



# Why Customers Call Tech Support



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# About the Speaker

## Jack Molisani

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- Past President, Los Angeles STC
- Chair, Year 2000 Pan-Pacific Conference

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# In This Presentation

- **Why Customers Call Tech Support**
- **What Writers Can Do About It**
- **Questions and Answers**

# Introduction

- Companies in the United States spends *billions* on help desks and tech support
- Why customers call for help is widely based on the type of product, but there are general reasons
- A “customer” can be internal or external

## Introduction (cont.)

- **Customers call support for one of two main reasons:**
  - There is an actual problem with the product
  - The customer just called to find out how to *do* something

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## Why Customers Call with Procedural Questions

- 1. There is no user documentation for the product.**
- 2. There is user documentation but the procedure the customer wants is not in it.**
- 3. The procedure is in the documentation but the customer never bothered to look it up.**

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## Why Customers Call with Procedural Questions (cont)

4. The procedure is in the documentation and the customer actually looked in the manual, but couldn't *find* it.
5. The procedure is in the documentation but the procedure is *wrong* (missing steps, screen have changed, etc).

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## Why Customers Call with Procedural Questions (cont)

6. The procedure is in the documentation but the procedure is so badly written that it couldn't be understood (different from the document being wrong).
7. There is no applicable procedure because the product can't do what the customer wants it to.

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**What can we do about it?**

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## 1. No User Documentation

- **Write some!**
- **More basic question: why wasn't there documentation in the first place?**
  - Cost?
  - Ignorance?
  - Deadlines?
  - “Self documenting”

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## 2. Is Documentation, But The Procedure Missing

- **Add it!**
- **Document based on *procedures*, not features.**
- **View tech support logs or interview support personnel for most frequently asked questions.**

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### 3. Customer Didn't Bother to RTFM

- Find out *why*.
- Is the documentation available?
  - Printed manuals
  - Online manuals
  - Quick reference guides
- Make the documentation more user friendly if customers are intimidated

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## 4. Customer Couldn't Find the Information

- A usability issue
- Is there an index?
- Is there a well-written index based on gerunds (verbs)?
- Is there a table of contents?
- Meaningful headings?
- Organized based on tasks (not features)?

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## 5. Procedure is There, but Wrong

- **Fix it!**
- **Is the procedure correct?**
- **Is the procedure in the correct *sequence*?**
- **Is the sample data correct?**
- **Screen shots correct?**
- **Remember case sensitivity, etc.**

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## 6. Procedure Cannot be Understood

- **Say “I can fix that!”**
- **Good technical writing:**
  - Use clear and minimalistic writing
  - Use numbered and bulleted lists
  - Use screen shots and diagrams
  - Show what result is expected
  - Troubleshooting

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## **7. No Applicable Procedure (Product Doesn't do That)**

- **Is there a work-around?**
- **Add it to the customer wish-list**
- **“Upsell” to a better or different product**

## Summary

### **Documentation-related calls are caused by:**

1. No user documentation
2. Missing procedure
3. Customer didn't RTFM
4. Customer couldn't find the information
5. Procedure is wrong
6. Procedure is badly written
7. The product just can't do that

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## Questions and Answers

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