



How to say no: 4 steps for handling service requests

One of the hardest things for service desk staff is saying no to requests. But it's necessary. How can you say no and still leave your customer satisfied? Here are four steps you can follow.

Do you use a service catalogue? Then you made a choice about which services your teams support. Great! Of course this doesn't mean your customers know this. They will file requests for services you don't support. So you need to say no.

How can you say no and still leave your customer satisfied? Follow the steps below to provide your customers with the right solution.

1. Find out what your customer really needs

Imagine your customer asks for an iPad, but you only support Android phones. Ask this question: why does my customer want an iPad? What are their needs and why do they think that an Android tablet can't meet those needs? Always ask your customer why. Maybe they just don't know all the possibilities Android offers. Maybe you can help your customer by providing some instructions or installing an app.

2. Propose an alternative standard solution

As soon as you know your customer's needs, it becomes easier to find an alternative for the standard services.

Ideally, you would have a different standard service that fully meets the needs of your customer. This makes your customer happy and saves you the extra trouble.

But if you don't have a different standard service, it's likely that you can offer an alternative that partly meets your customer's needs. In this case, you need to ask yourself how important the missing functionality is for your customer. If they request an iPad you don't support, does the Android tablet you do support meet your customer's most important needs? See if you can steer your customer towards the alternative solution.

3. Optional: propose a bespoke solution

If you can't offer a standard service that meets your customer's expectations, check whether you can offer an alternative. Ask yourself these questions:

Is it technically feasible to offer your customer a bespoke solution?

If the answer to the first question is 'yes', ask yourself the next questions: do you want to offer this alternative? Does it fit the policy and strategy of the IT department? Will it take a lot of time to provide the alternative solution? What is the impact on security? Are you able to maintain the solution?

When the bespoke solution is technically possible and you believe it's a good idea, we get to the next question: does it fit your customer's budget? Can you send an invoice to your customer? Based on this, your customer can decide whether they agree or not.

4. Afterwards: decide whether you want to standardize this service

When the answer is 'yes' to all the questions above and the service is delivered, you need to think about another question. Do you want to add this service to your standard services? If so, add it to your service catalogue.

Be prepared to say 'no'

Saying no can be hard for your team. They want to help, and saying no makes it seem like they're not trying. But sometimes you have no choice. You can't create a policy for your department if you say yes to everything.

Use the questions below to understand what your customer's asking. Even if the answer is still no, your staff has done everything in their power to help. It's easier for your staff to say no when they need to, and your customer will be more satisfied if they understand why you can't help them and what other options they have.

