

# Writing Your Own Customer Service Recipe Book

Written By Mathew Patterson · July 30, 2025



This post is part of The Supportive, Mathew Patterson's column for customer service professionals. Learn [what The Supportive is](#), or browse through [all of the posts from this series](#).

There are many cookbooks in my house, and I can understand their recipes well enough. Yet the end results of my efforts could be best described as “reasonably competent.”

That is because applying those recipes in the real world — with all of its infinite variances of ingredients, tools, and environments — requires knowledge and experience beyond what can be written down.

Skilled cooks understand which parts of the recipe must be closely followed and where they can safely substitute, skip, or otherwise experiment. They know how to adapt a recipe to suit the climate or the customer or the kitchen without compromising the quality.

That deep knowledge of how and why a recipe works (and when to ignore it) is the key to their success. Precisely because I lack their tacit knowledge, I am forced to treat the entire recipe as a sort of magical incantation, as if missing a word might turn me into a human durian.

So I'm no chef ... but I do have recipes of a sort: customer service recipes. These recipes aren't in tomato-splattered books or scribbled on envelopes, though. They are saved replies and text snippets and knowledge base articles.

And in that world, I know how and when to improvise. I've answered tens of thousands of customer questions and learned through painful experiences where to stick closely to the “best” answers and where taking a different approach will create a better customer experience.

I've taken explanations from other people and adapted them to suit my own needs. I know which customers want the fast-food burger of support and who will prefer the degustation menu.

It's less a formal cookbook and more the sort of recipe your Grandma hands down, with half of the ingredients left out and all of the amounts in units of “some” or “enough.” Every page has scribbled notes about alternative approaches to consider.

I trust that you have your own customer service recipe book, too, and that you are allowed to cook from it. Some companies don't let their support teams deviate from the official recipe. That works OK, and consistency is important.

But the best customer service experiences come when you can throw in a new idea or a new technique to make something more clear and more helpful — and when you know exactly the right moment to try it.

We often talk about customer service career paths in terms of becoming a leader or moving into another role, and that is a fantastic route for some people. But not every chef wants to open their own restaurant.

There is real value and pleasure in continually improving your skills and expanding your own recipe book, even if you're cooking in someone else's kitchen.

Some chefs are particularly effective teachers, sharing all of that unwritten knowledge with their less experienced colleagues. Experienced customer service professionals can fill the same role.

Even with all the documentation in the world, there's nothing like a highly skilled team member talking through their thought process and approach to encourage others' abilities. Could you play that role in your own team?

Wherever your path leads, if you are a long-term customer service pro, please know that your customers appreciate your skill — and so will other companies. Keep sharpening your tools, and there will always be another customer to serve.



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### Mathew Patterson

After running a support team for years, Mat joined Help Scout, where he helps people deliver better online customer support. Subscribe to [The Supportive Newsletter](#) or find him on [LinkedIn](#).

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