

# The Move to Maitank.com

*Three Companies Discuss The Move To This Customer Service Email Service Provider*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Because the management of customer relations is central to a company's success, and because the majority of those relationships today are conducted via email, choosing the right email service provider is a decision that cannot be left to chance. In November 2007, The Field Consulting Group (TFCG) interviewed three companies that recently switched their email systems to MailTank.com. After interviews with senior staff at each organization, TFCG identified five primary reasons for the switch to MailTank.com: the ability to precisely track customer interactions pre and post sales; the ability to monitor customer service performance; consistency of messaging; ease of use; and exceptional technical support. This report summarizes the preceding conditions and five primary reasons that lead these three organizations to switch to MailTank.com. In every case, the move to Maitank.com greatly improved customer service performance and showed significant ROI.

## INTRODUCTION

TFCG conducted telephone and written interviews with senior management at three companies that switched their email service provider to Maitank.com. All interviewees were directly responsible for the oversight of their customer service department. The organizations included an online retail boutique; an international Express and Logistics company specializing in South and Central America; and a Chicago-based auto dealership.

*"Maitank.com is to InBoxHQ what Windows is to DOS. (Retail site)"*

Email service providers that were abandoned in favor of Maitank.com included, Gmail for Business, Mac.com, InBoxHQ, Talisma, Salesforce and MailRoom.

## WHY THREE COMPANIES SWITCHED TO MAILTANK.COM

All interviewees expressed frustration that their previous email systems had been unable to adequately track customer interactions. These previous systems operated in one of two ways: The first was that customer service agents, whether sitting side by side in the same office, spread out across the country or overseas, all worked from the same inbox. An email was responded to in the order it was received by the first agent who could get to it. However, if the customer wrote again, or multiple times (with follow up questions or

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seeking more specific instruction, etc.), rarely, if ever, were those subsequent emails received by the same agent. As a result, customers had to explain their situation anew to each agent they contacted, and they were often sent the same standardized responses multiple times. These experiences lead many customers to conclude that once the sale had been made their business no longer mattered to the organization.

In the second scenario, each customer service agent worked from their own individual email account. This method, because it allowed the customer to correspond with the same agent time and again, improved the customer's experience of consistency, personal attention and value to the organization. Where the method fell short was in managements' ability to adequately oversee so many separate accounts. Managers needed to be everywhere at once and yet moving from one account to another was cumbersome and time consuming. In the end, individual accounts proved isolating and ineffective. Management often didn't find out about problems until it was too late. And agents, feeling they had to go it alone with their customers, were prevented from drawing on the ready-aid of their more experienced managers as well as from the collective wisdom of their colleagues.

*"No visibility meant no accountability. We were always reacting to problems."  
(E&L site)*

Maitank.com solved both scenarios.

With Maitank.com all incoming messages arrive in one central location or "Tank." The tank is shared by all agents and newly arrived messages are opened by the first available agent. (Having all agents work from the Tank greatly reduces initial wait-times for emails to be opened.) Here, however, is where all similarity between Maitank.com and other customer service email systems ends.

Instead of now leaving agents to field messages randomly from this single inbox, Maitank.com provides management the ability to subdivide customer service agents into various "Teams;" each with its own relevant specialization, i.e., sales and returns, troubleshooting, finance, etc. (Teams can contain as many or as few agents as is necessary; and agents can serve on multiple teams simultaneously.) With Maitank.com, when a new email arrives, attending agents now have the option of either answering the customer's query their self or, should the subject lie outside the agent's expertise, to

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transfer the email to the appropriate team. Redirected emails disappear from the Tank and reappear in the assigned team's queue.

*"Maitank is able to handle multiple employees with ease... It organizes more information and performs multiple tasks with simplicity." (Auto site)*

Team members have a number of email options as well. They can assign the message to one another within their team or they can send it off to another team all together. In this way, all agents work together to answer customers or to direct emails to the most suitable teams and team members.

Once an email is "Owned" by a team member, the agent that claims it takes responsibility for the communication with that customer. Other team members can watch the exchange as it unfolds in the queue but they can't interrupt. Should the situation change, and a different agent or another team's expertise becomes more relevant, than the email can be "Escalated" on so the conversation can continue as needed.

The team manager, on the other hand, can observe agent/customer conversations as well as step in and contribute. A manager in charge of several teams, each comprised of numerous agents, can oversee everyone's work by simply clicking from one agent's queue to another. All interviewees noticed a marked increase in customer service satisfaction.

*"The value add of Maitank.com was noticeable immediately. That I could stay in such close contact with my team and see how they were doing at all times was incredible!" (E&L site)*

To further expedite response time to customers, template answers to Frequently Asked Questions are easily incorporated into email responses. Templates live in a drop menu within the body of each message and can be added with a click. In addition to cutting response times, pre-written templates help keep an organization's messaging to customers consistent. With the heavy lifting of in-depth explanations already done, agents are freed up to more personally communicate with customers. They can add brief notes of encouragement at the top of messages or even suggest modifications to the template.

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*“We spend significantly less time handling our customer emails now, and are providing better customer support via email than we were able to do in the past. This has been invaluable to our business.” (Retail site)*

Another complaint among interviewees was that their previous email systems didn't provide effective archiving. When Inbox and Sent folders were located in different locations an agent's access was limited to either one side of a past conversation or the other—the customer's messages or the agent's responses. Due to the limited memory capability of these other systems, older conversations were often taken out of the system entirely and archived on disc.

The failure to provide on-demand access of customer histories prevented agents from being able to quickly and accurately understand the progression of a customer's situation. Lacking this key information, agents often found themselves suggesting steps and procedures that had already been suggested by other agents. In addition, lack of effective archiving prevented Managers from ascertaining which procedures were working best in the field and which were not. This in turn impeded the systematizing of customer service protocol as well as the creating of training manuals for new agent hires.

Maitank.com creates a living archive. Both sides of every conversation between an agent and customer are stored alongside the current message. The archive is never removed. In addition, Maitank.com provides a Comments Box where team members can write internal notes, viewable to one another but never by the customer.

*“Now we are always one step ahead of our customers. We receive so much praise about how well we respond to their needs.” (E&L site)*

In all three case studies Maitank.com's ease of use was an important factor in the decision to switch email providers.

On average, the switch to Maitank.com took about an hour to complete. There was no need to create new email addresses. Maitank.com worked with already existing addresses by simply redirected them into the Tank. Unless notified, customers were never made aware that there had been a change, nor did they ever lose sight of company brands.

*“Within an hour my newest Customer Service Representative was answering emails and creating new templates.” (Retail site)*

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*"I'm serious; a first grader could use this thing." (Auto site)*

## **IN CLOSING**

The three organizations interviewed for this report stated that among the principal reasons for seeking a new Customer Service Email Provider was the recognition that ineffective customer service diminished brand value. They noted that their relationships to customers didn't end when the sale closed but continued on, sometimes indefinitely. And how their organization managed those relationships, the quality of care they demonstrated, directly influenced their customer's perception of the overall value of their goods or services. All three organizations had started out with the intention to provide their customers with the very best service they could. None were satisfied. The problem wasn't their people, it was their technology. Their email service providers were preventing their achieving the high standard of customer service excellence that they and their customers demanded. The solution was unanimous: Maitank.com.