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Exit, voice, and loyalty and the function of communication in a customer service setting

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EXIT, VOICE, AND LOYALTY AND THE FUNCTION OF
COMMUNICATION IN A CUSTOMER SERVICE SETTING

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of

Communication Studies

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

By

Richard Fox

December, 1993

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ABSTRACT

EXIT, VOICE, AND LOYALTY AND THE FUNCTION OF COMMUNICATION IN A CUSTOMER SERVICE SETTING

By Richard Fox

In an effort to understand the role of communication within A.O. Hirschman's exit, voice, and loyalty model, this field study explored the functioning of communication between customers and customer assistance representatives within a customer service organization. Telephone conversations occurring through toll-free lines were tape recorded over an extended period. The recordings were analyzed and coded. The coding process was guided by grounded theory.

Three research questions were explored and developed. (1) What are the functions of communication within the customer service, communication channel between customer and customer assistance representatives? (2) What constraints on voice can be identified within the service environment under study? (3) What relationships, if any, can be identified among exit, voice, and loyalty constructs and the functions of communication?

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Through this work, I honor the memory of the late Dr. Jack Knutsen, a friend and mentor, who through his friendship long ago, gave me confidence in

my ideas and the heart to follow my dreams.

And finally, I dedicate this work to my mother, Mary Fox, whose impression of me as someone special has never diminished, and to the memory of my father, Melvin Fox, who taught me laughter, tenacity, and an appreciation of process.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

There exist, according to Hirschman (1970), three possible responses for a dissatisfied customer: exit, voice, and loyalty. Exit is simply a decision a customer makes to fulfill his or her needs elsewhere (p. 21). Voice is a decision on the part of a customer to seek satisfaction directly with the offending supplier of goods or services (p. 30). Loyalty is seen as an intervening construct that increases the probability of voice over exit during instances of customer dissatisfaction (p. 78).

Keely and Graham (1991) observe that:

Most research on Hirschman's framework has focused on (1) conditions under which voice or exit or some combination will be chosen by organizational participants, (2) consequences of exit and voice for organizational survival or effectiveness, and (3) effects of loyalty on exit and voice.

They point out that this body of research has been largely descriptive in nature and has ignored the normative or prescriptive implications of Hirschman's framework (pp. 351-354). Additionally, it is noted that "Hirschman's collective-goal orientation leads him to place more emphasis on the efficiency-enhancing function of voice and exit than their function of relieving participant dissatisfaction" (p. 352-353). In other words, the research and literature on voice

and exit has been primarily focused on the role or potential role of exit and voice on organizational adaptation rather than on the day-to-day relationship between customer and corporation.

Purpose of Research

From the perspective of a customer service department that is responsible for meeting the needs of the customers of a Fortune 500 manufacturer of disk drives, Hirschman's model is axiomatic. It is assumed that effective voice reduces exit and increases customer loyalty. There currently is no research dealing with the role of communication within Hirschman's model. An understanding of how "voice" is enacted through communication seems essential to the full explication of the model. This field study explored the functioning (functions) of communication within Hirschman's "voice" toward understanding and then enhancing "voice" within the customer service channel.

As the Service Business Manager for the area under study, this researcher views Hirschman's model as a powerful heuristic framework, if well understood within the department. Understanding the functions of communication within Hirschman's model and within the customer service setting will go a long way toward enhancing the service culture of the organization. Following the completion of this study, the information will be integrated back into the service business organization. It is hoped that over time the staff will develop a common

language and framework for understanding and improving their interactions with our customers.

Background of Researcher

Having worked at all levels within this organization over the past seven years, this researcher and manager possesses a great deal of experience regarding the area under study. This experience offers the advantage of a longitudinal perspective on what is otherwise a cross-sectional study.

Definitions

Communication Functions

Most references to communication functions are found in undergraduate textbooks. Conrad (1985) posits three functions for communication within organizations: command, relational, and ambiguity-management. Daniels and Spiker (1987) list production, maintenance, and innovation. Goldhaber (1986) adds the human function as a separate maintenance function. Farace, Monge, and Russell (1977) categorize the functions into work, maintenance, motivation, integration, and innovation. For the purposes of this study, the above listed functions seem either too broad or to be answering the question—what was the communication about (production, maintenance, innovation, etc.), rather than answering the question as to what was its purpose.

In the Handbook of Organizational Communication (1987) Stohl and

Redding have developed a communication function typology containing over forty functions that are divided into five levels: (1) individual functions, (2) relational functions, (3) instrumental functions, (4) contextual functions, and (5) structural functions. Their typology provides a much needed logical system for grouping functions. In the authors' words, "to advocate close textual analysis of OD (ostensibly displayed) messages is fruitless in the absence of reliable and valid categories" (p. 494).

While the communication function typology may provide a useful means of categorizing functions, none of the abstracted categories or the functions listed seem to provide insight into the subject of this study. The functions represent the thinking of many authors across many disciplines and contexts. It is unclear whether the functions have been systematically grounded in data. Rather than pursuing the haphazard process of testing these existing functions against data, this research will develop a functional scheme from customer service data and relate it back to this existing typology.

Functional Analysis

McQuail (1987), in an effort to detach the analysis of functions from the demonstration of causal antecedents, inherent in a functionalist epistemology, defines functions in terms of "purposes" rather than "outcomes." Additionally, he avoids supposing that all communication is functional. It may be ". . . either

purposeless or an end in itself—for intrinsic satisfaction and without ulterior motive or expected consequences." He argues that it is consistent with this position to reject the view of function that holds it is the causal effect of communication. Instead he takes what he admits is the more subjective or individualistic view and argues that function can be seen as the purpose of communication. McQuail suggests that the basic communication functions are "being," "adaptation," "control," and "affiliation." Conrad's command, relational, and ambiguity-management functions cited above would seem to fit with McQuail's positioning of functions as derived from the purposes of communication. With McQuail, this research assumed that communication is generally purposeful and that functions could be inferred from the speaker's intentions. Thus "function," as used here, refers to the researcher's interpretation of the purpose intended by the speaker in the message being analyzed.

Weick (1979) defends the use of functions as a beginning point for analysis.

Analyses of functions are unusually good starting points in organizational theory. Looking for unexpected functions and dysfunctions is a useful pretext to become absorbed into a phenomenon and to think about it carefully. I mention this because many people are highly critical of functional analyses, not so much because they are a fallible form of analysis, but because of the political implications mentioned earlier. Once

these political overtones—which are not as black and white as they are said to be—are stripped away, there remains a useful way to begin examining any phenomenon (p. 55).

With McQuail and Weick, above, this research adopted the position that the utility of a functional analysis need not be tied to the specification of causal antecedents often assumed to be inherent in a functionalist epistemology.

Voice

Hirschman (1970) defines voice as "any attempt at all to change rather than escape from an objectional state of affairs, whether through individual or collective petition to the management directly in charge" (p. 30). There are many different perspectives on voice, such as Bakhtin's use of voice in literary analysis (1981, p. 34) and the more common conception of voice as the quality of sound produced as a person speaks—a person's voice. This research dealt only with voice in Hirschman's political sense.

Research Setting (Corporate Environment)

This research investigated and explained the interaction between customer and customer assistance representatives across toll free phone lines. The setting is a customer assistance department within a Fortune 500 disk drive manufacturer.

For the purposes of this research, the research setting is broken down into three subcontexts: cultural, structural, and personal. The corporation's stated values, service policies, and procedures, were taken as cultural attributes. The structural attributes are composed of the technological infrastructure that supports the service business. The personal attributes are the customer assistance representative's personalities, corporate-cultural knowledge, and communication skill and awareness. It is understood that the above attributes are not mutually exclusive and influence one another over time.

Cultural Attributes

The corporation has chosen to stress values in an effort to influence its culture. These values have been refined over time into the following five categories and statements.

Customers

Fulfilling customer expectations is the purpose of everything we do and we are committed to providing increasing value to our customers. Providing value to our customers leads to success as measured in profit and revenue growth, benefiting investors and employees. Success is shared by all employees based on their contribution.

Excellence

Relentless pursuit of excellence is essential for our continued success.

Excellence means never being satisfied, since our expectations, and those of our customers, are always increasing. We achieve excellence by continuously reducing cycle times and defects in all our processes and by meeting commitments consistently.

Integrity

Integrity is everyone's responsibility and is never compromised. Behaving and communicating in an honest, candid, and ethical manner is a hallmark of the corporation.

Capable People

Our success depends on the capability of our people. Hiring and developing outstanding people is a management priority. Individual success requires initiative beyond defined roles as well as being a team player. We create a work environment where the diversity of our people is valued and all individuals can realize their full potential.

Teamwork

Our ability to work together in teams is essential to succeeding in a complex and competitive environment. Effective teamwork rests on a foundation of mutual cooperation, trust, and broad team participation. Team members focus on common goals, surface and deal with conflict, collaborate across boundaries and act with a sense of urgency.

These values sit on each desk within the corporation in the form of a small plaque as well as on coffee cups that have been given to each employee. The values serve to frame individual and group decision making.

The Customer Service Group (CSG) exists within the Quality organization and is comprised of four related but functionally distinct subgroups: engineering, operations, materials, and business. Each of these subgroups has worldwide scope and responsibilities. The customer assistance department under study is situated within the service business subgroup. The service business subgroup is a "customer liaison group" and is responsible for the establishment and maintenance of policies and procedures, out-of-warranty pricing, service contract negotiations, customer profile reporting, and customer communication.

From a financial perspective, CSG is not set up as a profit center. Rather, its role is to support and enhance both the "quality" reality and image of the corporation and its products. By virtue of not being tied to a profit-and-loss statement, the CSG organization is in a position of being able to be more "open" to customer needs in the face of disk drive failures and the potential erosion of the corporation's quality image.

The policies and procedures regarding the return, credit, repair, or replacement of the manufacturer's product are too numerous to specify. There are policies and procedures regarding turn-around time, warranty length on new and repaired product, customer damaged drives, bad packaging, credit periods

and amounts, customer reporting, special services, etc. All of these can vary by product, region, and customer. These policies and procedures define the boundaries of the service relationship between the corporation and its customers. They are not static. They change over time based on changing technology, competitive pressures within the marketplace, and customer demand.

Structural Attributes

The technological infrastructure is composed of three systems: a phone and fax system, a service tracking and repair database (STAR), and networked, desktop computers.

