

THE MYSTERIOUS CASE OF TICKET X

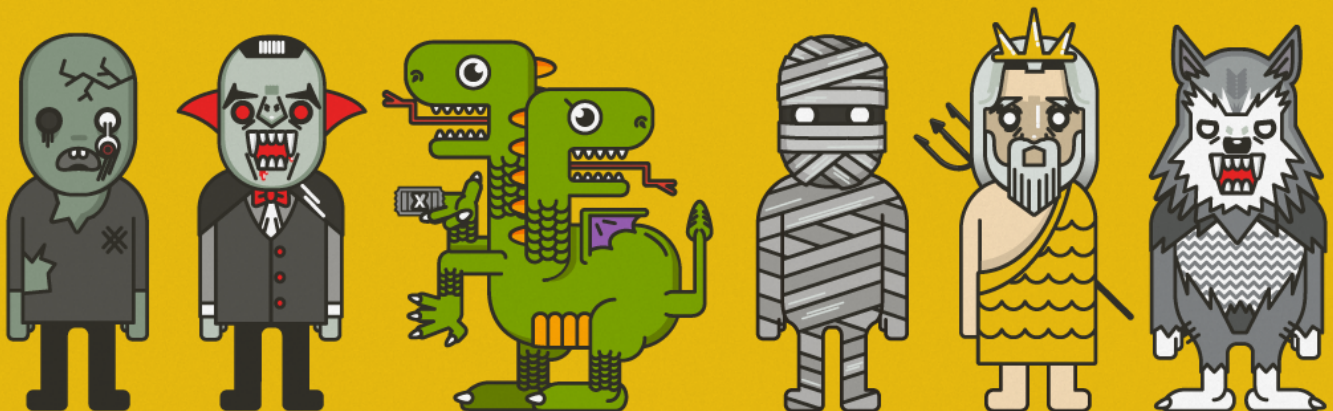


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PREFACE

Customer service can seem like a scary endeavor. There are ghastly tickets out there in the night, just waiting to strike at the very heart of your support team. Some suck up your time and energy. Others are known to take a vicious bite that festers, threatening to infect your entire team.

All who have chosen the honorable path of customer service have encountered these supernatural tickets. Be not afraid! Steel yourself against these grim forces, and you will always prevail.

Within this tome are tales of some of the more devilish tickets our team has encountered. It is our hope that by becoming acquainted with these tickets—and the agents we dispatched to deal with them—you too will be prepared to face any monstrous ticket. Only then shall you earn the vaunted “Yes, I was satisfied” response from the ticket’s author.

ZOMBIE TICKETS



Zombie Ticket Profile

What to look out for:

Strong desire to eat up brain power

Strength:

Never gets tired

Weakness:

Robust documentation (they hate reading)

Agent Ben Profile

Favorite weapon:

The phone mobile

Strength:

Patient enough to deal with the undying hordes

Symptoms

Some tickets just won't die.

Six months ago, I was working the graveyard shift when I got an email from a new customer. I assumed it was an open and shut case. She just wanted to know a little about [Triggers](#). Easy enough. I gave her a quick explanation and sent her a link to the [relevant forum article](#).

Then she followed up by reopening the same ticket with a question about [Macros](#). No problem. A little unusual, but no big deal. I sent her a similar response and a link to another [useful forum article](#).

Just moments later, I received an email notifying me that the ticket was reopened again. She wanted me to make sure she had set up her Macros and Triggers properly. Very strange. I started to get a little nervous.

Next she wanted to know how she could put a link to a photo of her cat in her Macros. Now I was really getting scared.

The final blow was when she asked me if I liked the picture of her cat. The horror, the absolute horror!

My head was spinning. When would my response be enough to put this ticket down for good?

Diagnosis

The answer, as it turned out, was never: this was a Zombie ticket.

Zombie tickets, or undead tickets, refuse to die. No matter how perfectly you answer the question, the ticket just keeps getting back up for more.

Cure

Zombie tickets aren't like normal tickets. You can't just solve them with a simple answer, no matter how accurate your answer is. You need a headshot, and that means getting on the phone. By its very nature, email fosters a back-and-forth dynamic. Phone calls are finite and sometimes necessary to put a ticket down once and for all.

I set up a call, answered all of her questions, and asked if it would be OK to close the ticket. It took all of five minutes.

