

**Communicating with customers  
in difficult and uncertain times**

by

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**Learning outcomes**

By the end of the webinar, participants will be able to:

- understand how to communicate with customers at times of difficulty and uncertainty.
- identify the language and communication methods most suitable for your customers.
- implement a strategy to communicate in a way that provides clarity and reassurance to customers and keeps them onboard.



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**In this webinar we will look at ...**

- Direct and indirect communication with customers.
- What customers expect and how they perceive the quality of communication.
- What the FCA is saying.
- Identifying the agenda in communication.
- Selecting the right voice.
- A 7 point strategy for communicating in uncertain times.
- Q&A



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## Indirect communication

- Social media. LinkedIn.
- Many of our customers are connections or followers.
- Be very careful with posts and comments.
- What do you think?



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## Customer expectation/perception

- Prior to the current situation, customer expectation was at an all-time high. What about now?
- 62% of customers are likely to switch if communication expectations are not met.
- A priority is to establish the preferred communication channel. Remember, things have changed for a vast majority of people!
- What do you think?



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- One of the key findings from the research was:
  - “...an increase in the value consumers place on content that indicates what to do if they need more information.”
  - “Action: Review message templates for opportunities to add helpful content, such as suggesting next steps or **where to go to get more information.**”



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## What the FCA is saying

- The FCA has dedicated part of its website to information for firms and consumers on Covid-19 as well as their expectations.
- They use the term “vulnerable” in relation to customers.

“We continue to make clear that firms must treat customers fairly and consider the needs of anyone potentially affected by the pandemic.”



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“We expect firms to provide strong support and service to customers during this period. They should be **clear and transparent** and provide support as consumers and small businesses face challenges at this time.”

- Communication is key to meeting these expectations.
- Use plain language. Paraphrase. Don't just quote.
- In other words, what this means is ....



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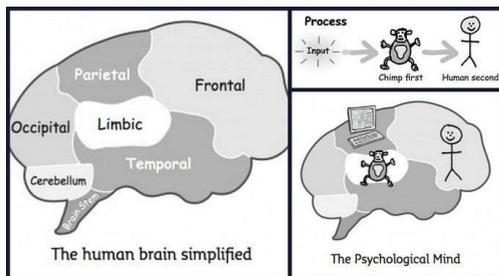
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## Identifying the right agenda



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- Remove hidden agendas.
- Identify the right agenda.
- Focus on the solution and not the problem (agreement v acceptance).
- Active listening is more important than ever (discriminative listening).
- Is the person actually looking for a solution?



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### Selecting the right voice

- The voice of power:
  - “the policy is what it is”
  - forcefully shuts down
  - battle will commence
- The voice of reason:
  - “I didn’t write the policy”
  - attempts to justify the voice of power
  - will escalate and fall back to the voice of power



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- The voice of avoidance:
  - “I would prefer not to discuss that now”
  - avoidance won’t fix the issue
  - the issue won’t go away and may worsen
- The voice of possibility:
  - “what else is possible?”
  - turns the relationship into one of collaboration
  - “The obstacle becomes the path”



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## The 4 levels of communication

➤ If the message is not getting through, work backwards through the 4 levels of communication:

1. What I intended to say
2. What I actually said
3. What I think the other person understood
4. What they actually understood



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➤ Use positive phrases and avoid threats.

➤ If someone uses emotional words, pay special attention. Show empathy.

➤ Never say “but” or “however” as it removes the empathy.

➤ Always use “because”.

➤ Never tell someone they need to be patient. Instead, say you want to work with the other person to resolve things as quickly as possible.



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➤ If you ask someone to “trust” you, it suggests there is a reason why they shouldn’t trust you!

➤ Never tell someone they need to be reasonable or even worse, they are being unreasonable. Reinforce the reasons to back up your viewpoint.

➤ If you ask someone to calm down, you’re likely to make them even more excitable (remember the chimp).



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## A 7 point strategy

1. Don't delay.
2. Prepare (especially your language).
3. Be sincere.
4. Engage.
5. Suggest and signpost solutions.
6. Monitor.
7. Review.



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## Any questions?



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## Thank you and please stay in touch

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