The phone and fax system is composed of an incoming toll-free line (three trunks) and 10 direct-dial phones. All lines are interconnected via a digital phone switching system that facilitates the distribution of incoming calls among available service representatives. Additionally, the phone system is interconnected with the corporate phone and voice mail system. The system is programmed with recorded prompts to guide a customer or potential customer to the appropriate communication channel within the corporation in relation to that person's need. Based on feedback in the form of AT&T Management Reports, the number of trunks can be increased or decreased in relation to trends in call volume, thus varying the structural openness of the communication channel. Additionally, based on reporting from the digital switch, staffing on phones can

be scheduled to correspond to varying levels of call volume. Fax capability includes two stand-alone fax machines and a networked "send only" fax machine that allows the sending of information directly from each representative's desktop. The fax machines are utilized for the placing of return material orders by high volume customers that have an ongoing, stable relationship with the corporation. Additionally, the fax machines are used to facilitate the movement of required documentation back and forth between the corporation and its customers.

The STAR system facilitates the coordination and control of the warranty returns process worldwide. Serial numbers, part numbers, descriptions, customer information, and the appropriate warranty periods are captured and stored on all products sold by the corporation worldwide. As drives are authorized to be returned for warranty repair or replacement, required customer information is captured and then warranty and billing information is calculated automatically. As the drives are returned, the system automatically routes them through the repair/replace process, generating configuration, shipping, and customs documents where appropriate. Via reports or on-line inquiry, management or the service representative can access information regarding the status of a customer's drives throughout the repair/replace process. This information is accumulated, processed, and communicated as trend information externally to the corporation's customers and internally to the quality and finance organizations.

Each customer assistance representative has a desktop computer. The computers each contain word processing, spreadsheet, presentation software, and corporate worldwide e-mail capability. Links to our customers via the STAR and e-mail systems are currently under evaluation or development.

Personal Attributes

Customer service representatives are screened and selected during the interview process based on their service experience, communication skills (written and oral), demonstrated learning abilities, and the desire and ability to work as a member of a culturally diverse team in an often stressful, communication-intensive environment. Communication skills required include the ability to control the flow of a customer interaction, negotiate conflict, and present an empowered, professional image over the phone. Skills and knowledge that are believed to affect the relative openness of the communication channel are: good listening skills; sound working knowledge of policies, procedures, and systems; perception of self as customer's advocate within the corporation; ability to control the course of a conversation to a positive outcome in a timely manner; and whether or not the employee is empowered to make decisions.

Research Questions

Through exploring and explicating the following research questions within the above specified environment, this research attempted to expand the understanding of Hirschman's model within the research community.

Secondarily, the answers to these research questions add a common framework and language toward improving the service culture under study. (1) What are the functions of communication within the customer service communication channel between customer and customer assistance representatives? (2) What constraints on voice can be identified within the service environment under study? (3) What relationships, if any, can be identified among exit, voice, and loyalty constructs and the functions of communication?

Chapter 2

DEVELOPMENT OF GROUNDED TYPOLOGY

Grounded Theory

This research utilized grounded theory in the analysis of data and the construction of the communication function typology. Strauss and Corbin (1990) state that:

The systematic techniques and procedures of grounded theory allow the researcher to develop a substantive theory that meets the criteria for doing 'good' science: significance, theory-observation compatibility, generalizability, reproducibility, precision, rigor, and verification (p. 31).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) emphasize that generating theory from analysis of research data offers several advantages. (1) Grounded theory can prevent forcing data into theories which have a dubious fit. (2) Grounded theory can be useful for generating theory in areas that are "new." (3) Grounded theory can be used to study social units of any size (pp. 1-28).

To avoid confusion, it is important to differentiate grounded theory from content analysis. According to Smith (1988), content analysis seeks to quantify and verify logical categories against data. This is accomplished by counting the frequency of occurrences of categories, employing statistical tests for significance of relationship to the frequencies of data, and by employing multiple raters or

judges (usually three or more persons) to independently sort data into related categories. An intercoder reliability coefficient is then computed to assess the level of agreement between coders. Content analysis, then, is objective in the sense that researchers limit themselves to empirically based conclusions that can be confirmed by others (pp. 264-265).

While content analysis is objective in nature, grounded theory is subjective in nature. Grounded theory is a systematic method for developing logical categories directly from data. Once the categories are developed and "grounded" in the data, content analysis is employed to empirically substantiate the categories. The strength of grounded theory is in its ability to make specific the process of theory formation. Frequently content analysis imposed categories *a priori* rather than allowing the categories to emerge from the data. In the words of Glaser and Strauss (1967), "We believe that grounded theory will be more successful than theories logically deduced from *a priori* assumptions (p. 6)."

Research Design

Smith (1988) posits a classification scheme containing eight categories for use in placing research into a particular context (pp. 180-182). Each category has two contrasting research types: (1) quantitative or qualitative, (2) experimental or naturalistic, (3) laboratory or field, (4) participant or non-participant, (5) overt

or unobtrusive, (6) cross-sectional or longitudinal, (7) basic or applied, (8) interpretive or functional.

This research was: (1) qualitative in that it involved the critical analysis and synthesis of narrative information to derive verbal rather than statistical conclusions about the content and functions of human talk; (2) naturalistic in that it involved observing and recording ongoing communication behaviors during the course of "normal life activity" without experimentally manipulating the observational environment; (3) field research in that it took place in a setting where people conduct their ordinary life activities; (4) nonparticipant research in that the researcher did not enter into the target communication interactions; (5) unobtrusive in that the researcher was not present in the domain of interaction; (6) cross-sectional in that it viewed communication events from a single point in time; (7) applied in that it explored theoretical relationships for the purpose of understanding and solving problems related to everyday communicative actions and interactions; and finally, (8) functional in that it treated inferred meaning as the starting point for drawing conclusions about the antecedents and consequences of human communication (Smith, 1988, pp. 180-182).

Data Collection

Fifty conversations between customers and customer assistance representatives were recorded from a toll-free phone line at varying times during the business day and over an extended period of time. An equal number of recordings were collected of each of the four customer representatives who work on the toll-free line. A fifth representative left the company prior to the completion of data collection and therefore has fewer recordings. The data is representative of the day-to-day incoming calls that are processed within the customer assistance organization. The toll-free line is by far the most heavily utilized communication channel between the customer service department and the manufacturer's distribution customers. As such, it provides an excellent opportunity for research of this type. Both customers and staff are informed that monitoring and recording periodically take place for training purposes.

Grounded Theory Process

Coding

Strauss and Corbin (1990) outline three types of coding that are utilized during the analysis and conceptualization of data into grounded theory: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (pp. 61-142). For studies of this type, which stop short of developing theory, Strauss and Corbin recommend stopping after the axial coding process (p. 115).

The grounded theory coding process is very iterative in nature. During this process there was a constant cycling back and forth between the emerging typology and the data. The cycling back and forth took the form of questioning the data in relation to the emerging typology during the open coding process. During the axial coding process the iterative questioning cycle was used to compare, contrast, and sort categories and then return back to the data for verification. This iterative questioning process is what is referred to as the "constant comparative method." The constant comparative method is the process that links data to the typology—that grounds the typology.

Open Coding

Strauss and Corbin (1990) point out that concepts are the basic building blocks of theory. During open coding, concepts are identified and developed in terms of their properties and dimensions. The basic analytic procedures by which this is accomplished are: the asking of questions about data; and the making of comparisons for similarities and differences between each incident, event, and other instances of phenomena. Similar events and incidents are labeled and grouped to form categories (p. 74).

The open coding process as it was pursued in this research is outlined below.

Coding was carried out in a number of discrete steps. Each conversation

was initially played back and concepts were listed. The unit of analysis during this step was the message. A message was understood to be composed of a single thought unit. As an example, the following sentence was broken down into two messages. "Good morning. I need to get an RMA number, please." "Good morning" was coded as: greets representative. "I need to get an RMA number, please" was coded as: makes request for service.

As the tapes were reviewed, the "constant comparative method" was utilized in the relating of data into concepts in a stepwise fashion. This resulted in a list of forty concepts.

It became evident, after further review, that transcripts would be required to more thoroughly analyze the conversations. The conversations were reviewed and coded a second time. During this step, the recordings were coded at the "conversation type" level. This process resulted in a list of five general conversation types: (1) RMA (return material authorization) request, (2) status check/expedite, (3) discrepancy resolution, (4) requests for information/call transfer, and (5) customer complaint. Five conversations were chosen and transcribed as being representative of these conversation types (see Appendix C). The remainder of the coding was done in conjunction with these five transcripts. Three additional transcripts that were produced as variations within the five call types became evident during the coding process (see Appendix C). The three additional transcripts were (1) RMA request/aborted, (2) request for information/

action request, call transfer, and (3) request for information/action resolved.

During the next step, the list of forty properties were abstracted into categories and subcategories. The constant comparative method was used to group the concepts into categories. As the four categories began to emerge, their properties were explored as a means of naming each category. The four categories discovered in this way were: (1) introduction/orientation, (2) data processing, (3) persuasion/negotiation, and (4) closure. Returning to the transcripts, it was discovered that these categories were actually themes that circulated throughout the conversations. These thematic categories delineate discrete breakpoints in a process or pattern that is clearly recognizable in each conversation. A breakdown of the concepts and the four categories is included in Table 1.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) point out that the recognition of process is an essential feature of grounded theory analysis. They define process as "the linking of action/interactional sequences, as they evolve over time" (p. 157).

The transcripts of the conversations, complete with coding notes, are provided in Appendix C with the thematic categories noted. Table 2 shows a segment of conversation with the transitions from the "orientation" category (see diamond shapes) to the "data processing" category..

The open coding process was completed with subsequent analysis cycles between the data and emerging model. It became clear that there were additional

Table 1

Properties from coding notes

<u>Introduction/orientation</u>	<u>Persuasion/negotiation</u>
greeting politeness asks for identification offers assistance	attempts persuasion presents evidence argues point develops persuasive argument appeals to fairness appeals to lost revenue appeals to personal costs appeals to customer need persuades explains requests makes wishes known asks leading questions communicates concerns expresses exasperation (emotional) communicates feelings makes comment about conversation (meta comment)
<u>Data processing</u>	<u>Closure</u>
confirms information gives feedback clarifies information uncertainty reduction acknowledges receipt of information reinforces message repeats information (redundancy) qualifies information (uncertainty reduction) reviews information asks for feedback asks/probes for details explains/answers questions makes commitments gives instructions provides cues/conversational breakpoints sets context of conversation set conversational breakpoint asks for break in conversation	politeness parting/conversational closure asks for identification

categories and subcategories that could be identified by pursuing coding at the message and interact levels. "Information sharing" and "information seeking" were added as subcategories. These two categories were consistent with previous grounded research undertaken by Hegstrom, Fox, Larkin, and Harris (1991, pp. 12-15). Table 3 shows the category scheme at this juncture of data analysis.

