

## Unit 7

**1** Read the title of the article and choose the option (a, b or c) which best explains its meaning.

- a The customer services department of a company makes a complaint.
- b A new company plans to make it less difficult to complain.
- c A company complains about start-ups' customer services.

**2** Read the article quickly. Then read these sentences and choose the correct definition (a or b) for the words/phrases in bold.

- 1 If you are **waiting on hold**, you are likely to be on the
  - a phone.
  - b internet.
- 2 If you **rip off** someone, you \_\_\_\_ their time, money or ideas.
  - a buy
  - b take
- 3 When a person is **matter-of-fact**, they are calm and
  - a unemotional.
  - b bored.
- 4 The **lion's share** of something is the \_\_\_\_ part.
  - a largest
  - b smallest
- 5 **Twitter storm** and **the one-star TripAdvisor review** both refer to \_\_\_\_ feedback online.
  - a positive
  - b negative
- 6 When someone **vents their rage**, they express a strong or \_\_\_\_ emotion and say or write what they are thinking at that moment.
  - a angry
  - b excited
- 7 People or software that get **smarter** become more
  - a enthusiastic.
  - b intelligent.

**3** Read the article again and complete the gaps (1–5) with these phrases (a–f). There is one extra phrase you don't need to use.

- a social media sites
- b saving your branding
- c cancellations and lost bags
- d during the holiday period
- e before making a complaint
- f fill in a form

**4** Decide if the statements about Michael Schneider and Service are *true* (T) or *false* (F).

- 1 Michael Schneider had the idea for the company after personal experience of waiting for his complaints to be dealt with by customer services.
- 2 He thinks that customers usually explain the problem well when they deal directly with customer services.
- 3 Service charges customers \$300 to help with their complaint.
- 4 Complaints about travel make up about fifty percent of Service's business.
- 5 Start-ups which have not succeeded gave customers a place to complain about service but did not try to solve the problem.
- 6 Service aims to have a large workforce in the future.
- 7 As Service gains more experience, it learns to solve complaints more quickly.
- 8 So far, all of the problems have been difficult to solve.

**5** Put the steps in the correct order (1–4) to make a complaint using Service.

- a Service explains the problem to the company.
- b The customer gets the money.
- c The customer completes a form online.
- d Service and the company negotiate and agree an amount.



## Customer service start-up aims to take pain out of complaints

By Malcolm Moore

A Los Angeles start-up wants to save people from waiting on hold on customer service helplines by resolving their complaints for them.

5 ‘The idea for the company was me wasting too much of my time dealing with customer service,’ said Michael Schneider, the founder of Service. ‘If you deal with it yourself, you feel you are losing your time. If you do not do anything, you feel like you have been ripped off.’

Service, which has raised almost \$4 million in seed funding, asks customers to <sup>1</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ on its website or app. It then tries to negotiate a settlement with the poorly performing company.

10 ‘We are more efficient. Customers are often not the most articulate and can often be emotional. That makes the job more difficult at the other end. We are not emotional; we are matter-of-fact,’ said Mr Schneider.

Service processes more than 100 requests a day and recovers just under \$300 on average for customers. ‘The biggest area is travel, with the lion’s share being airline delays and <sup>2</sup>\_\_\_\_\_,’ he said. ‘Travel makes up half our cases. Then there is retail: Amazon, Home Depot and Best Buy and telecoms companies, with queries over cable and mobile phone bills.’

15 Mr Schneider said Service planned eventually to make money by charging either consumers or the offending companies. ‘My goal is to go to these companies and say not only are we saving you money by having people not call your call centre but we are <sup>3</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ by preventing the angry Twitter storm or the one-star TripAdvisor review.’

20 A number of failed technology start-ups have in the past attempted to name and shame bad customer service by giving consumers a place to vent their rage online. In recent years, several companies have focused on using <sup>4</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ such as Twitter to respond to unhappy customers.

25 Service only employs eleven staff but said it would take on another person <sup>5</sup>\_\_\_\_\_. ‘Our eventual goal is to have the software do most of the work,’ said Mr Schneider. ‘Every time we solve a case, the software gets a bit smarter. The first time we called British Airways we had no idea what we were doing,’ he said. ‘Now we have mapped most large companies so we know the quickest way to resolve problems. Some companies are easy, some are more difficult.’