In this handbook we will share what are the 5 must-have traits associates should have to succeed overtime in a high-volume customer interaction operation.
In the world of e-commerce and customer service, the instant messaging option has emerged as the most effective way for medium to large sized brands, to increase conversion rates and create trust. Customers, are preferring text-based channels at unprecedented rates before and after purchase.

When you hire your customer service staff—they would probably be working on tickets in a helpdesk or a CRM, live chat and social messengers.

This handbook should help you understand what skills to look for so when you make your next hire. So whatever knowledge and smart training you already have in place for the new member, you know you choose people with the relevant personal skills to implement your training successfully. This handbook should help you avoid cognitive biases when you make your hiring decision.
"82% of US consumers want more human interaction"
2018’s PwC Future of Customer Experience Survey

# 1

EXCELLENT WRITTEN COMMUNICATION SKILLS

In life, we always hear that “communication is everything,” and that couldn’t ring more true in today’s eCommerce customer service.

When it comes to live conversations, excellent written communication skills are key factor for success. When an associate engages in a conversation with a potential or returning customer, it is really critical that the customer feels heard. Dialogue must be fluid, and the customer must be allowed time to finish their thoughts, before the associate responds.

Excellent written communication skills are a must because in turn it will allow your associate to effectively implement their training around your product selling points, brand voice and resolution techniques.
Let's take a look on real conversation to spot written communication skills:

[agent] : Hey welcome to ****. Are you browsing or shopping today?
[client] : browsing but kinda like the ***
[agent] : Great to hear! I'll be here if you need anything [Acknowledgment & Pausing]
[client] : ok, so they hold 12 credit cards and you just clip cash on the outside?
[agent] : Yes the money clip or cash strap can hold 15 - 20 bills. [Mirroring & Anchoring]
[client] : ok sounds good I'm going to buy one
[agent] : Awesome, I really think you'll like it. [Reassuring & Pausing]
[client] : Hows the gun metal color? do you see these in person yourself? what's your favorite color?
[agent] : The gunmetal is a modern grey color. [Answer 1]
[agent] : My fav is Carbon Fiber, that's the one I have. [New line, Answer 2 & Pause]
[client] : ok I'll order the carbon fibre
[agent] : Great it very nice, extremely durable and the lightest of all the wallets. [Reassuring & Framing]
[client] : Sweet!!
[agent] : :-) [Mirroring]
[client] : does the 115.00 include the money clip?
[agent] : Yes it does. [Answer & Pausing]
[client] : ok
[system] : Client has successfully completed a purchase.

Want to learn more about how effective written communication skills can be applied to impact CS & CX Goals? Read More
Every customer is an individual, and we all have our unique ways of speaking and writing, as well as our past experiences. Successful associates are able to pick up on a customer’s tone and use of language, and utilize those verbal cues, to make their responses more personable and authentic. We asked a top-performing associate from the Proonto community on her thoughts:

It’s important to know the type of client the brand attracts. If you are familiar with the type of clients you communicate with it helps you in your day.

An angry customer who has had a bad experience ordering online in the past from various websites automatically needs empathy. A customer who immediately mentions “cost” requires some sort of incentive or special price to put their mind at ease. A “researcher” will ask 50 questions before making a purchase so it’s important she feels heard.

Different folks require a different kind of patience and conversation cadence. Try to position where a customer is in terms of needs and want and help her take the next step in her wanted journey.

It is really just a matter of knowing what you are up against so you can apply the relevant message.
VERSATILITY AND SPEED

It is important for associate to build trust in a conversation, in a potentially short amount of time. Trust is built on various factors an associate can make or break. Being able to tweak tone-of-voice and choose the right message in a conversation, that is specific to each and every customer, helps build trust from the very start.

The more that a customer feels that an associate “speaks the same language” as them, the more comfortable they feel. Being able to quickly understand and define a customer’s expectation in a conversation, bridges a deeper connection between the associate and the customer.

The deeper that connection goes, the more trust that customer has in the conversation.
An associate who doesn’t like interacting with people in a friendly, engaging fashion, should possibly look for another career.

“People Person” skills are critical for your team of reps. Throughout any given day, an associate will deal with every kind of customer....from the easy-going to the difficult and demanding.

Some will ask a ton of questions....some will have no direction at all....some will be beyond frustrated about something....and a great associate will have to adjust accordingly, while always remaining cordial, calm and helpful.

An associate has to be a people’s person be it if they work on site and through a remote a location.
"59% of all consumers feel companies have lost touch with the human element of customer experience."
2018’s PwC Future of Customer Experience Survey

# 5

**METHODICAL & MULTI-TASKERS**

No matter how much knowledge a customer service associate has... and today’s consumer seek incredible depths of knowledge on the brand policies products and social responsibility there are always going to be customer questions and requests, that an associate might not have an answer for.

That is why associates need to think quick on their feet, know how to source the information the customer is looking for, stay engaged with the customer throughout the process without interrupting the flow of the conversation.

Tech stack that includes a knowledge-base is great though the ability to keep things personal while multi-tasking is imperative.

"59% of all consumers feel companies have lost touch with the human element of customer experience."
2018’s PwC Future of Customer Experience Survey
"Personalised = digital recommendations of products based on an algorithm; Personal = a human interaction that evokes emotion"

WGSN’s 2018 The high-velocity consumer report

SUMMARY

5 MUST-HAVE TRAITS OF A MODERN ASSOCIATE

#1 Excellent Written Communication skills

#2 Sensitivity to Sentiment and Nuance

#3 Versatility and Speed

#4 People's Person

#5 Methodical and Multi-tasker