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30 March 2012

[Nintendo Customer Support
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Dear Shibata-san,

“The Customer is Always Right”, and Other Modern Myths

I'd like to begin this letter with a couple of positive statements taken from your own websites:

Nintendo Corporate Policy

At Nintendo we are proud to be working for the leading company in our industry. We are strongly committed to producing and marketing the best products and support services available. We believe it is essential not only to provide products of the highest quality, but to treat every customer with attention, consideration and respect. By listening closely to our customers, we constantly improve our products and services.

Nintendo Mission Statement

Nintendo continues to make efforts for the growth of the home entertainment industry with a mission that is "to pleasantly surprise people and put smiles on the faces of everyone involved with Nintendo."

These are indeed sage words, and laudable ambitions. However, I have to tell you that actions speak louder than words and, sadly, when my recent experiences are measured against your own yardsticks, you are coming up short.

Prior to January 12th 2012 I was the proud owner of, amongst other things, a Nintendo 3DS; a well beloved recent addition to my home. I even did the decent thing and paid some of my hard earned money to the Nintendo eshop to buy games for it.

On January 12th 2012 I had the misfortune to come home to find that a potential Nintendo customer person from my neighbourhood had been so impressed by the beauty of the 3DS that they couldn't wait to get one. Literally couldn't wait, so they chose to put a brick through by French doors and have mine.

While they were there, they decided to liberate several of my other consumer goods as well, but that's a whole other story which I won't digress into here.

At this juncture it seems to me to be worth pointing out to them that if I had been the formerly proud owner of a now purloined Sony PSP or an Apple iPhone, I would have bought my replacement console and, within minutes, logged in to their respective eshops with my Sony or Apple account and been given immediate access to the games that I had previously bought and been able to download them again.

So it seemed to be natural to assume that I would be able to do the same with my 3DS games and, accordingly, I email Customer Services on January 13th as follows:

“Hi, I have had my 3DS console stolen and I had some eShop credit on there. I had also purchased several games from the eShop.

Is there a way to lock my account, ban my console from online activity and to transfer my purchases and credit to my replacement console when I get it?”

You can imagine my surprise when I received the following reply:

“Dear Mike,

Thank you for your email.

Your Nintendo eShop account (including Ambassador titles) is tied to the console itself so if the console has been lost, stolen or has been replaced by the retailer then transfer is not possible.

Please note that this cannot be performed with the use of just an your SD card and the 3DS transfer tool will require both both (sic) consoles to be in your possession and both need to be fully updated and configured for internet access to follow this process. Both consoles also need to be from the same region for example Europe for this to be possible and you may need to re-download your titles from the eShop once more once complete.

If you have purchased a second console for example because you wanted to take advantage of one of the new range of colours we now offer but traded-in your original console we strongly recommend getting in touch with the retailer/buyer to see if they still have possession of your original console to carry out this process.

Please note that if the console has been sent to our repair centre and no longer has the downloaded titles stored on the console then you should re-visit the eShop and they should be available to re-download free of charge.

If this is not the case or you have any further queries please call us on the number below.

Kind regards,

The Nintendo Team

Tel: 0XXX XXX XXXX

Fax: 0XXX XXX XXXX

Email: customer-support@nintendo.co.uk”

So, there's the rub: Nintendo, in its infinite wisdom has chosen to fly in the face of normal practice and inextricably link the eShop account to the specific console. (Interestingly, if the console fails and is repaired, it seems that I can download the games again if they are wiped during the repair. However, if it fails catastrophically and requires replacing under the warranty, it seems that I don't have that luxury and have to re-buy the games that I lost due to your faulty console. Just saying!)

After raising the response from customer services on a number of online forums, the advice turned out not to be strictly true because a Nintendo employee (who shall remain nameless for obvious reasons) told me this:

"There should be a paragraph there to highlight the steps to take in order to recover accounts if the product has been stolen. There basically needs to be an official email from the police to our RIPA email.

The local police dept need to put in a request on the following email RIPA-notices@nintendo.co.uk

It basically needs to be logged as stolen and then request then comes to us on the above email and we can action."

So, a slap on the wrist for customer services methinks, turning away valued(?) customers with half truths in the hope that they will pay to buy the games again, rather than telling them the process to go through to get their games onto their new console.

Accordingly, I asked the local constabulary to send the necessary email, which they did on 24 February, as follows:

"I was approached by the aggrieved Mike JAMES who works at Xxxxxxx Xxxx Xxxxxx where I am the school based police officer on 31/1/12. He stated that he had been a victim of crime (Greater Manchester Police crime reference XXXXX/XX refers), and that assorted property had been stolen from his home address. He indicated that one of the items was a Nintendo 3DS console. He stated he was trying to recover a £XX credit which was on the console when stolen. He was advised by your customer support staff that an official e-mail from the police was required to the following e-mail address <RIPA-notices@nintendo.co.uk> to confirm the loss.

