

Everyone is a Critic: How to Cancel Complaint Culture

Description

Note: With so much uncertainty in the world right now amidst the Coronavirus, this article should be viewed as a supplement to what you are currently doing to keep your head above the water, and stay in business. This might not be the right time to try something new, but if you view this season as an opportunity instead of an obstacle (and you are willing to do what other title companies might not be willing to do), I believe you can come out of this stronger than before.

For as long as I can remember, the number one complaint from consumers against all parties involved in a real estate transaction (the real estate agent, the title company & lender) has been bad communication. Maybe that should have been the case back in the day when pen, paper, stamps and the fax machine were essential office equipment, but in 2020 there are better and more efficient ways to communicate. One would assume these advancements would increase satisfaction ratings with consumers. Sadly, this is not the case.

There is still a disconnect between the added efficiencies that have been gained through using newer technology like CRM's, email, texting, online messaging etc. and the consumers' expectations of what great communication is.

When I look at the sheer amount of communication that goes out during the real estate transaction, I would argue that real estate agents, title companies, and lenders are actually doing a good job at communicating. However I believe the disconnect exists not because of a lack of communication, but rather because the communication is not what consumers actually expect.

Which begs the question: What do customers expect?

In looking at companies that have set the bar for communication (e.g. Amazon, Uber, UPS and even Domino's Pizza), and comparing them to their competition, one thing stands out. And spoiler alert, the answer has nothing to do with the technology that these companies use to communicate with (because let's be real, these companies have a huge amount of money to spend on tech).

Here is what separates good companies from the great companies listed above:

Good companies communicate to the customer what *has happened* and what is *currently happening*. They might even go so far as to communicate what will happen next as well.

Great companies, however, push ahead of good companies because they communicate to the customer what *has happened*, what *is happening*, and most important, *what will happen next* with an expectation of *when it will happen*.

By stating *when it will happen* and *when to expect the next communication*, these great companies help the consumer know they are in a well-defined process.

Here's why this is so effective:

1. It gives the consumer a sense of control (since they have a timeline in their mind). This can help reduce their anxiety and uncertainty about what will happen next.
2. Decreases the number of inbound questions.
3. Allows the company to proactively work on what is most important, instead of constantly reacting to and dealing with frustrated or anxious customers.

To illustrate this point let me give you an actual personal example. A few years ago I broke my arm playing basketball and it was a very bad break, requiring a metal rod and seven screws to be inserted into my left arm. When I woke up from the surgery I remember finding myself laying on a hospital bed and throughout the day nurses would come in and out of my room to give me food/medicine and check my vitals. I also remember wondering how long I would be there and if I would be OK? Thoughts of *what is happening to me?*, *how long will this take to get better?* and *what now?* flooded my mind.

The one thing that helped to calm my anxiety however was when, after checking my vitals or giving me food, they would tell me when they would be returning to check on me next. It was not a vague time frame, such as *I'll see you in a little*, but rather: *I will be back in 30 minutes to check on you* or *the doctor will be stopping by in two hours*.

Each time they told me what to expect and when to expect it, my anxiety decreased and I was able to relax and focus on getting through that hour and ultimately getting better. It wasn't until years later (and my arm was healed), that I understood the importance of these timely check-ins and what it could mean for business communication.

Let's bring this back to the Title Industry and what this ultimately means for each of us and our businesses.

During a real estate transaction, the consumer feels a lot like I felt in my hospital bed following the surgery. They have no idea what is happening, and in some ways, they feel held hostage by the realtor, title company, and lender. Big words and a complicated process can easily cloud their vision, while all they want is to complete the transaction and move into the house they just purchased.

In 2020, for any company to win (and stand out from the competition), it's not enough to simply communicate with the customer your competition is already doing that. You must communicate what the customer cares about. Remember, good Title Companies communicate *what has happened* and *what is happening*. Great Title Companies communicate *what has happened*, *what is happening* and most important, *what will happen next* and *the timeline for when it will happen*.

For example, if a Domino's Pizza customer can track the status and expected arrival time for their \$10 pizza, why shouldn't the customer of a title company know the status and what is happening next on their \$500,000 home closing?

So how do we do it?

First, provide expectations for what will happen next and when it will happen:

This means establishing when the customer should expect to hear from you next & clearly communicating the process. This will allow you to work on actually closing the file, creating an amazing customer experience and winning more business, instead of being interrupted by questions.

Second, make sure you're communicating the way in which your customers would like to be communicated:

Have you seen a realtors' email inbox lately? With the sheer number of emails that flood an inbox today, it's no doubt that emails do not get opened and replied to. Communication is changing. Are you embracing things like text messaging, Facebook messaging, app-based messaging with status updates or other modes of communication that you would not have thought about using 10 or 20 years ago?

It's important to *go where the realtors are*, so if you know that a Realtor spends the majority of time on social media marketing, or texting with their clients, maybe you should consider testing these methods of communication with them too. Of course you are not going to send a Title Commitment through Facebook Messenger, but you might consider letting them know via Messenger that you emailed it to them.

It also might be worth asking your best real estate agents what they prefer. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised at the time it takes a realtor to reply to any of these alternative communication methods if you try them after a realtor says that he or she would like to get updates that way.

Remember, your real competition is not the title company down the street, it is Uber, UPS, Amazon, and Domino's Pizza – the companies that realtors, consumers & lenders use on a daily basis in their normal everyday lives. These are the companies that your customers judge the quality of your communication on.

If you choose to raise the bar by communicating what is happening next and when to expect it, I guarantee realtors, consumers, and lenders will notice and your title company will stand out from the rest.

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Bill Svoboda

In 2003 and at the age of 20, Bill Svoboda founded his first company CoedMonkey.com, an online custom t-shirt company out of his college dorm room. By the time Bill sold the business, Coed Monkey had sold over 500,000 t-shirts to clients ranging from Google, Facebook & LinkedIn, to colleges and non-profits across the country.

Currently, Bill is the co-founder of CloseSimple, a software that helps Title companies communicate to Real Estate Agents, Mortgage Professionals and Consumers during the home closing process. He is passionate about the customer experience and helping Title companies grow by putting their best foot forward and creating an unrivaled closing experience.

Along with these businesses, Bill is a passionate speaker on the topics of both entrepreneurship, customer-engagement, customer experience, growth strategies and why everyone should make at least one pair of shoes from Zappos.com (youâ??ll need to hear him talk to learn why).

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Date Created

2020/06/02

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