Table 2

Conversation Excerpt (RMA request, aborted)
Example of Thematic Cycle Transitions

•	goal seeking subfunction
◆	establishes thematic cycle
→	establishes conversation type
	request – asking for a specific action or activity
	statement – a declaration or remark
	question – asking for information
	answer – returning information
C = Customer	
R = Service Representative	
R:	[Company] customer service, this is [name], may I help you?
	provides confirmation that customer reached correct place
	provides name (personal reference)
	statement
•	Information sharing
◆	initiates introduction/orientation cycle (convergent goal seeking)
	provides customer cue to state purpose of call
	question
•	Information seeking
C:	I would like to send a drive in for repair.
	makes request for service
	request
•	information-action seeking
→	establishes conversation type (RMA request)
R:	Okay. Who did you purchase this unit from?
	acknowledges receipt of message
	statement
•	information sharing, message received
	asks qualifying question
	question
•	information seeking
◆	initiates data process cycle

Table 3

Categories developed through open coding

Communication functions (unit of analysis, conversation type)
RMA process Status Check/expedite Discrepancy resolution Call transfer/information requests Customer complaint resolution
Communication functions (unit of analysis, thematic cycle)
Introduction/orientation Data processing Persuasion/negotiation Closure
Communication functions (unit of analysis, message, interact)
Information sharing Information seeking

Axial Coding

Axial coding is the second phase of the grounded theory approach.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) outline the following steps in the process.

(1) The hypothetical relating of subcategories to a category by means of statements denoting the nature of the relationships between them and the phenomenon—causal conditions, context, intervening conditions, action/interactional strategies, consequences; (2) the verification of those

hypotheses against actual data; (3) the continued search for the properties of categories and subcategories, and the dimensional locations of data (events, happenings, etc.) indicative of them; (4) the beginning of exploration of variation in phenomena, by comparing each category and its subcategories for different patterns discovered by comparing dimensional locations of instances of data (p. 107).

Additionally, the authors point out that even though "open and axial coding are distinct analytic procedures, when the researcher is actually engaged in analysis he or she alternates between the two modes" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 98).

To facilitate this process, coding was entered directly within the transcripts, line by line. Additionally a matrix was developed to note the relationships between categories and subcategories. As categories and subcategories emerged, they were added into the transcripts and into the matrix to be further questioned and explored against the data. Again, as in the open coding process, this process was very iterative in nature and was grounded via the "constant comparative method."

Reviewing the transcripts, it became clear that there was an uncertainty reduction process at work within the conversations. This was evident in a very consistent question-and-answer interaction process that was observable in many parts of the transcripts. It was assumed that for there to be uncertainty reduction

a goal needed to be defined and pursued by the interactants. The thematic cycles observed in the open coding process were then seen as the shared goal of the participants. Thus "orientation" or "data processing" could be seen as a category and "goal seeking" a subcategory. Later it was noted that there were sequences that displayed a tendency toward uncertainty increase rather than reduction. It was assumed that goal seeking was still being pursued. After further analysis, it was concluded that goal seeking could be broken down into convergent goal seeking and divergent goal seeking: "convergent" where the interactants have a shared goal and "divergent" where the interactants have differing goals. Later still, divergent goal seeking was identified as compliance gaining behavior and convergent goal seeking as information sorting behavior. While compliance gaining and information sorting categories seemed equivalent to divergent and convergent goal seeking categories, after further analysis it was decided that convergent and divergent goal seeking were more descriptive of the communication process.

The last categories emerged following an aborted attempt to code control and compliance categories. Unable to fit control and compliance with the data, a decision was made to try and identify the messages at a lower level of abstraction than "information sharing" and "information seeking." After working with the data for a period of time, "questions," "answers," "statements," and "requests" were identified as subcategories of information sharing and information seeking.

Questions and requests were identified as subcategories of information seeking. Statements and answers were identified as subcategories of information sharing. The final matrix appears in Table 4.

Grounded Functional Typology

The grounded data analysis yielded a three-tiered communication function typology (see Table 4). This level of integration was accomplished by coding with three distinct and different units of analysis: (1) conversation type, (2) thematic cycle, and (3) message/interact. It should be noted that the core unit of analysis was message/interact and that through the grounded theory process the other two categories emerged as higher level abstractions. The abstractions were verified against the data and then later coded using their respective units of analysis.

The function of communication at the highest level, "conversation type," is to enable the processing of: (1) RMA's (return material authorizations), (2) the processing of status checks/expedites, (3) the resolution of discrepancies, (4) call transfers/information requests, and (5) the resolution of customer complaints.

At the second tier of the functional typology the function of communication is to enact the "thematic cycles": (1) introduction/orientation, (2) data processing, (3) persuasion/negotiation, and (4) closure, as necessary for each member of the dyad to achieve their respective goals.

Table 4

Grounded Typology of Communication Functions

-
- goal seeking subfunction
 - ◆ establishes thematic cycle
 - establishes conversation type
- request – asking for a specific action or activity
 - statement – a declaration or remark
 - question – asking for information
 - answer – returning information

Communication functions (unit of analysis, conversation type)

- RMA process
- Status Check/expedite
- Discrepancy resolution
- Call transfer/information requests
- Customer complaint resolution

Communication functions (unit of analysis, thematic cycle)

- ◆ Introduction/orientation
- ◆ Data processing
- ◆ Persuasion/negotiation
- ◆ Closure

Communication functions (unit of analysis, message, interact)

- Convergent goal seeking (information sorting)
 - Information seeking (occurrence, high)
 - requests (occurrence low)
 - questions (occurrence balanced with answers)
 - Information sharing (occurrence, high)
 - statements (occurrence low)
 - answers (occurrence balanced with questions)
 - Divergent goal seeking (compliance gaining)
 - Information seeking (occurrence, low)
 - requests (occurrence higher than in convergent goal seeking)
 - questions (occurrence low)
 - Information sharing (occurrence, high)
 - statements (occurrence high, actors attempt persuasion)
 - answers (occurrence low)
-

The third tier of the typology contains three nested levels of subfunctions. The relationship between the subfunctions is shown at the bottom of Table 4.

At the top of tier three are two subfunctions: (1) convergent goal seeking and (2) divergent goal seeking. Each type of goal seeking is composed of: (1) an information seeking and (2) an information sharing subfunction that is in turn composed of message types. "Requests" and "questions" are the message types that make up the information seeking subfunction. "Answers" and "statements" are the message types that make up the information sharing subfunction.

Convergent goal seeking is clearly distinguishable within the transcripts. It is defined by a very consistent question and answer interaction. An example of convergent goal seeking is contained in Table 5 (extracted from Conversation 4 in Appendix C). The data processing cycle proceeds uninterrupted through this question and answer interaction. The data processing theme is characterized by convergent goal seeking.

Divergent goal seeking is also distinguishable within the transcripts. It is defined by a lack of symmetry in communication interaction. "Statement" to "statement" transactions and "request" to "statement" transactions predominate during divergent goal seeking. An example of divergent goal seeking is contained in Table 6 (extracted from Conversation 1 in Appendix C).

Table 5

Conversation Excerpt (RMA request)
Example of Convergent Goal Seeking

-
- goal seeking subfunction
 - ♦ establishes thematic cycle
 - establishes conversation type

C = Customer

R = Service Representative

R: [Company] customer service this is [name] may I help you?
statement

- Information sharing
- ♦ initiates introduction/orientation cycle

question

- Information seeking

C: Good morning. I need to get an RMA number, please.
statement

- information sharing

request

- information-action seeking
- establishes conversation type (RMA request)

R: Okay. Can you tell me, are you an end user or reseller?

question

information seeking

- ♦ initiates thematic cycle (data processing)

C: Reseller.

answer

- information sharing

R: And, where is it you normally purchase your [Company] products from?
question

- information seeking

C: [Distributor's name]

answer

- information sharing
-

Table 6

Conversation Excerpt (Customer complaint)
Example of Divergent Goal Seeking

-
- goal seeking subfunction
 - ◆ establishes thematic cycle
 - establishes conversation type
-
- request – asking for a specific action or activity
 - statement – a declaration or remark
 - question – asking for information
 - answer – returning information

C = Customer

R = Service Representative

C: **Even though the problem might be something else?**
question

- information seeking
- ◆ initiates persuasion/negotiation cycle

R: **Okay. The actual drive will be damaged then?**
question

- information seeking

C: **It is so minimal, so insignificant that I don't see anything . . .**
answer

- information sharing
- Initiates conversation type (customer complaint)

R: **Okay.**

- question
- information seeking (nonverbal)

C: **They pushed it in too much.**
statement

- information sharing

R: **Okay, and it went into the circuit board?**
question

- information seeking

C: **And, then touched, uh, touched the PC board.**
statement

- information sharing
-

Table 6 (cont.)

R:	Okay, sir. [Company] would regard that as being customer damage.
	statement
•	information sharing
C:	Yeah, but I mean I, I, I, uh.
	statement
•	information sharing
R:	Okay. Let me explain this, sir.
	request
•	information-action seeking
C:	It's hard to see, it's even hard to see the little chip off.
	statement
•	information sharing
R:	Okay, let . . .
	request
•	information-action seeking
C:	On the PC board.
	statement
•	information sharing

Examples of the various coded function levels can be found in the transcripts and coding notes in Appendix C. The "conversation type," "thematic cycle," and the "goal seeking" subfunctions are identified in the legends.

Chapter 3

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

This research was organized around three research questions. Each research question will be addressed in turn.

Research Question 1

What are the functions of communication within the customer service, communication channel between customer and customer assistance representative?

As was noted in Chapter 2, this research yielded a three-tiered communication function typology. The three tiers included conversation types, thematic cycles, and goal seeking subfunctions. Each of the functional levels is nested within the other from the top down. The "conversation type" function is defined by conversation content. The "thematic cycle" functions define the specific process and the breakpoints within each conversation type. The distribution and sequence of the "goal seeking" subfunctions define the individual thematic cycles.

Conversation Types

A breakdown of the "conversation types" yielded the following percentages of occurrence: (1) RMA process (35%), (2) requests for information/call

transfer (41%), (3) discrepancy resolution (10%), (4) process status checks/expedites (11%), and (5) address customer complaints (3%). Decisions were made to code "conversation types" in reference to that conversation's most predominant theme. In reality, the "conversation type" sometimes shifts in the course of a conversation. Doing an analysis of the strategic shifts within the conversations would possibly yield different percentages.

Additionally, these percentages are only meant to reflect a static picture of the call types coming over the toll-free line. The period that the data was gathered was relatively calm from a service perspective. There have been other periods of time when the company's performance has not been up to its own expectations or its customers' expectations. During these periods of time, depending on the nature of the problem, the percentages can shift dramatically toward the "customer complaint" conversation type or the "status check/expedite" conversation type. This was the case during a reorganization within the company two years ago when the shipping and receiving area failed to organize effectively for the change. Shipments and receipts of the customers' warranty returns were soon backlogged. This resulted in the service assistance group's inability to either set or meet our customers' expectations adequately. As a result, the group was overrun with customer complaints and status check/expedites.