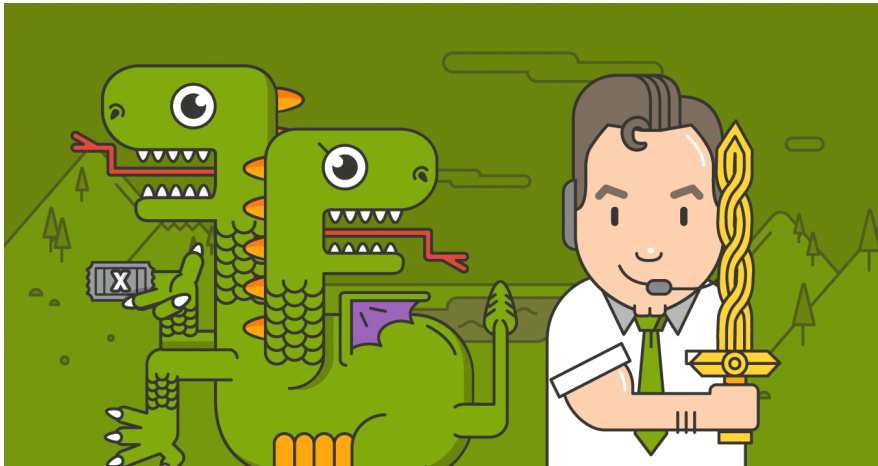
Conclusion

In this crazy world we live in, Zombie tickets are a fact of life. But you can take these steps to make sure they don't turn into full-on outbreaks, threatening to break down the company walls and eat everyone's brains:

- Include documentation and training on your dashboard so new customers can get a handle on your product or service.
- Foster a healthy FAQ and forums so customers can find answers on their own.
- Provide a "Related Topics" widget.
- Provide [proactive support](#) for better feature adoption.

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and that means
getting on the phone.

HYDRA TICKETS



Hydra Ticket Profile

What to look out for:

One customer, multiple tickets

Strength:

Bad breath, really hard to kill

Weakness:

Hydras are most vulnerable when they're young, so find and kill them early

Agent Herc Profile

Favorite weapon:

The golden sword of Merge

Strength:

Sexy muscles, always on the lookout for potential problem tickets

Symptoms

I was on the side of a mountain overlooking a dark and mysterious swamp, responding to tickets (thanks to [Zendesk for iPad](#)), and occasionally running my fingers through my perfect hair. I saw a ticket from a prospective customer asking if we would be interested in publishing one of her blog posts on our own blog. Requests like this should be no problem; we get them all the time. I just assigned it to marketing and assumed my work was done.


Imagine my surprise when I found that the emails had returned multiplied—I got one from the original sender and three more from different members of the marketing department. The customer received three answers to the same basic question from three different people and wanted to know what to do. All three were confused as to how this could have happened. Since my good looks and infamous strength have held up against such terrors before, I already knew what type of beast we were dealing with.

Diagnosis

We had a Hydra on our hands. Long thought to be a myth, the Hydra rears its ugly heads and returns with a vengeance. With this monster, answering a ticket only results in the creation of two more tickets.

The original sender thought she would get a quicker response if she sent three tickets at once—all asking the same question—via three different channels:

It's best to get everyone at your company on the same page with an email, let them know what happened, and choose one person to respond.



- 1 **Email:** “Am I allowed to post my blog entry on your site?”
- 2 **Twitter:** “What does it take to publish my blog post on your blog?”
- 3 **Support portal:** “I am interested in publishing my blog on your site. Here is the link to the post.”

Of course, what happened was that one got assigned to support, one to our Director of Content, and one to a Community Manager.

Cure

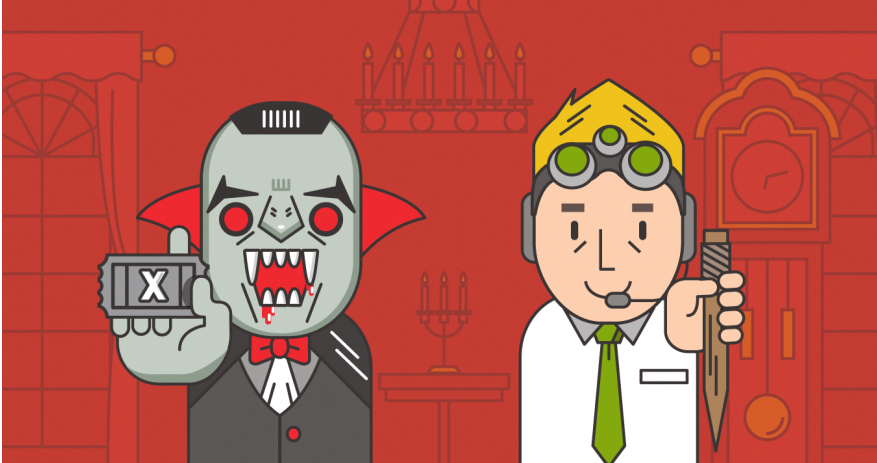
In the short term, it's best to get everyone at your company on the same page with an email, let them know what happened, and choose one person to respond. I suggest you choose the person with the nicest biceps.

