

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/clips/fanatical-customer-support/>

Garry Tan, president and CEO of Y Combinator, encourages founders to be dedicated to hands-on, authentic customer service. People are desperate for human connection on the Internet, he says — and this applies to B2B as well as consumer products.



## Transcript

- This is something I learned 00:00:04,230 from my friend Kevin Hale at Wufoo. For Posterous, we're able to answer every single email that we got. And in fact, later when we had a eight person team, seven person team, the first thing we did was we split up the days of the week, and each one of us would take the inbox all day and we would aim to reply to every single email within 10 minutes of receiving it. And if there was a bug, we'd fix it on the spot. And that helped a lot, actually. The other thing is being really, really hyper hands-on with people on the internet and being as authentic as possible. Like, I'm a real person, I'm here, I'm here to solve your problem, I'm the CEO. That actually helps so much. And this is, I wanna show you like, the reason why. There's, one of the earliest studies on internet behavior was actually on Usenet.

And so what they found was that on Usenet, if someone posted, you know, what's a good, it's like a- I don't know, what is Usenet even? It's literally like a, it's like a group, it's like a forum online. And so if someone posted and did not get a reply, only 16% of people would come back to that forum. But if you got even one reply, 26% would come back. And so this is the power of actually being a real person in there, like, not like- We just are so desperate for human connection, especially on the internet, do that. Like, I know we're talking about, you know, you might be working on some AI thing, you might be working on, you know, even dev tools like open source, like, there's still human being on the other end of that. And the difference between, you know, a 10% difference in retention is actually the difference between a startup that's flatlining and one that's actually working. It's like the compounding of this is really, really massive. So ultimately, you know, whether- Most people would look at this and say, "Oh, this only applies to consumer," but these days, when you're working on say a B2B software thing, a thing for developers, like, there are only 30 million developers. Like, developer tools are basically a consumer go-to market now, but with 30 million consumers instead of a billion. And so this absolutely applies.

Be small, be human, and get in there...