Thematic Cycles

It is important to note that the thematic cycles often occur at various irregular points within each conversation type. However, there is always an "introduction/orientation," "data processing," and "closure" cycle within the service conversations. It is always the case that all conversation types begin with an "introduction/orientation" cycle and end with a "closure" cycle. However, the "introduction/orientation" cycle can begin again at any point where uncertainty about the goal arises. Conversation 1 in Appendix C provides a good example of this. The conversation starts out as a "call transfer" conversation type and goes through the "introduction/orientation" thematic cycle and into a "data processing" cycle before moving back to an "introduction/orientation" cycle. The "closure" cycle can also start and stop in the face of forgotten, unfinished business. The "data processing" cycle is present in all conversation types and is the most utilized thematic cycle in all service calls. The one exception to this seems to be within the "customer complaint" conversation type. In conversations of this type, the "persuasion/negotiation" theme was enacted through the most lines of text.

The most efficient conversations from a productivity point of view were those conversations moving from "introduction/orientation" through "data processing" to "closure." The small number of thematic shifts seems to indicate a high level of mutual understanding and an efficient flow of information within the dyad.

Goal Seeking Subfunctions

Through the communication process of defining goals and then pursuing and achieving (or not achieving) the goals, the nested goal seeking subfunctions give shape to the thematic cycles within the customer service setting under study.

Convergent goal seeking. The "introduction/orientation," "data processing," and "closure" thematic cycles are defined by the interplay of the "convergent goal seeking" subfunctions. The "introduction/orientation" thematic cycle moves through an information sharing and then seeking sequence of "statements," "questions," and "requests." The "data processing" thematic cycle moves through an information seeking and then sharing sequence of "questions" and "answers." The "closure" thematic cycle moves through an information sharing sequence of "statements." Convergent goal seeking is characterized by a symmetrical information sorting process. Conversation 4 in Appendix C provides a very good example of convergent goal seeking within the thematic cycles. Typically, the service representative is serving the role of guide in these transactions and leading the customer through a series of question and answer interactions toward an agreed upon (thematic cycle) goal. Convergent goal seeking is the predominant theme in all "conversation types" with the exception of the "customer complaint" conversation type.

Divergent goal seeking. Divergent goal seeking is characterized by an asymmetrical (compliance gaining) process. Typically, this process unfolds when, for whatever reason, a customer's expectations or needs are not being met. Conversation 1 in Appendix C provides an excellent example of divergent goal seeking throughout much of the conversation. The "persuasion/negotiation" thematic cycle is defined by the interplay of the "divergent goal seeking" subfunctions and moves through an information sharing sequence of "statements." In the divergent goal seeking process the customer representative is enforcing or explaining policies and procedures.

It is often the case where a conversation shifts from divergent goal seeking to convergent goal seeking. No conversations of this type were part of the sample. The shift is the result of compliance being gained on the part of either the representative or the customer. In many cases, these thematic shifts will be played out across management boundaries as the customer seeks resolution of his or her problem. A case in point is the situation in Conversation 1. That particular customer took his complaint back to the distributor and the distributor has brought the complaint back into the corporation. The issue is now being addressed at a fairly high level.

Research Question 2

What constraints on voice can be identified within the service environment under study?

From the conversations, constraints on voice can be identified within two of the three subcontexts of the service environment: the personal and the cultural. No constraints within the structural subcontext were identified within the conversations. Examples of constraints within this subcontext have been evident in the past and are brought into conversations as a result of phone or data processing systems failures. Within the personal subcontext, two interrelated constraints can be identified. As was outlined earlier, the skills and knowledge required by a service representative are: good listening skills; sound working knowledge of policies, procedures, and systems; perception of self as customer's advocate within the corporation; ability to control the course of a conversation to a positive outcome in a timely manner; and whether or not the employee is empowered to make decisions.

The first constraint at the personal level is evident in Conversation 1. The representative is clearly not listening carefully to what the customer is requesting and, instead, is doggedly enforcing policy. It is well within the representative's power to take this drive back and have it examined for the degree of damage that was caused by the customer. Often, making this sort of gesture diffuses the situation, even if the subsequent findings are not in the customer's favor. In this

conversation, the representative has made a decision to enforce policy rather than seek some resolution on a customer's behalf. There are many factors that can influence a representative's motivation to respond adequately to a customer's requests (voice). One of these is workload. If a representative is feeling overwhelmed with work, he or she will be less likely to engage in what may become a time consuming process. Two additional factors are discussed below.

The second constraint to voice, and this can influence the first over time, is how much access there is to management and what has been communicated over time regarding a representative's ability to gain a decision on a customer's behalf. Each representative has been empowered to make some low-level exceptions to policy. The ability to do expedites (advance replacements) and to extend a customer's warranty by a couple of weeks, when it becomes an issue, are examples of this decision-making capability. If a representative encounters a request that is outside of his or her power to grant and if they decide they want to pursue it, the next level of decision making is the department coordinator. If the coordinator doesn't feel comfortable either making the decision in favor of the customer or engaging in a "persuasion/negotiation" cycle with the customer, then the issue goes to the next level of management. This process is carried to each level until a decision is made and communicated back to the customer.

If access to management is difficult (workload), the representative will become less inclined to act on a customer's behalf when a required decision falls

outside of his or her power to resolve. The tendency, in this case, is for the representative to discourage voice. An example of this can be seen again in Conversation 1 where the manager is unavailable to the customer or the representative. This issue may have been resolved given the greater latitude in decision making available to the manager. Additionally, Table 7 contains an excerpt from Conversation 5 that shows another side of the access problem. In this case, the representative is making assumptions about the manager's point of view in an effort, apparently, to constrain customer voice. This representative is clearly unwilling in this instance to assume the role of customer advocate.

The third constraint to voice, identifiable in the coded conversations, exists in the cultural subcontext and impacts the two constraints just discussed within the personal context. This constraint is the balance of service policies and procedures that exist between the corporation and its customers. Customer voice and a representative's inclination to respond to it can and should be strongly influenced by service policies.

This is the case with the issue that is being explored in Conversations 1, 5, and 8. A current product of the corporation has a propensity to be damaged by "an industry standard" screw. While the corporation sends out installation instructions with its drives, the distributors often fail to pass the instructions through to their resellers. The reseller location is often where the drives are installed into computers and the damage occurs. Currently these drives are

Table 7

Conversation Excerpt (Information/action request, customer complaint, call transfer)
Example of Constraint on Voice

-
- goal seeking subfunction
 - ◆ establishes thematic cycle
 - establishes conversation type

request – asking for a specific action or activity
statement – a declaration or remark
question – asking for information
answer – returning information

C = Customer

R = Service Representative

C: Okay, is, is there any way our customer can call you about this because he is pretty angry because you guys should really make the drives so the screws can be put in....

undertakes compliance gaining strategy
question

- information seeking
- ◆ initiates close cycle (convergent goal seeking)

R: Well, actually the drives, uh, have specifications that the screw lengths are specified.

explains situation
statement

- information sharing
- ◆ re-initiates persuasion/negotiation cycle (divergent goal seeking)

C: Well, they don't come that way from your distributor.

offers rebuttal to explanation
statement

- information sharing

R: Uhm, actually, I, I couldn't, there really isn't anybody else to talk to but the manager and I, I know what her explanation is going to be but certainly, I can give you her name at the, at the, you know. It's either that or Tech Support.

considered as customer damaged and the customer is assessed an out-of-warranty fee. The assumption on the part of management is that the out-of-warranty fee tends to reinforce learning in the channel and reduce the occurrence of customer damage over time. This policy is enforced somewhat rigidly.

There is a balance that must be maintained between acknowledging and responding to a customer's needs and expectations and the corporation's need to control costs. Walking this line falls on the shoulders of the Service Business Department. As was pointed out earlier in this study, the service area does not have a separate profit-and-loss statement. The pressure of profitability is therefore removed from the service manager's decision-making criteria. This has the effect of enabling the organization to be more open to the customer's needs. However, controlling costs is still an issue. Money spent fixing a problem for a customer can ultimately mean money not spent fixing or improving a process. The issue here isn't so much with one drive but rather with setting a precedent of taking this type of customer-damaged drive back, which would decrease the amount of learning in the channel, thereby increasing the number of these drives coming back in the future.

As stated above, the three observed constraints to voice are interrelated. A customer assistance representative can seek to influence a customer away from voice by not listening carefully or by a lack of awareness of some alternative solution. Additionally, a lack of access to management can impair a

representative's ability to gain a decision on a customer's behalf. Finally, service policies can tend to constrain voice. While the customer's voice in Conversation 1 appears to be constrained at the policy level, the representative could have made a decision to examine the drive on the customer's behalf. The customer in this conversation was making the case for an exception on one drive based on degree of damage. As it turned out, the customer ended up taking the complaint to a higher level and challenging the policy overall. As of this writing, the corporation and the distributor are monitoring the effectiveness of a remedy to this problem which is a stenciled warning on the anti-static bag that protects each drive during shipment.

Research Question 3

What relationships, if any, can be identified among exit, voice, and loyalty constructs and the functions of communication?

The relationship between the communication functions and the exit, voice, and loyalty model seems to be linked at the "conversation type" functional level. While it is easy to see that dealing with "customer complaints" relates to voice, it is more difficult to understand the relationship between the other conversation types and Hirschman's model. However, when an RMA is issued, it is clear that a customer has decided to return a failed product rather than purchasing something else. This could be construed as "voice" as opposed to "exit." Status

checks/expedites are also indicative of a choice by a customer of voice over exit. Information requests and discrepancy resolution conversations do not seem to relate to Hirschman's model in any significant way.

It is clear from the conversations and transcripts that customer voice is constantly at play within the customer service channel. This is evidenced most clearly in Conversation 1.

It is interesting to speculate as to whether or not the ability to relate voice to the lower level functions, through the "persuasion/negotiation" conversation type, may have provided the representative with enough awareness to recognize the thematic cycle he was perpetuating through his goal seeking behavior. Such training may have given the representative the awareness to shift the conversation from divergent to convergent goal seeking and find a solution for his customer.

In relation to the conversations, the relationship of the communication functions to "exit" and "loyalty" are not direct. A tendency toward exit is communicated in Conversations 1 and 5. Exit may be viewed as implied during all "persuasion-negotiation" thematic cycles. Further work with service conversations would be required to substantiate "implied" exit. "Loyalty," as well, can only be inferred from the conversations. The strength of this research is in its explication of the role of communication within the voice construct.

Reflections

As can be seen in Table 8, the functional typology proposed by Stohl and Redding (1987) is broken down into five "systems": individual functions, relational functions, instrumental functions, contextual functions, and structural functions.

