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

a The customer services department of a company makes a complaint.

b A new company plans to make it less difficult to complain.

c A company complains about start-ups' customer services.

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

By Malcolm Moore

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

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

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

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

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

Mr Schneider said Service planned eventually to make money by charging either consumers or the offending companies. 'My goal is to go to these companies and say not only are we saving you money by having people not call your call centre but we are 3 _____ by preventing the angry X storm or the one-star TripAdvisor review.'

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

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

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

a social media sites

b saving your branding

c cancellations and lost bags

d during the holiday period

e before making a complaint

f fill in a form

LIVEWORKSHEETS

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

1 If you are **waiting on hold**, you are likely to be on the _____

a phone. b internet.

2 If you **rip off** someone, you _____ their time, money or ideas.

a buy b take

3 When a person is **matter-of-fact**, they are calm and _____

a unemotional. b bored.

4 The lion's share of something is the _____ part.

a largest b smallest

5 X storm and the one-star TripAdvisor review both refer to _____ feedback online.

a positive b negative

6 When someone **vents their rage**, they express a strong or _____ emotion and say or write what they are thinking at that moment.

a angry b excited

7 Service, which has raised almost $4 million in **seed funding**…

a money invested in a new business at an early stage to help it grow.

b money a successful company pays to its shareholders every year.

8 It then tries to **negotiate a settlement** with the poorly performing company.

a move a company to a new location.

b discuss and reach an agreement to resolve a problem or dispute.

9 Customers are often not the most **articulate**.

a able to express thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively.

b able to speak several foreign languages fluently.

10 Travel **makes up** half our cases.

a to form, constitute, or account for something.

b to invent a story that is not true.

11 Service planned eventually to make money by charging either consumers or the **offending companies.**

a companies that have done something wrong or provided poor service.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

b companies that have recently changed their company name.

12 A number of failed technology start-ups have in the past attempted to **name and shame** bad customer service.

a publicly identify and criticize a person or company for bad behaviour.

b give a company a new name to improve its reputation.

13 Our **eventual** goal is to have the software do most of the work.

a happening immediately.

b happening or achieved in the end, after some time.

14 Now we **have mapped** most large companies.

a have identified, analysed, and recorded information about them systematically.

b have moved the companies to different places on a map.

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

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

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

a Service explains the problem to the company.

b The customer gets the money.

c The customer completes a form online.

d Service and the company negotiate and agree an amount.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

1 **Complete the extracts from four customer service calls with the correct form of the verbs in brackets.**

Call A

A: I'm afraid I forgot [1]_____ (pay) my credit card bill last month.

B: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. Have you tried [2]_____ (create) an alarm on your phone? It will help [3]_____ (remind) you about the bill every month.

A: Thanks. That's a good suggestion. But would you mind [4]_____ (cancel) the late fee this time? I'm a good customer and I usually pay on time.

Call B

A: I'm not satisfied with this phone. It keeps [1]_____ (drop) calls and I'm having other problems with it, too.

B: Oh, I am sorry; that's disappointing. If you want [2]_____ (return) it, I suggest [3]_____ (send) it back by special delivery. We can offer you a refund.

A: OK, but I don't want [4]_____ (pay) the shipping costs. After all, it's not my fault the quality of the phone is poor.

Call C

A: I'm sorry to hear the item hasn't arrived yet. Would you like [1]_____ (speak) to someone in customer service?

B: No, I'd prefer [2]_____ (get) a call back from them. I really don't enjoy [3]_____ (wait) on hold. It always takes ages!

A: I'm so sorry, our agents can't make calls. If you don't have time right now, I recommend [4]_____ (try) early in the morning. It's usually quiet then.

Call D

A: I regret [1]_____ (order) this item in the summer. It isn't suitable, and I'd like [2]_____ (request) a full refund.

B: I'm afraid items need [3]_____ (be) returned within thirty days for refunds. You've had this item for three months.

A: Yes, but as I've just finished [4]_____ (explain) to your colleague, I've been ill.

2 **Work in pairs. Look at the extracts in Exercise 1 again. We don't know whether the customers got what they wanted. What do you think the companies decided to do? Discuss each call with your partner and make notes. Remember to use the *to*-infinitive or *-ing* with the correct verbs.**

A _____

_____

B _____

_____

C _____

_____

D _____

_____

LIVEWORKSHEETS

3 **Use your notes from Exercise 2 to continue each call from Exercise 1. Decide what the customer and the customer service agent said next. Read the example for Call A and then roleplay at least two new lines of dialogue for Calls B, C and D. Take turns to be the customer and customer service agent.**

Call A, continued

B: Yes, I can see that you're a very good customer. Let me try to get rid of this fee for you ... OK, I've managed to cancel it.

