what customers should never need to chase.** Choose commitments your business can realistically manage.
7. **Test the sheet for one working week.** Review missed targets together. Adjust staffing, processes or unrealistic targets rather than quietly abandoning the standards.

Finish by asking every team member: **“Could you follow this sheet without the owner standing beside you?”** If the answer is no, make the instruction clearer.