Table 8

A Sampling of Functional Typologies (Redding & Stohl, 1987)

Structural Functions	orientation
	information
maintenance	control
task	decision
human	tension management
innovative	task opinion
political	task direction
technical	attributions
cultural	evaluation
authority	comparisons
friendship	provides help
information exchange	rationale
task expertise	
status	Relational Functions
regulative	relational control
integrative	message response
	face support
Contextual Functions	interaction management
	feedback
repeat	
contradict	Individual Functions
substitute	assertives
complement	directives
accent	commissives
verify	expressives
	declarations
Instrumental Functions	informatives
integration	affiliatives
pattern maintenancegoal attainment	
adaptation	

According to Stohl and Redding (1987):

Individual functions categorize messages as the embodiment of the intentional, personal goals of the sender. Relational functions categorize messages in terms of how they serve to define the structuring of communication relationships. Instrumental functions categorize messages in terms of how they contribute to or detract from the pragmatic goals involved in achieving a group task.

Contextual functions categorize messages in terms of how they serve to mediate other messages, within a relevant context of interaction. And finally, structural functions categorize messages in terms of how they contribute to a regularly patterned system of communication (p. 461).

It appears that the lowest level of the goal seeking subfunctions:

"questions," "answers," "requests," and "statements" could be broken down further by utilizing the seven functions contained within the individual function level.

This might be a productive avenue of future research since the functions seem to frame a speaker's purposes in a more concise way.

The higher level "goal seeking" subfunctions, information sharing and seeking, seem to fit within the instrumental category. However, an initial analysis of the functions within this category indicates a need for a more grounded approach. These functions appear to be a mix of low level concepts and higher

level categories. The inclusion of the higher level goal seeking subfunctions might provide a point from which to organize this category.

The "thematic cycle" functions fit within the structural category. Once again, the functions within this category seem derived from varying levels of abstraction and would benefit from a grounded analysis over many communication contexts.

The "conversation type" functions do not seem to fit within any of the above categories. It is not clear at this juncture whether this indicates a need for another category within the typology or whether classifying communication as functional at this level has some logical inconsistency. The "conversation type" communication function is a high level abstraction and may only apply to each communication context under study. Further analysis should be undertaken in this area.

The relational category that exists within the Redding and Stohl typology was not coded during this research. As was noted earlier, attempts to code the data into control and compliance categories was aborted due to an inability to fit the categories with the data. Further analysis might be undertaken in this area to expand the typology developed during this study.

Keely and Graham (1991) pointed out that most of the research on Hirschman's framework had been directed toward an organization's ability to adapt rather than in relieving customer dissatisfaction (pp. 352-353). Based on

this research and this researcher's experience as a manager, these two areas of research should be tightly linked. In the organization under study, it is more often than not the voice of the customer seeking satisfaction that is at the root of corporate adaptation. It is often out of recognizing a pattern of voice that adaptation is born. It is the role of this department to assess customer needs and make decisions regarding policies, procedures, and support systems in response to those customer needs. As demonstrated in the transcripts, scores of decisions are made every day regarding the outcome of customer "voice." "Fix the problem and then fix the process" is a phrase that is repeated often within the service environment under study. A decision that relieves customer dissatisfaction (fixes a problem) should be analyzed in terms of whether a policy or process needs to be improved or changed.

The outcomes of customer voice over the years have been incorporated into the corporation's policies, procedures, and systems. When the organization is doing a good job of listening and learning, patterns are recognized and the organization adapts. A good example of this is highlighted by Conversation 3. The turn-around time capability within the service area was born out of a need to resolve day-to-day customer dissatisfaction. Over time, as the pattern for a fast turn-around on drives was recognized, the policies, procedures, and systems were modified to accommodate this need. If, for whatever reason, the turn-around time is increased, customer voice increases.

Systems and mechanisms to facilitate the capturing and quantifying of voice are imperative in today's service environment. Within the technical support organization, a call tracking system has been implemented that allows the representative to systematically collect data regarding each call. This system will be assessed for use in this service environment in the near term.

A limitation of this study was its inability to capture from the conversations the functions of communication associated with adaptation. The linkage between relieving customer dissatisfaction and corporate adaptation is based on this researcher's experience, at all levels of the service organization under study, rather than the findings of this research. The conversations that result in adaptive behavior are often played out across functional boundaries over time. A research design employing communication network analysis and the diffusion of innovation literature would probably be more suitable to the task of capturing the adaptation communication process.

Based more on experience than anything accessible from the tapes, it seems clear to this researcher and manager that voice may be broken down into at least two levels. There is an immediate and active voice that is evident in the transcripts. This has been the voice under study. Additionally, there is a more passive and ongoing voice that is built into the policies and procedures and systems that exist between the corporation and its customers. An example of this is customer reporting. As a large customer's drives move through the repair and

warranty process, data is collected regarding the status of each drive. By agreement, this information is communicated back to the customer and is used to assess the Customer Service Group's turn-around time, and our repair quality. There are often quarterly meetings between the customer and corporation to mutually assess performance each way in the relationship.

This voice is systematized and standardized and follows a set schedule. It does, however, result in the resolution of complaints (problems/opportunities) both between customer and corporation and between corporation and customer. It also often results in a high degree of adaptation from both parties. The closeness of this relationship would seem to produce a high cost of exit and enhanced customer and corporation loyalty.

It is clear from the research that protracted and unsuccessful periods of "divergent goal seeking" do not serve the interests of either customer or corporation effectively. Knowing when to shift into a convergent cycle will be the object of some discussion within the department following the completion of this study.

In the spirit of grounded theory, this typology of communication functions in a service environment should not be thought of as complete. However, the typology seems robust enough to support more quantitative types of research. As outlined earlier, future research should undertake a content analysis of service conversations employing the communication function typology developed during

this research.

Additionally, this typology could be extended and elaborated through the analysis of additional "conversation types" occurring in non-service settings or in service settings outside of manufacturing.

While the research findings must be seen as tentative, pending further empirical analysis and verification, the grounded nature of this research within a specific service environment has illuminated a process and a framework that will inform the service organization that is intent on hearing more clearly the voice of the customer.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Concepts from Open Coding

Concepts from Open Coding

GREETING
POLITENESS
PARTING/CONVERSATIONAL CLOSURE
ASKS FOR IDENTIFICATION
MAKES COMMITMENTS
GIVES INSTRUCTIONS
OFFERS ASSISTANCE

CONFIRMS INFORMATION
GIVES FEEDBACK
CLARIFIES INFORMATION
UNCERTAINTY REDUCTION
ACKNOWLEDGES RECEIPT OF INFORMATION
REINFORCES MESSAGE
REPEATS INFORMATION (REDUNDANCY)
QUALIFIES INFORMATION (UNCERTAINTY REDUCTION)
REVIEWS INFORMATION
ASKS FOR FEEDBACK
ASKS/PROBES FOR DETAILS
EXPLAINS/ANSWERS QUESTIONS

ATTEMPTS PERSUASION
PRESENTS EVIDENCE
ARGUES POINT
DEVELOPS PERSUASIVE ARGUMENT
APPEALS TO FAIRNESS
APPEALS TO LOST REVENUE
APPEALS TO PERSONAL COSTS
APPEALS TO CUSTOMER NEED
PERSUADES
EXPLAINS
REQUESTS
MAKES WISHES KNOWN
ASKS LEADING QUESTIONS

COMMUNICATES CONCERNS
EXPRESSES EXASPERATION (EMOTIONAL)
COMMUNICATES FEELINGS
MAKES COMMENT ABOUT CONVERSATION (META COMMENT)

PROVIDES CUES/CONVERSATIONAL BREAKPOINTS
SETS CONTEXT OF CONVERSATION
SET CONVERSATIONAL BREAKPOINT
ASKS FOR BREAK IN CONVERSATION

APPENDIX B
Conversation Types from Open Coding

Conversation Types from Open Coding

Tape Number 1 = 20 recordings

000 - 099	RMA request
099 - 139	Information request
139 - 167	Information request
167 - 173	Information request
173 - 216	Information request
216 - 248	Information request
248 - 265	RMA request aborted
265 - 301	RMA request
301 - 317	Status check / expedite request
317 - 395	Information request
395 - 434	Discrepancy resolution
434 - 491	RMA request
491 - 511	Status check / expedite request
511 - 609	Information request
609 - 663	RMA request
663 - 693	Information callback
693 - 754	RMA request
754 - 764	Information request
764 - 799	Information request
799 - 942	RMA request

Tape Number 2 = 10 recordings

000 - 176	Information request
176 - 239	Status check
239 - 258	Information request
258 - 301	Call transfer to Manager
301 - 311	Information request
311 - 414	RMA request
414 - 421	Information request
421 - 449	Information request
449 - 638	RMA request
638 - 814	Customer complaint

Tape Number 3 = 8 messages

814 - 825	Call transfer
825 - 839	Information request
839 - 897	RMA request
897 - 908	Information request
908 - 006	RMA request
006 - 074	Information request/complaint/transfer to Manager
074 - 268	RMA request
268 - 292	Information callback

Tape Number 4 = 8 messages

029 - 076	Discrepancy clearing
076 - 140	Information request
140 - 201	RMA request
302 - 365	RMA request
369 - 469	Status check
469 - 543	RMA request
543 - 575	RMA status
575 - 716	RMA request

Tape Number 5 = 4 messages

000 - 063	RMA request
013 - 072	Status check
072 - 080	Information request
080 - 190	RMA request

APPENDIX C

Conversation Transcripts

Conversation 1, tape counter 0-85, coded 11/5/93

Conversation type (customer complaint)

- goal seeking subfunctions
 - ♦ thematic cycle established
 - conversation type established
- request — asking for a specific action or activity
- statement — a declaration or remark
- question — asking for information
- answer — returning information

C = Customer

R = Service Representative

R: [Customer] customer service, this is [name] may I help you?

provides confirmation that customer reached correct place

provides name (personal reference)

statement

- Information sharing
- ♦ initiates introduction/orientation cycle (convergent goal seeking)

provides customer cue to state purpose of call

question

- Information seeking

C: I would like to speak with [manager's name].

request for action

request

- Information seeking
- establishes strategic context (call transfer)

R: Okay, may I say who is calling?

acknowledges receipt of information

question

- information seeking

C: **This is [customer name]**

gives information
answer

- information sharing

R: **And, is she expecting your call?**

qualifies caller
question

- information seeking

C: **Yes. I called before. She was going to call me back.**

answers question affirmative
answer

- information sharing

R: **Okay, just a moment, please. I'll see if she's there. Just a moment, please. (pause)**

initiates transfer
asks for patience
request

- information seeking

R: **Hello, sir?**

greeting on return
initiates conversation
question

- information seeking

C: **Yes.**

acknowledges presence on line
answer

- information sharing

R: Yes, she's not actually responding to her call.