A: Thank you so much for agreeing to do that! I'll try setting a reminder on my phone now.

Generating and presenting ideas

Lead-in

1 **Work in small groups and discuss the questions. Then share your ideas with the class.**

1 Why is it important for businesses to be good at generating ideas?
2 Whose responsibility is it to generate ideas: managers, staff or both?

Listening

2A 7.04 **A group of employees are attending a staff training day on customer service. Listen to the manager introducing the session and answer the questions.**

1 According to the manager, when do we have ideas?
2 What happens to most ideas? Why?
3 What does the manager want to do in this meeting? Why?
4 What must the group come up with?

LIVEWORKSHEETS

B **Complete the text using the words in the box. Then listen again to check.**

enough	generate	lose	share	ways

So I want to hear your ideas about how we can [1]_____ more ideas, and how we can [2]_____ them with each other. But it's not [3]_____ just to have good ideas. What I want to do in this session is to brainstorm [4]_____ we can capture those ideas to make sure we don't [5]_____ them.

3 **Work in small groups. Discuss ways to generate ideas and how to capture them and not lose them. Then discuss your ideas as a class.**

4A 7.05 **Listen to six people presenting their team's ideas. Which techniques (if any) have you already discussed?**

B **Listen again. Tick the techniques which talk about ways to capture or record ideas.**

1 brainstorm
2 use a notebook/smartphone
3 mind mapping
4 roleplay
5 visualisation
6 play devil's advocate

5A **Match the beginnings (1–10) with the endings (a–j) to make sentences from the audio.**

1 We think **the first thing we need to do is** to
2 **So we should** brainstorm
3 **We suggest everyone needs to** get into
4 **Another way is to** use
5 The thing is, it's got to be easy,
6 Our team would like to push the idea of
7 **Basically,** starting with
8 **So it's a bit like**
9 **Our team came up with** the idea
10 What we want to do is make sure that

a a word or phrase, and then simply writing down all the ideas that come from that phrase.
b make lists.
c we really think through the issues.
d the habit of carrying a small notebook.
e the recorders on our smartphones.
f as many ideas as possible, and write them all down.
g mind mapping.
h otherwise we won't do it.
i brainstorming, which the first group mentioned.
j of visualisation.

B **Look at the words in bold in the sentences in Exercise 5A. Which phrases introduce the idea, and which can be used to add a comment or explanation?**

6 **Here are some opening statements about customer service. Use the phrases in Exercise 5 to add your own comments or explanations.**

1 We think that it is important to have competent staff.
2 The first thing we need to do is to make sure that we offer a premium service.
3 We like the idea of giving the customer VIP treatment.
4 Our team would like to push the importance of good communication.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

7A You are going to discuss ideas to solve a problem or challenge which is common to everybody. Choose one of the topics in the box, or use your own ideas.

TASK

1. You have too much work.
2. You have no idea about future jobs.
3. You don't have enough money.
4. Your classes are too large.
5. You have a poor wifi connection.

B Work in small groups. Choose two techniques which you can use to generate ideas to deal with your problem or challenge. The techniques don't have to come from this unit, but it's important that everybody in the group understands how they work.

Introducing a topic

We often use a phrase with its own stress pattern to introduce a topic, and we often pause before we go on to say something about the topic.

1 P7.03 **Listen to these examples and repeat.**

1. In today's meeting, I want us to brainstorm ways of capturing ideas.
2. Mind-mapping is a kind of brainstorming.

2 **Work in pairs. Student A asks one of the questions (1–4), and Student B answers (a–d), putting the heaviest stress on the underlined words.**

1. What's the most important thing?
2. Whose responsibility is it to generate ideas?
3. What do your team think?
4. What happens to all our good ideas?

a. We think the important thing is to have competent staff.
b. Generating ideas is everybody's responsibility.
c. Our team would like to push the importance of good communication.
d. Most of the time, the good ideas we have simply disappear.

3 P7.04 **Listen and practise again.**

LIVEWORKSHEETS

2 **Read the suggestions between colleagues discussing improving their English. Put the words in the correct order to complete the sentences.**

The training is over for another year. How are we going to keep improving our English?

1 _____
(do / need / the / thing / we / first / to) is to have an English homepage on our computers.

2 _____
(the / of / idea / came / our / up / team / with) listening to the news every day in English. Just ten minutes of listening is useful.

3 _____
(of / idea / like / team / would / to / push / the / our) having lunch in English at least twice a week.

4 _____
(suggest / everyone / to / needs / we) read a short story every week and discuss it.

They are all good ideas. 5 _____
(is / be / thing / to / it's / got / the) easy.

LIVEWORKSHEETS