



## Tips for Eliminating "Customer Hassles"

- 1. Poll customers via Web, mail, e-mail, phone surveys, or support calls.** As suggested in the "Researching Customer Needs" checklist, you might ask what your customers love and don't love about your products and services, and how they might suggest improving them. You could consider expanding routine customer support calls by asking customers: "Is there anything you can think of that could enable our products or services to better assist you?" Customers may find it very refreshing to finally reveal their pet peeves.
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- 2. Comb your technical support logs to locate hassles of every type.** What's really been bugging your customers or stopping them from getting something done? See which kinds of trends you can spot. For example, are people calling technical support mainly to get training on using the system? Are they having installation problems, or wrestling with setting things up or getting started? Are they reporting bugs? Are the instructions incomplete or confusing? Another way of looking at this is to ask why your system is not *completely transparent* in helping customers to accomplish their real goals.
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- 3. Observe your customers using your products at their own facilities.** It may be a real eye-opener to watch your customers try to install, set up, learn, and troubleshoot your product without having a specialist guide them through every step. If you had intended your products to be self-explaining and easy to use, this could reveal several aspects in which they are not.
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- 4. Prioritize your findings using the 80:20 rule.** Try to determine which 20% of the hassles (the "vital few") seem to be giving your customers 80% of the grief. Now you can continuously work toward eliminating the heaviest hitters until you've removed everything down to the noise level. Easier said than done, but in the long run, your customers will really appreciate it!
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