- reports unable to reach
statement
- information sharing

C: Uh, Uh.

- customer acknowledges receipt of information
statement
- information sharing

R: Can I help you in any way?

- provides customer cue to restate purpose of call
question
- information seeking
- ◆ Re-initiates orientation cycle (convergent goal seeking)

C: Well, yeah, um, I hope you can.

- acknowledges and accepts offer of help
answer
- information sharing

R: Can you tell me what it's regarding?

- asks for details
question
- information seeking

C: It's regarding about a disk, uh, uh, 85 meg disk

- gives response
answer
- information sharing

R: Okay.

acknowledges receipt of partial information
statement
question

C: Uh, that I was returning uh, uh, uh, returning because it has uh, uh, many defective sectors in [distributor name], here in Miami.

gives additional information
answer

- information sharing

R: Okay.

acknowledges receipt of partial information
statement

- information sharing, message received

C: Uh, they say they cannot accept it because it has, uh, well minimal broken piece in the PC board.

gives additional information
answer

- information sharing

R: Okay.

acknowledges receipt of partial information
statement

- information sharing, message received

C: Uh, they say they are not accepting, then, because [Customer] won't accept?

gives additional information
answer

- information sharing

R: That's correct.

validates customer's assumptions
statement

- information sharing

C: Even though the problem might be something else?

customer communicates concern
question

- information seeking
- ♦ initiates persuasion/negotiation cycle

R: Okay. The actual drive will be damaged then?

responds, seeks clarification
question

- information seeking

C: No. No, it is not. I mean, it is so minimal. It is so insignificant that I don't see anything tha, tha, that has been affected by it. You see, on the two sides the disk has, you can put two screws on it, and maybe they, they pushed one of the screws too much.

explains/qualifies damage to drive as minimal
answer

- information sharing
- Initiates strategic context (customer complaint) (divergent goal seeking)
- note: compliance gaining themes (minimal damage (customer)) (policy (rep))

R: Okay.

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

- information sharing

C: They pushed it in too much.

repeats information to clarify last sentence
statement

- information sharing

R: Okay, and it went into the circuit board?

clarifies statement to reflect damaged board
question

- information seeking

C: And, then touched, uh, touched the PC board.

qualifies degree of damage
answer

- information sharing

R: Okay, sir. That would be after we, [Customer] would regard that as being customer damage.

explains corporate policy
statement

- information sharing

C: Yeah, but I mean I, I, I, uh.

customer expresses dissatisfaction with answer (nonverbal/emotional)
statement

- information sharing

R: Okay. Let me explain this, sir.

attempts to gain control by explaining
statement

- information sharing

C: It's hard to see, it's even hard to see the little chip off.

continues to complain
statement

- information sharing

R: **Okay, let ...**

attempts to gain control by explaining
statement

- information sharing

C: **On the PC board**

finishes sentence
statement

- information sharing

R: **Okay, let me explain it to you sir, that those drives are then refurbished so we would have to send that out to another customer like that.**

attempts to gain control
attempts to explain reason behind the policy
statement

- information sharing

C: **Yes, okay.**

acknowledges receipt of information
allows representative to have control of conversation
statement

- information sharing

R: **You know, like, uh, uh, if we sent that out to another customer, they would not accept it.**

explains why policy exists
statement

- information sharing

C: **So, what should I do?**

asks clarifying question
question

- information seeking
- ♦ Initiates data processing cycle (convergent goal seeking)

R: Well, it will be an "out of warranty" drive. There will be an "out of warranty" charge on it.

explains policy
answer

- information sharing

C: Even though the problem might be something else? Because what they said, I am a distributor

not acceptable explanation
question

- information seeking
 - ♦ Initiates customer complaint cycle (divergent goal seeking)
- note: Compliance gaining themes (might have failed from something else (customer)) (explains company policy (representative))

R: Okay.

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

C: But my customer said.

Break -- tape ended -- had to switch sides -- missed about 30 seconds of conversation and then there was a pause while representative checked with manager and distributor.

R: Okay. We've just checked with the manager, and we checked with Futuretech, and what can happen is that Futuretech will take that drive back from you but as being "out of warranty", and there will be an "out of warranty" charge on it.

informs customer that drive will be out of warranty
statement

- information sharing

C: I'm, uh, uh, I'm, uh, uh, I'm not exaggerating or anything. It is hard to see it.

- customer restates small damage argument
- information sharing
- note: Compliance gaining theme (minimal damage (customer)) (explains company policy (representative))

R: Okay, sir. That may be but

- acknowledges receipt
- tries to establish control
- statement
- information sharing

C: It's just a little piece there on the board. I mean it's hard to see where they touched it with a screw.

- restates level of damage
- statement
- information sharing

R: Okay, sir. As I explained to you, that board would have to sent out to another customer, and if the board actually fails for another customer, they would not accept it. The board is actually damaged.

- explains why the policy exists
- statement
- information sharing

C: Now, what do they do? They replace it, and they charge me for "out of warranty"?

- inquires about policy
- question
- information seeking
- ♦ Initiates data processing cycle (convergent goal seeking)

R: That's right.

responds that assumption is correct

answer

- information sharing

C: Well, uh, I don't have any other choice do I?

asks question

question

- information seeking

R: Not when the board is damaged like that sir.

responds that assumption is correct

answer

- information sharing

C: No, it's not, I mean, they, they are exaggerating the whole thing. It's, it's not damaged. I will talk to [distributor], but I know [distributor] said that they cannot accept it because you people are returning every one of them "out of warranty".

rejects argument

explains situation

statement

- information sharing
 - ♦ Initiates customer complaint cycle (divergent goal seeking)
- note: Compliance gaining theme (minimal damage (customer)) (explains company policy (representative))

R: That's correct.

acknowledges statement

statement

- information sharing

- C:** ...I have checked that before, and what is going to happen is, customers are very funny, they don't, they don't get warranty on these for little details, they will go buy something else. And then, when you start losing sales, then, you say boy! We got to take these back before it gets too late. I think this is a wrong policy because I saw the people at [distributor]. They were having the same problems. Boy, we have to go to somebody else, and I don't buy two, two or three of them. I buy 500 uh, a month.

explains why drive should be taken back as in-warranty statement

- information sharing
- note: Compliance gaining theme (company will lose business(customer)) (explains company policy (representative))

- R:** Okay. That is our policy. That is ...

restates policy
attempts to gain control of conversation
statement

- information sharing

- C:** I am not a small little customer there. You see, but uh, we send in all the way south. Then, we have to pay all the freight getting them back. And now we find out that you are not accepting them because, I mean, somebody's touched it, uh, th, th, that's not fair. That's not right. I understand when a board has been altered. That I understand, but this one, like the one I have in my hand, maybe I will give it to you, and you won't find what they found. Okay?

explains why policy is unacceptable
statement

- information sharing
- note: Compliance gaining theme (reviews arguments, appeals to unfairness of situation (customer)) (explains company policy (representative))

- R:** Okay.

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

- information sharing

C: How bad, how silly this whole thing is. It's hard to find it.

makes comment about situation (meta comment)
statement

- information sharing

R: Okay. But it could present problems later on. That is what I am trying to express to you.

acknowledges receipt of information
repeats reason for policy
statement

- information sharing

C: I, I, that's what I was talking to, I was going to talk to [name], the Manager.

restates reason for call
statement

- information sharing

R: Okay.

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

- information sharing
- information seeking (nonverbal)

C: Because, because, uh, I mean, uh, uh, all you, uh, tell her. You will find out. Tell your people there. They will find out and go to another brand and then it will be too late because they are not going to accept the, the RMA's, and we are not interested in that. Because I will lose 177 dollars here. There's no way. I have to replace it myself. You see what I mean?

restates dissatisfaction
explains why he will go elsewhere (cost)
statement

- information sharing
- note: Compliance gaining theme (appeals to his costs and lose of business for [Customer] (customer)) (explains company policy (representative))

R: **Okay, that's understandable, sir. But th, the fact of the matter is that the drive is actually damaged because, you did say that it was damaged.**

acknowledges receipt of message
restates that issue is damaged drive
statement

- information sharing

C: **Okay, okay, okay. Well, what is your name?**

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

- information sharing, message received

asks for name
question

- information seeking
- ♦ Initiates close cycle (convergent goal seeking)

R: **My name is [name].**

gives name
answer

- information sharing

C: **Okay, [name]. Okay, um, will you tell this to [manager's name]?**

asks that information be passed on to a manager
request for action
request

- information/action-seeking

R: **I will indeed, sir.**

request for action accepted
answer

- information sharing

C: I will talk to the people at [distributor] they know me. They know what kind of customer I am, and if they don't solve me this problem, I have to move to another brand because, yeah, I cannot take it. No way. No way. When they, when I get it back from my customers, I mean, I, I, I feel. I understand your problem when they really do something to the disk, but this little cases, no way, no way. Okay?

reviews issues

statement

- information sharing

R: Okay, sir. I'll convey that message to [manager's name].

acknowledges request

complies with request

statement

- information sharing

C: Okay, thank you.

acknowledges receipt of information

statement

- information sharing

R: You're welcome. Bye, bye.

reciprocates positive close

statement

- information sharing

C: Bye, bye.

close

statement

- information sharing

Conversation 2, tape counter 85-98, coded 11/3/93

Conversation type (RMA request, aborted)

- goal seeking subfunctions
- ♦ thematic cycle established
- conversation type established

request – asking for a specific action or activity
 statement – a declaration or remark
 question – asking for information
 answer – returning information

C = Customer

R = Service Representative

R: [Customer] customer service this is [name] may I help you?

provides confirmation that customer reached correct place

provides name (personal reference)

statement

- Information sharing
- ♦ initiates introduction/orientation cycle (convergent goal seeking)

provides customer cue to state purpose of call

question

- Information seeking

C: I would like to send a drive in for repair.

makes request for service

request

- information/action-seeking
- conversation type established

R: Okay. Who did you purchase this unit from?

asks qualifying question

question

- information seeking
- ♦ initiates data process cycle

C: Uhm. I don't know. This, I have a customer of mine that I do service work for. They have a Hardcard in their computer.

answers in the negative
answer

- information sharing
- ♦ re-initiates orientation cycle

explains situation
statement

- information sharing

R: OK. Do you resell foreign products?

qualifying question
question

- information seeking

C: Yes we do.

answers in the affirmative
statement

- information sharing

R: And who do you purchase from to resell that product?

qualifying question
question

- information seeking

C: I have no idea.

answers in the negative
answer

- information sharing

R: Okay, in order to qualify you to uhm, in order for me to authorize an RA on this line, I do need to qualify you as an authorized dealer, and I need to do so by knowing who you purchase your products from. Is there any way you can get that real quick?

