

Help!

I'm a game player, get me out of here!!

Case Study: Nintendo and CoDEStorm

Q. "Hi, I need help on Pokemon Sapphire, I need help to try and find HM 08 Dive, then I can dive in the deep water so I can carry on 'cause I'm stuck without it"

A. "Ok, what you would need to do is get the Mind Badge at Mossdeep City, then go to the house in the Northwest corner of Mossdeep City and talk to Steven to get HM08 Dive."

The same simple query that we all come across during our day-to-day demands on our customer services. Well okay, queries can vary massively, but the response given is identical in its delivery - the caller has an issue and they need it resolved - Now.

For Nintendo, in its cut-throat and somewhat fickle industry of Game Play, customer service is of paramount importance. Ensuring it can get little Joey (and big Joey) out of the dungeon, over the wall, across the finishing line, etc., with the least amount of heartache will ensure its players stay loyal.

It is not just the increasing technology of the hardware, the continuing stream of exciting games or the realism of the graphics that inspires customers' loyalty, it's also the way those customers are treated after they have paid over their hard-earned cash - with reverence and respect. So if this function is so important, why would Nintendo take the risk of outsourcing its customer services to a third party?

Nintendo is a company that builds relationships, not only with its customers but with its suppliers too. Because of that it inspires loyalty from its customers and suppliers as well. CoDEStorm plc has been working with Nintendo for six years, initially on the point of sale packing and distribution for its UK campaigns, achieving the deadlines as it was fully aware that the success

of campaigns depends on getting awareness into the shops on time.

The teamwork between Nintendo and CoDEStorm to achieve those deadlines has resulted in a partnership that sees a seamless interaction between them in their common goal of supporting both the retailer and - ultimately - the end customer. CoDEStorm had already proven its loyalty to Nintendo. Its recognition that it is a custodian of Nintendo's very much prized brand and that its service directly reflects that of Nintendo in the marketplace is what inspires it to perform and has helped to shape the trust between the two companies. When CoDEStorm took over the customer service centre for Nintendo in February of this year, it proved to be exactly as the companies had hoped - seamless. The service was stopped on the Friday in one venue and started in CoDEStorm on the Monday morning with no one outside the companies even realising it had happened.

This seamless integration was helped by CoDEStorm's ability to employ some of the existing team of Game Play Hotliners. These Hotliners don't just sit all day playing games; they are highly trained with 6 to 7 years' experience each in all of the Nintendo products. Writing gaming scripts for the telephone hotline, monitoring and updating the website forum and responding to website and email queries and conundrums to a high standard leaves the gamers and forum visitors wanting to come back for more. The customer service function covers all areas, not just those stuck in the proverbial dungeon. Technical support for the testing of hardware and software, warranty queries, breakages and breakdowns, indeed anything Nintendo-related, the team needs to cover from 8 o'clock in the morning to 7 o'clock in the evening.



Right: Nintendo Game Play Hotliners
below: Nintendo products

Nintendo believes very strongly in a quick and efficient warranty system. If there is a problem with a product, the product is sent to customer services and a replacement is sent out within 24 hours. An out-of-warranty repair will see a replacement sent, again within 24 hours of receipt of payment, to avoid the customer being without his or her game for too long, again ensuring optimum customer relations.

Nintendo is also involved with the charity Starlight Foundation, supplying games and consoles for the Starlight Units into hospitals around the country. These also need the same support, repair and customer service functions.

Jakki Brierley-Shorrock, managing director of CoDEStorm, makes the point that, although a customer service centre is not always an area where you can recover all of your costs, it is the one area that will cost a company most if it is managed badly. "You will only ever be as good as that last telephone call, email or letter response. The visit through customer service, whatever form it takes, has to be as exciting and enjoyable as having bought the product in the first place." **OF/86**

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