STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Customer Escalation SOP

Document no.	SOP-CS-006
Revision	1.0
Owner	Customer Service Manager
Effective date	September 15, 2026
Review cycle	Every 12 months

1. Purpose

To give front-line agents a clear, consistent path for escalating difficult, high-risk or out-of-authority customer situations, so they are handled quickly by the right person without the customer repeating themselves.

2. Scope

Applies to escalations of live or in-progress customer interactions that a front-line agent cannot resolve, including anger beyond standard de-escalation, legal or safety concerns, and requests above approval authority. Already-closed written complaints follow the complaint handling SOP.

Definitions

Escalation trigger	A defined situation, such as a safety threat or authority limit, that calls for escalation.
De-escalation	Techniques used to calm a tense interaction, such as acknowledging and listening before problem-solving.
Warm handoff	Introducing the next person to the customer directly, rather than making them start over.
Authority limit	The scope of decisions an agent or Team Lead can make without further approval.

3. Responsibilities

Support Agent	Recognizes escalation triggers, attempts de-escalation, and performs a warm handoff when needed.
Team Lead	Takes ownership of escalated interactions and resolves them within their authority.
Customer Service Manager	Handles extreme escalations beyond the Team Lead's authority and reviews escalation patterns.

RACI matrix

Activity	Support Agent	Team Lead	Customer Service Manager
Attempt de-escalation and decide to escalate	R/A	I	-
Take ownership of the escalation	C	R/A	I
Escalate extreme cases further	I	R	R/A
Review escalation patterns	I	C	R/A

R = Responsible, A = Accountable, C = Consulted, I = Informed

4. Materials and PPE

Materials, tools and systems

- CRM or case history
- Escalation log
- De-escalation guidelines
- Authority limit reference

5. Procedure

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.1	**Recognize escalation triggers** The Support Agent watches for defined escalation triggers: anger that does not respond to de-escalation, a legal or safety concern, a request above their authority limit, or repeated failure to resolve the issue.	Support Agent	☐
5.2	**Attempt de-escalation first** The Support Agent uses standard de-escalation techniques: acknowledging the customer's frustration, apologizing where appropriate, and listening fully before responding. **Warning:** Never argue with or interrupt an angry customer; it almost always makes the situation worse.	Support Agent	☐
5.3	**Decide if escalation is truly needed** The Support Agent checks the situation against the defined escalation triggers rather than escalating just because the customer's tone is difficult. **Checkpoint:** The decision to escalate is based on a genuine trigger, not simply on a hard conversation.	Support Agent	☐
5.4	**Notify the Team Lead** The Support Agent notifies the Team Lead and summarizes the situation, the customer's history and what has already been tried.	Support Agent	☐
5.5	**Perform a warm handoff** The Support Agent introduces the Team Lead to the customer directly where possible, so the conversation continues rather than restarting. **Checkpoint:** The customer is not asked to repeat their entire story from scratch during the handoff.	Support Agent	☐
5.6	**Take ownership** The Team Lead takes full ownership of the escalated interaction from the moment of handoff, including any follow-up needed.	Team Lead	☐
5.7	**Decide or escalate further** The Team Lead makes a decision within their authority, or escalates to the Customer Service Manager for extreme cases such as legal threats or major financial exceptions.	Team Lead	☐
5.8	**Communicate the resolution** The Team Lead clearly communicates the resolution and any commitments made to the customer in plain language.	Team Lead	☐
5.9	**Document the escalation** The Team Lead documents the trigger, the actions taken, the resolution and any commitments made to the customer in the escalation log.	Team Lead	☐

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.10	**Follow up with the customer** The Team Lead follows up with the customer after the agreed timeframe to confirm they are satisfied with the outcome.	Team Lead	☐
5.11	**Review escalation patterns** The Customer Service Manager reviews escalation patterns weekly to identify agents who need coaching or recurring root causes to fix.	Customer Service Manager	☐

6. Quality checks

- Every escalation records the specific trigger that caused it.
- Warm handoffs are used so customers don't have to repeat their story.
- Escalation resolutions and any commitments made are documented.
- Weekly escalation pattern review is completed.

7. Records

- Escalation log entry
- Case history or CRM notes
- Weekly escalation pattern review

8. KPIs

- Escalation rate as a percentage of total interactions
- Average time to resolve an escalation
- Percentage resolved at Team Lead level versus Customer Service Manager
- Customer satisfaction after an escalated interaction

9. Common mistakes

- Escalating too quickly without attempting de-escalation first.
- Making the customer repeat the whole story to the next person.
- Not documenting what commitments were made to the customer.
- Sitting on an escalation instead of taking ownership immediately.

10. Revision history

Revision	Date	Description	Reviewed by
1.0	September 15, 2026	Initial release	Alexa Uskova

Approval

Prepared by	Approved by	Date

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