explains why qualification is necessary
statement

- information sharing

asks question to initiate action on part of customer
request

- information/action-seeking

C: Mmm. No. You see, I'm in a, my headquarters is in Massachusetts.

explains situation/tries to clarify
answer

- information sharing

R: What's the name of your company?

asks qualifying question
question

- information seeking

C: [company name]

answers question
answer

- information sharing

R: Okay, no that doesn't ring a bell. Do you have an account number?

responds to answer in the negative
statement

- information sharing, message received

asks qualifying question
question

- information seeking

C: No, uh, I'm in service. I don't have any of that stuff. What if, if, if I was just some guy off the street that wanted a hard drive fixed, and he doesn't have an account number, he's not allowed to get it fixed?

expresses that all information is unavailable
 expresses frustration with process (nonverbal)
 answer

- information sharing, message received

customer takes initiative
 asks leading question
 question

- information seeking

R: Sir, now you need to call [phone number]

gives customer another number to call
 answer

- information sharing

C: Okay. Bye.

acknowledges receipt of information
 statement

- information sharing

closes conversation
 statement

- information sharing
- ♦ initiates close cycle

R: Thank you.

closes termination cycle
 statement

- information sharing

Conversation 3, Tape counter 132-146, Coded as of 11/2/93
 Conversation type (RMA status)

- goal seeking subfunctions
- ♦ thematic cycle established
- conversation type established

request – asking for a specific action or activity
 statement – a declaration or remark
 question – asking for information
 answer – returning information

C = Customer

R = Service Representative

R: [Customer] customer service this is [name] may I help you?

provides confirmation that customer reached correct place
 statement

- Information sharing
- ♦ initiates introduction/orientation cycle

provides customer cue to state purpose of call
 provides name (personal reference)

- Information seeking

C: Hi, this is [name] with [distributor name] in Denver.

introduces herself and the distributor she is representing
 continues introduction/orientation cycle
 statement

- information sharing

R: How are you today?

inquires as to well being
 question

- information seeking (emotional)

C: Good, and how are you?

responds in the affirmative
continues introduction/orientation cycle (redundant)
statement

- information sharing (emotional)

inquires as to well being
continues introduction/orientation cycle (redundant)
question

- information seeking (emotional)

R: Fine.

responds in the affirmative
continues introduction/orientation cycle (redundant)
statement

- information sharing (emotional)

C: We sent in a return for a company called [name], uhm, awhile back, and, uhm, my product manager called to expedite this on Monday and was told that it was shipping out today.

explains reason for call
statement

- information sharing

R: Um, Okay.

indicates receipt of message
statement
information sharing

C: And I need to see if it's still scheduled to ship today, and if so, if there is any way we can send if UPS Red.

continues to explain reason for call
question

- information seeking
- initiates strategic context (process status checks/expedites)

R: Okay, what is the RMA number?

acknowledges receipt of message
statement

- information sharing

requests RMA tracking number
question

- information seeking
- ♦ initiates data processing cycle (convergent goal seeking)

C: 533452.

gives RMA tracking number
statement

- information sharing

R: Okay. Just a minute, and I'll check the status of it.

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

- information sharing

asks customer to wait while status is checked
statement

- information sharing

C: Thank you.

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

- information sharing

R: Okay. That's code "R", right.

- announces return statement
- information sharing
- asks qualifying question
- question
- information seeking

C: Uhm, hmm.

- acknowledges receipt of message statement (nonverbal)
- information sharing

R: Okay. It shipped on the 16th. Okay.

- gives ship date of product statement
- information sharing

C: Shipped on the 16th.

- repeats information question
- information seeking

R: The 16th. That was Monday.

- repeats shipment date and day of the week statement
- information sharing

C: And, uh

- begins to ask for additional information question (nonverbal)
- information seeking

R: Fed X economy. That's two day delivery.

provides information
answer

- information sharing

C: Oh, so they should receive it today.

seeks clarification regarding delivery date
question

- information seeking

R: Today.

reinforces message
answer

- information sharing

C: Okay, uhm, great. Well, thank you for your help. You're fast.

acknowledges receipt of information
gives compliment (personal)
statement

- information sharing
- ♦ initiates close cycle (convergent goal seeking)

R: You're welcome.

accepts compliment
continues closing cycle
statement

- information sharing

C: All right, Thank you. Bye.

signals satisfactory end of interaction
statement

- information sharing

R: Bye.

signals end of interaction
statement

- information sharing

Conversation 4, tape counter 186 - 221, coded as of 11/12/93
 Conversation type (issue RMA)

- goal seeking subfunctions
 - ♦ thematic cycle established
 - conversation type established
-
- request – asking for a specific action or activity
 - statement – a declaration or remark
 - question – asking for information
 - answer – returning information

C = Customer

R = Service Representative

R: [Customer] customer service this is [name] may I help you?

- provides confirmation that customer reached correct place
 - Information sharing
 - ♦ initiates introduction/orientation cycle
-
- provides customer cue to state purpose of call
 - provides name (personal reference)
 - statement
 - Information seeking

C: Good morning. I need to get an RMA number, please.

- greets rep
 - information sharing
-
- makes request for service
 - request
 - information/action-sharing
 - establishes correction type (RMA request)

R: Okay. Can you tell me, are you an end user or reseller?

- acknowledges request
statement
- information sharing
- asks qualifying question
question
- information seeking
- ♦ initiates thematic cycle (data processing)

C: Reseller.

- answers question
answer
- information sharing

R: And, where is it you normally purchase your [Customer] products from?

- asks qualifying question
question
- information seeking

C: [Distributor's name]

- answers question
provides information
answer
- information sharing

R: Okay, just a moment please. And can I have your company name?

- acknowledges receipt of information
excuses for delay
statement
- information sharing
asks question
question
- information seeking

C: [name of company] [customer spells name]

gives name

answer

- information sharing

spells name

statement

- information sharing

R: And should I return the drive to your attention?

asks question

question

- information seeking

C: Yes, please.

answers question

answer

- information sharing

R: And your name please.

asks question

question

- information seeking

C: [caller's name]

answers question

answer

- information sharing

R: And the address please

asks question

question

information seeking

C: [address]

answers question
answer

- information sharing

R: Is there a suite number?

asks question
question

- information seeking

C: No, there's not.

answers question
answer

- information sharing

R: And the city and state please.

answers question
answer

- information seeking

C: [city and state names]

answers question
answer

- information sharing

R: And your zip code?

asks question
question

- information seeking

C: [zip code]

answers question
answer

- information sharing

R: And, may I have your area code and phone number please?

- asks question
- question
- information seeking

C: [area code and phone number]

- answers question
- answer
- information sharing

R: And, can you tell me if this drive is under warranty?

- asks question
- question
- information seeking

C: I have two, and they're both in warranty.

- answers question
- answer
- information sharing
- gives additional information
- statement
- information sharing

R: Okay. Can I have the first serial number please?

- acknowledges receipt of information
- statement
- information sharing
- asks question
- question
- information seeking

C: It is 166311684023.

answers question
answer

- information sharing

R: And the problem with this drive?

asks question
question

- information seeking

C: It won't format.

answers question
answer

- information sharing

R: And the second serial number?

asks question
question

- information seeking

C: 142305621759.

answers question
answer

- information sharing

R: And the problem with this drive?

asks question
question

- information seeking

C: This one also won't format.

answers question
answer

- information sharing

R: Okay. And have you got our shipping instructions.

asks question

question

- information sorting

C: I believe so.

answers question

answer

- information sharing

R: Okay.

acknowledges receipt of information

statement

information sharing

C: Make sure I have your, you're at [address]?

asks question

question

- information seeking

R: Okay. We've moved. Let me update you there. Our new address is [gives address].

answers question

answer

- information sharing

C: Okay.

acknowledges receipt of information

statement

- information sharing

R: And the city is [city, state, and zip code], and if you send the drives back in anti-static bags, make sure they are securely packaged so they don't actually hit off one another.

- provides remainder of address
- provides packaging information
- information sharing

C: Okay.

- acknowledges receipt of information
- statement
- information sharing

R: And, if you can insert a packing slip with your company name, address, phone number and the serial number from the drive.

- continues to provide packaging information
- statement
- information sharing

C: Okay.

- acknowledges receipt of information
- statement
- information sharing

R: And it's most important that you just send the drives alone. You keep all cables, adapters and manuals.

- continues to provide packaging information
- statement
- information sharing

C: Okay.

- acknowledges receipt of information
- statement
- information sharing

R: Please ship them attention: RA #U45251D.

provides last information for shipping
statement

- information sharing

C: U45251D.

repeats information
question (nonverbal)

- information seeking

R: That's it.

acknowledges receipt of correct information
statement

- information sharing
- ♦ initiates thematic cycle (closing)

C: Wonderful. Thank you very much.

acknowledges positive interaction
thanks rep
statement

- information sharing

R: You're welcome.

acknowledges positive interaction
accepts thanks
statement

- information sharing

C: Bye, bye.

continues close
statement

- information sharing

R: Bye, bye.

- close
- statement
- information sharing

Conversation 5, tape counter 186 - 221, coded as of 11/12/93

Conversation type (information request, request for action, customer complaint, call transfer)

- goal seeking subfunctions
 - ♦ thematic cycle established
 - conversation type established
- request – asking for a specific action or activity
 - statement – a declaration or remark
 - question – asking for information
 - answer – returning information

C = Customer

R = Service Representative

R: [Customer] customer service, this is [name] may I help you?

- provides confirmation that customer reached correct place
- provides name (personal)
- Information sharing
- ♦ Initiates introduction/orientation theme (convergent goal seeking)
- provides customer cue to state purpose of call
- question
- Information seeking

C: Yeah, this is [name], again, from [name of company]in Michigan.

- gives introduction
- answer
- information sharing

R: Uh, huh.

- acknowledges receipt of information
- statement (nonverbal)
- information sharing

C: I was talking with my, with my supervisor here, and he was wondering if there's some way we can just order the circuit board and, and you know, replace that ourselves.

request for action
question

- information seeking
- ♦ initiates persuasion/negotiation cycle (divergent goal seeking)
- initiates strategic context (request for action)

R: Uh, No. We don't sell piece parts, and we never have. Basically, yeah, and nobody is authorized to take apart a [Customer] product and uh...

explains company policy
statement

- information sharing

C: Yeah, we realize this warranty is voided.

acknowledges receipt of information
accepts correctness of information
statement

- information sharing

R: Yeah.