Then you need to [merge](#) all three tickets into one. Respond to the requester, by phone if necessary, apologize for the confusion, and make sure her questions are answered. In this case, it was “thanks, but no thanks.”

Conclusion

In the long term, vigilance is the only way to prevent Hydra tickets. [Keep an eye on the number of open tickets](#) the requestor has and make sure she hasn't sent out a bunch of the same tickets. If she has, merge them. Either that, or chop off their heads and then cauterize the stumps with molten silver. Whatever feels right.

VAMPIRE TICKETS



Vampire Ticket Profile

What to look out for:

Vitamin D deficiency

Strength:

Night vision

Weakness:

The purifying light of the sun

Agent Harker Profile

Favorite weapon:

A wooden stake named Trigger

Strength:

Always knows what time it is

Symptoms

Agent Harker's Journal, 3 May, Pennsylvania

It started one morning, just after dawn. We received a negative comment from a customer in a far off land who was still waiting for a question to be answered. The next morning, just as the sun emerged, a bad satisfaction rating appeared from a customer on the other side of the globe whose question was answered, though not in a timely fashion. This went on for a fortnight: upset customers and bad ratings, always first thing in the morning, and always from distant lands.

Diagnosis

Finally, old man Swan spoke up. "Ye best be prepared," said he. "We're dealing with no less than vampire tickets!" He went on to tell us that vampire tickets prowl the night, long after posted business hours, and only come to our attention the next morning. Customers from different time zones were sending us questions, and they were forced to wait for our business hours to get a response.

Cure

Vampire tickets need to be dealt with quickly or they'll get out of hand. Escalate the tickets and solve them as quickly as possible. Set up an [automation](#) reminding people to reply to these tickets as soon as is humanly possible.

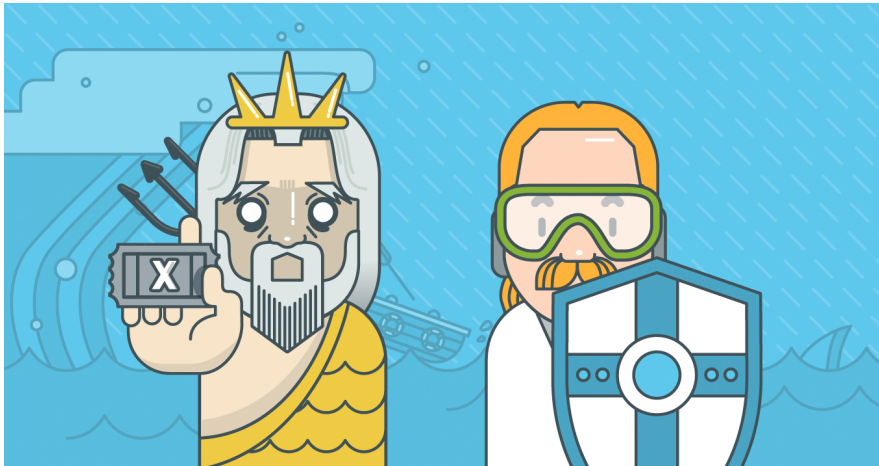
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Conclusion

In the long run, you'll want to set up a permanent plan for dispatching with vampire tickets once and for all. Since they hate sunlight, use the [follow-the-sun model](#) (if you can). The healing light of the sun will prevent a ticket from going vampire.

If that's not possible, create a [Trigger](#) to automatically inform customers that they have reached out to you outside of your normal [business hours](#) and assure them that you will respond as quickly as possible.

POSEIDON TICKETS



Poseidon Ticket Profile

What to look out for:

A tidal wave (you'll know it when you see it)

Strength:

Controls 75% of the Earth's surface. Also, sharks.

Weakness:

Climate change, oil spills, spring break

Agent Odysseus Profile

Favorite weapon:

A large shield and a sharp tongue

Strength:

The ability to think strategically while being overtaken by a flood of tickets

Symptoms

Here's the deal: You should never raise the ire of Poseidon. Yes, I said all sea creatures are dumb. And I might have poked his son in the eye. Whatever. That guy has no sense of humor.

One time, I mentioned that the Pacific Ocean was "no big deal," and a day later we received a deluge of tickets, calls, tweets, Facebook posts, and chats. All of them were about the same issue: a heretofore unseen bug. Apparently the Pacific Ocean has a lot of friends.