I have reviewed the crime report and note that a console was reported stolen by Mr JAMES as a result of a burglary at his home address of XX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX. His e-mail address for ease of reference is <xxxx@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>. thank you for your assistance in this matter

PC XXXX Xxxx Xxxxxx,
XX Neighbourhood Policing Team
School Based Police Officer,
Xxxxxx Xxxx Xxx Xxxxxx,

The very next day I also sent an email so that you could tally the two correspondences together. Since then I have heard nothing from you via email. Not even an acknowledgement. (Remember the bit earlier about treating every customer with attention, consideration and respect?)

I then started to phone customer services every week and was told each of the following:

- All the management are out and won't be coming back until next week;
- The person who deals with this is not in today;
- The person who deals with this is really busy at the moment (On this point and the last one: Is there really just one person in the whole of Nintendo who deals with this? You really should think about continuity planning: God forbid that they should ever end up under a bus on the way to work one day!),
- There is nobody in from that department (as an aside, if you need help producing a holiday planner, just let me know. I'm pretty good at that sort of thing)..

Finally, after several weeks, I was told that the policy on stolen consoles had changed and that the Police now also had to email customer-services in addition to RIPA-notices so I forwarded the mail to that address as well, telling the person on the other end that I would do so within the next five minutes but when I made my scheduled call a week later they claimed to never have received it. I said that I would send it again within the next five minutes and that they should contact me if they didn't receive it. I didn't hear anything but based on previous form, I rang up after a few days to follow up. Guess what? You apparently didn't receive that one either (and didn't phone to let me know either). Once again, do you recall the bit earlier about treating every customer with attention, consideration and respect? It's beginning to sound a bit hollow, isn't it? Aspirations are great but delivery is the important thing)

So, I found a complaints system on your website which let me fill in a lovely sarcastic letter before hitting submit, to receive the following response:

"Not Found

The requested URL /survey/confirmation.php was not found on this server.

Additionally, a 404 Not Found error was encountered while trying to use an ErrorDocument to handle the request."

You know, for a company in the IT arena, I don't think it's too much to expect that your IT infrastructure should work. I work as an IT support engineer and, quite frankly, I would be shot if my work was a shoddy as yours. Seriously!

I have since emailed customer services again (admittedly to the email address which you either don't check or doesn't work properly) but this is dragging on and on and I've reached the end of my tether.

I could blame you for making such a beautiful console that some scrote decided to take mine (have you ever thought of producing a model which has the same functionality as the 3DS but looks like an old knackered Game & Watch, for example?) That way, I could leave it in open sight without fear that its sheer beauty would make someone want to take it? – btw, if you ever decide to do this, don't forget who suggested it. I'd want my pound of flesh!)

You could even model it on my own old and knackered Game & Watch if you like, Donkey Kong, the first one to feature the d-pad designed by Gunpei Yokoi as you may or may not know.

Anyway, I am feeling somewhat less than grunted about the fact that:

- I bought your console with hard earned cash;
- I spent more hard earned cash on games for it;
- I have invested a large part of my life that I will never get back in negotiating your interminable processes to restore my games and credit;
- Some thieving scrote is currently benefitting from my purchases (if not my remaining eshop credit)
- Nintendo don't seem to give a damn about it.

As mentioned above, your mission is to "pleasantly surprise people and put smiles on the faces of everyone involved with Nintendo." My involvement with Nintendo has certainly surprised me but I can assure you that the smile has long since disappeared from my face.

All I am asking is that you respond to my requests and deal with the ongoing problem so that I can play my games again. It can't be that difficult.

This saga has become very long in the tooth and I'm not getting any younger: I just want my games back before I die.

For the love of God!

Please!

Pretty Please!

I'll even swear undying loyalty to Nintendo and forsake all other platforms. ...and that promise is as rock solid as your promises to provide the best support services available and to treat every customer with attention, consideration and respect, so you can take that to the bank. Clearly.

I look forward to hearing from you although, admittedly, on form to date this is more in hope than anticipation. My recent experiences have made me realise that a feeling of optimism is very much like a feeling of disappointment.

Regards

Yours sincerely

Michael James

PS. According to a TARP report in 1997, a customer who is satisfied with an organisation's response to a problem will, on average, tell four or five people. If the experience was bad, they will tell nine or ten people.

I'm sure that you can hazard a guess at my current quota (although maybe times were different back in 1997 but, from recent personal experience, I think they underestimated).