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

- information sharing

C: He's probably more concerned about getting the hard drive running than he is about, you know...

explains his customer's situation
statement

- information sharing

R: Voiding the warranty at this point. Yeah, well, it's voided. It's a done deal.

confirms that warranty is voided
statement

- information sharing

C: Right.

acknowledges / confirms information
statement

- information sharing

R: No, we don't. We don't have any uhh mechanisms for that. We don't have any parts. We wouldn't be able to do that.

explains reasons for policy
statement

- information sharing

C: Yeah, I think he just thought it seems awfully expensive cause we can buy a brand new one through our distributor for under \$175.00.

explains that cost of out-of-warranty unit is high
statement

- information sharing

R: Yeah, unfortunately, repair cost is high right now, and there is a lot of reason for that.

explains high repair costs
statement

- information sharing

C: The repair costs?

asks for repeat of information
question

- information seeking

R: Yeah, uh, huh. That's what we call out of warranty repair costs.

explains

answer

- information sharing

C: Okay, can you hang on just a minute?

asks for pause

question

- information seeking

R: Um, hmmm (long pause of music).

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

- information sharing

C: Okay, is, is there any way our customer can call you about this because he is pretty angry because you guys should really make the drives so the screws can be put in....

undertakes compliance gaining strategy
question

- information seeking
- ♦ initiates close cycle (convergent goal seeking)

R: Well, actually the drives, uh, have specifications that the screw lengths are specified.

explains situation
statement

- information sharing
- ♦ re-initiates persuasion/negotiation cycle (divergent goal seeking)

C: Well, they don't come that way from your distributor.

offers rebuttal to explanation
statement

- information sharing

R: Uhm, actually, I, I couldn't, there really isn't anybody else to talk to but the manager and I, I know what her explanation is going to be but certainly, I can give you her name at the, at the, you know. It's either that or Tech Support

offers opportunity to speak with manager
statement

- information sharing
- ♦ initiates close cycle (convergent goal seeking)

C: There are screws specified, and we don't receive them from your distributor. Somehow, they're getting lost in the shuffle.

continues to offer rebuttal to explanation
statement

- information sharing
- ♦ re-initiates persuasion/negotiation cycle (divergent goal seeking)

R: Okay.

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

- information sharing

C: Now, if we buy them by five or ten or whatever, you know, we're not getting any specifications with your drives.

continues to offer rebuttal to explanation
statement

- information sharing

R: Well, I don't know about that. I, I know that they are supposed to be sending out documentation with everything they send, so, you're more than welcome to speak to the manager, you know.

explains what should be happening
offers opportunity to speak with manager
question

- information sharing
- ♦ re-initiates close cycle (convergent goal seeking)

C: Sure. I guess.

accepts offer
statement

- information sharing

R: Uh, hold on just a moment.

acknowledges transfer to manager
statement

- information sharing

Conversation 6, tape counter 221 - 237, coded as of 11/13/93
 Conversation type (discrepancy resolution)

- goal seeking subfunctions
 - ♦ thematic cycle established
 - conversation type established
-
- request – asking for a specific action or activity
 - statement – a declaration or remark
 - question – asking for information
 - answer – returning information

C = Customer

R = Customer Representative

R: [Customer] customer service, this is [name] may I help you?

provides confirmation that customer reached correct place

provides name (personal)

statement

- Information sharing
- ♦ Initiates introduction/orientation cycle (convergent goal seeking)

provides customer cue to state purpose of call

question

Information seeking

C: Hello?

customer confirms connection

question (nonverbal)

- information seeking

R: Yes.

confirms that customer has made connection

statement

- information sharing

C: Uh, Yes, uhm, I had arranged an RMA with, uh, [name].

states purpose of call
statement

- information sharing

R: Uh, Huh.

acknowledges receipt of partial information
statement

- information sharing

C: Is she available?

asks to speak with another representative
question

- information seeking
- initiates strategic context (call transfer)

R: Uh, no. She is at lunch.

gives information
statement

- information sharing

C: Uh, if I give you the RMA number can you uh, can you trace something down for me?

asks for information
question

- information seeking
- initiates strategic context (process status check)

R: What are you trying to trace?

seeks clarification
question

- information seeking

C: Well, not actually tracing. I had, she had a question about, uh, one of the serial numbers I gave her. I told her it was a new drive and, uh, she told me that I had to produce an invoice stating that..

explains situation

answer

- information sharing
- initiates strategic context (discrepancy resolution)

R: Uh, huh.

acknowledges receipt of partial information
statement

- information sharing

C: because they were showing that it was in warranty or something.

continues transfer of information
statement

- information sharing

R: Uh, huh.

acknowledges receipt of partial information
statement

- information sharing

C: And, I have my invoice and I want to FAX it over.

completes transfer of information
statement

- information sharing
- ♦ initiates data processing cycle (convergent goal seeking)

R: Okay.

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

- information sharing

C: To be sure I've got replacement drive, well, got a new drive instead of a refurb drive.

restates purpose of call to clarify
statement

- information sharing

R: Okay. So, you need to just FAX the invoice over to [name's] attention then?

gives instructions
statement

- information sharing

C: Okay. Okay, is it [phone number]?

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

- information sharing

attempts to confirm information
question

- information seeking

R: 50. 3250.

gives correct information
statement

- information sharing

C: 3250.

repeats correct information
statement

- information sharing

R: Ah, huh.

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

- information sharing

C: Okay.

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

- information sharing

R: Yeah.

indicates that customer can continue to speak
statement

- information sharing

C: Okay, I'm going to FAX this over and uh...

informs representative of next step
statement

- information sharing

wonders what next step will be
question (nonverbal)

- information seeking

R: Yes. To her attention because if she's working on something specific for you, you need to give all the data to her.

gives additional required information
statement

- information sharing

C: Okay.

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

- information sharing

R: Okay. Okayyyy?

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

- information sharing
- ♦ initiates close cycle (convergent goal seeking)

C: Okay. Thank you much.

acknowledges receipt of information
continues close cycle
statement

- information sharing

R: Sure. Bye. Bye.

acknowledges receipt of information
finishes close cycle
statement

- information sharing

Conversation 7, tape counter 238 - 243, coded as of 11/12/93
 Conversation type (request for information)

- goal seeking subfunctions
 - ◆ thematic cycle established
 - conversation type established
- request – asking for a specific action or activity
 - statement – a declaration or remark
 - question – asking for information
 - answer – returning information

C = Customer

R = Customer Representative

R: [Customer] customer service, this is [name], may I help you?

provides confirmation that customer reached correct place
 provides name (personal)

- Information sharing (reduces uncertainty)
- ◆ Initiates introduction/orientation cycle (convergent goal seeking)

provides customer cue to state purpose of call
 question

- Information seeking

C: I am trying to find out if you sell any drives for the PS2 anymore. I called [distributor's name], and he said you discontinued it?

asks question
 question

- information seeking
- initiates strategic context (request for information)

R: Okay. What you need to do sir is call our presales team. They have all our up-to-date information on all our drives.

gives information
 answer

- information sharing
- ◆ initiates data processing cycle (convergent goal seeking)

C: Okay.

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

- information sharing

R: And their number [gives phone number].

gives information
statement

- information sharing

C: Okay, thank you.

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

- information sharing
- ♦ initiates close cycle

R: You're welcome. Bye, Bye.

closing statement
statement

- information sharing

Conversation 8, tape counter 244 - 265, coded as of 11/13/93

Conversation type (request for information/action)

- goal seeking subfunctions
 - ♦ thematic cycle established
 - conversation type established
-
- request – asking for a specific action or activity
 - statement – a declaration or remark
 - question – asking for information
 - answer – returning information

C = Customer

R = Customer Representative

R: [Customer] customer service, this is [name], may I help you?

- provides confirmation that customer reached correct place
- provides name (personal)
- Information
- ♦ Initiates introduction/orientation cycle (convergent goal seeking)

- provides customer cue to state purpose of call
- question
- Information seeking

C: Yes, I contacted, I contacted you once before with Lisa.

- acknowledges receipt of information
- begins to explain reason for call
- statement
- information sharing

R: Okay.

- acknowledges receipt of partial information
- statement
- information sharing

C: Uhm, We're in, well, we're a wholesale distributor, but we don't buy our hard drives directly from you.

continues to explain reason for call
statement

- information sharing

R: Okay. Can you tell me where you buy them from?

acknowledges receipt of information
asks clarifying question
question

- information seeking

C: Uhm, we bought them from [name of distributor] out of I think it's Miami, Florida.

begins to respond to question
answer

- information sharing

R: Okay.

acknowledges receipt of partial information
statement

- information sharing

C: Not sure. I'm not sure. It may be California.

uncertainty assertion
statement

- information sharing

R: Okay.

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

- information sharing

C: I can look it up. Uh, [name of distributor], uh, yeah, it's Miami, Florida. But anyway, we've got two drives that I know they're out of warranty because the logic boards are burnt.

gives additional information
statement

- information sharing

R: Okay.

acknowledges receipt of partial information
statement

- information sharing

C: Where someone put a screw in too far. Is there, we told our customers we would try to contact you to find out if there was any way to replace a logic board.

asks for information
question

- information seeking
- initiates strategic context (request for action)

R: There isn't, sir. You'd have to replace the whole drive.

gives information
answer

- information sharing
- ◆ initiates data processing cycle (convergent goal seeking)

C: You have to replace the whole drive?

confirms information
question

- information seeking

R: Yeah.

acknowledges positive confirmation
statement

- information sharing

C: Okay. That's what we wanted to check because we weren't sure. We figured there would be no way we could do anything about it, but we told our customer we'd offer.

accepts policy, explains reason for request
statement

- information sharing
- ♦ initiates close cycle

R: Okay.

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

- information sharing

C: Okay, uhm. I need for future reference, we normally send our drives back to [name of distributor].

asks for additional information
statement

- information sharing
- initiates strategic context (request for action)

R: That's correct, yeah.

gives affirmative reply
statement

- information sharing

C: We can't send them directly to you, can we?

request for action
question

- information seeking

R: Hmm. Nnn. No you can't. We're contracted with distributor's name] just to take the drive and sell them back through them, so you must go back through [distributor's name].

gives response in the negative statement

- information sharing
- ♦ initiates data processing cycle

C: Okay. What we, we tried to it, we deal directly with [competitor's name] and [competitor's name], and we're trying to streamline all of our returns by going back to the manufacturer if possible, but okay, that's what I wanted to know.

acknowledges receipt of information
accepts negative reply
statement

- information sharing

R: Okay, sir.

acknowledges receipt of information
statement

- information sharing

C: Okay. I thank you.

acknowledges receipt of information
acknowledges positive transaction
statement

- information sharing
- ♦ initiates close cycle (convergent goal seeking)

R: You're welcome.

acknowledges positive transaction
continues close cycle
statement

- information sharing

C: Bye.

- continues close cycle
statement
- information sharing

R: Bye.

- close
statement
- information sharing