Diagnosis

This was no less than a flash flood, a torrent of customer communications. They were all coming in at the same time and they were all about the same thing. It could only be Poseidon's revenge. Like I said, no sense of humor on this guy.

Cure

The first thing you need to do is get your head above water. Social media managers should respond via a unified front: "We're aware of the issue and doing all we can to fix it." Meanwhile, respond to all of the tickets with the same general message and send them in bulk to the correct department. This should give you enough time to efficiently address the issue. If you have a spare moment, eat some cheese.

Conclusion

The best thing to do is to build yourself a lifeboat. As soon as you become aware of an issue that might drown your entire support team, add it to your [custom drop down form](#). If you have a known bug, add it to the form so your

Respond to all of the tickets with the same general message and send them in bulk to the correct department.

customers can automatically choose it as the problem they are having rather than trying to describe the issue in detail. That way your customers will know right away that you are aware of the issue and all related tickets will automatically be sent to the correct place.

And remember: Never turn your back on the god of the sea—or tell him the coastline makes his oceans look fat.

MUMMY TICKETS



Mummy Ticket Profile

What to look out for:

Impossibly outdated requests

Strength:

Can summon ancient spells

Weakness:

The orb of Macro

Agent Whemple Profile

Favorite weapon:

The pen—mightier than the sword, and perfect for customer communications

Strength:

Unfazed by questions that make no sense

Symptoms

I say old boy, have you ever gotten a ticket that was covered in dust and felt rather...cursed? I've heard it told that if you're in customer service long enough, eventually you will come upon a ticket so confusing that it will feel like you're trying to read hieroglyphics.

The customer will ask about features you've never heard of, unfamiliar pricing plans, people that don't work at your company anymore, or a promotion your company hasn't offered in eons.

Diagnosis

A rather ghastly situation, I must say. But one that is bound to happen: a mummy ticket! Customers from the early days of our company—long before you started working there—will send these tickets. It's not uncommon for them to remember and ask about plans, features, or promotions that no longer exist.

Cure

In the short term, set up a mummy [Macro](#) for tickets referencing things that are out of date. An automatic answer with a predetermined response will hopefully help settle the issue or at least let your customers know you are aware of the issue. How you want to deal with these things (e.g., whether or not to grandfather in certain things) is up to you and your company. The key thing is: communicate, communicate, communicate.

Let your customers know you are aware of the issue.

Conclusion

If you find that you're getting a lot of mummy tickets, it might be a sign that you need to improve communications. Newsletters, blog posts, regular updates to social channels, and even in-product communications will help ensure that even your oldest customers are aware of changes to things like pricing structures.

WEREWOLF TICKETS



Werewolf Ticket Profile

What to look out for:

Fangs that appear from out of nowhere, back hair

Strength:

Insatiable blood lust

Weakness:

The kindness of beautiful young women

Agent Talbot Profile

Favorite weapon:

Silver bullets. Also, advice from the local shaman.

Strength:

A quick mind and an even disposition

Symptoms

A customer emailed us about a bug. He was friendly and warm, like a kindly old neighbor. We tried to replicate the bug, but couldn't. When we told him, he got nasty. Like, snarling, growling, howling at the moon nasty. Any attempt to resolve the issue or assuage his anger seemed to enrage him more. It was only then that I noticed the full moon.

Diagnosis

When a customer shape-shifts on you that quickly, there's only one explanation: a werewolf ticket. Nice and friendly one moment, howling mad the next. There seems to be no way to calm him down or talk him out of this hideous state.

Cure

In this case, you have to go right to the big guns: Pull in a shaman to help mediate and cure the bloodlust. A customer service manager or director would be a wise choice, as they are all highly trained in the art of taming the wild beast.

It should be noted that it is not uncommon for a customer to take to the public airwaves to vent their frustration. If a customer posts on Facebook or tweets under a full moon, your silver bullet will be a public measured response. Make sure your customers know that your company is standing by to help. Respond in the channel that was used for the complaint and try to solve the actual issue publicly. Most importantly, don't let them bite others and create more werewolves.

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Conclusion

You can't win them all. We couldn't take down this particular werewolf. It happens. We tried our best, but he's still out there, somewhere.

While you should try your best, you should accept that some situations may be out of your control. Especially with werewolves. The key thing is to learn, improve, and move on.

And don't let them bite you or you'll become a werewolf too.

EPILOGUE

It might seem a little scary out there in customer service land. Even the best support infrastructure is going to encounter tickets that don't seem to fit into the normal workflow. It happens.

Don't be afraid! Put your top agents on the case, learn from these experiences, and do your best to prepare for more troublesome tickets.

Because they will be back.