

When the delivery doesn't show up — what do you say?

A whiteboard UX writing exercise: designing the notification and recovery flow for a missed Home Depot delivery. The customer needs to either cancel or pick a new date — and they're already frustrated.

FORMAT

Whiteboard Exercise

PLATFORM

Mobile App · Web

WRITER

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ROLE

UX Writer Candidate

THE BRIEF

The prompt

"Tell the customer to either cancel their order or choose a new delivery date."

Whiteboard exercise. 30 minutes. No existing design system provided. Home Depot brand context assumed.

This is not a simple notification. The customer placed an order, cleared their schedule, waited at home, and the delivery didn't arrive. The copy has to acknowledge what happened, restore trust, and give them a clear path forward — without making a bad experience worse.

THE CHALLENGE

Four things this copy had to do at once



Acknowledge frustration without over-apologizing

Excessive apology centers the company. The customer needs to know what's happening next, not watch the brand feel bad.



Make the choices unmistakably clear

Two options. Customer must understand both without reading anything twice.



Create urgency without panic

They need to act — but not feel rushed into the wrong decision.



Sound like Home Depot, not a chatbot

Practical, direct, helpful. Approachable and no-nonsense — never corporate.

MY APPROACH

Problem → Approach → Outcome

PROBLEM

The customer doesn't know why this happened

One sentence explaining what went wrong. No jargon. No blame. Before they can decide, they need to understand.

APPROACH

Lead with the situation, not the apology

State what happened plainly. Offer two choices with equal weight. Let the customer feel in control of what comes next.

OUTCOME

Customer resolves the issue in one session

No call to customer service. No second notification needed. The flow answers the question and completes the action.

THE WORK

The copy, annotated

Here's the notification and recovery screen with the thinking behind each content decision.

← Order Update

■

Your delivery didn't arrive today

■

We couldn't complete your delivery on August 25. Tell us what you'd like to do next.

YOUR ORDER

RYOBI 40V Lawn Mower

Order #HD-2847-9301 · Originally scheduled Aug 25

What would you like to do?

■

Choose a new delivery date

Pick a date and time that works for you. We'll confirm within 2 hours.

■

Cancel this order

You'll get a full refund to your original payment method within 3–5 business days.

Continue

Contact us about this order

HEADLINE

"Your delivery didn't arrive today"

Plain statement of fact. No 'We're so sorry' — that centers the company. No 'Delivery Exception' — that's system language. Confirms what happened and moves forward.

SUB-COPY

"Tell us what you'd like to do next"

Transfers control to the customer immediately. "Next" implies forward momentum. "Like" signals preference, not demand — they choose what happens.

OPTION FRAMING

Rescheduling listed first

The default path keeps the order alive — most customers want their product. Both options include outcome copy so the customer knows exactly what happens when they choose.

CTA

"Continue" not "Submit"

Submit is system language. Continue implies a journey. The secondary CTA is de-emphasized — most customers won't need it if the primary copy does its job.

COPY DECISIONS

What I changed and why

■ FIRST DRAFT

We sincerely apologize for the inconvenience caused by the failed delivery attempt on your order. Please select one of the following options to proceed with your order resolution.

Passive and corporate. Leads with apology before telling the customer what happened. "Failed delivery attempt" implies the customer did something wrong. "Order resolution" is internal language.

■ FINAL COPY

We couldn't complete your delivery on August 25. Tell us what you'd like to do next.

Direct ownership ('we couldn't'), specific date so we demonstrate awareness of their order, forward-looking question that returns control to the customer. 12 words instead of 35.

■ OPTION LABELS ONLY

Reschedule Delivery Cancel and Refund Order

Functional but cold. No supporting copy means the customer has to guess what happens next. "Reschedule" is more formal than needed.

■ LABEL + OUTCOME

Choose a new delivery date Pick a date that works for you. We'll confirm within 2 hours. Cancel this order Full refund within 3-5 business days.

Each option states what the customer is choosing AND what happens when they choose it. 'Works for you' emphasizes control. Refund timeline manages expectations immediately.

THE THINKING BEHIND IT

Four principles that drove every decision

PRINCIPLE 01

Own it plainly

"We couldn't" takes responsibility without excessive apology. The customer needs to know what's happening next, not watch the company feel bad.

PRINCIPLE 02

Write from the customer's side

Every word evaluated by one question: does this help someone complete what they came to do?

PRINCIPLE 03

Outcomes, not options

Each choice includes what happens after. Remove uncertainty about refunds and confirmations — remove the hesitation.

PRINCIPLE 04

Specific beats generic

The date, order number, 2-hour window, 3–5 business day refund — specifics build trust. Vague copy signals a company that doesn't know your order.

INTERVIEW RESULT

Home Depot scheduled a follow-up interview after this exercise.

FORMAT

Whiteboard exercise with live stakeholder feedback

FEEDBACK

"Customer-first framing, strong brand voice fit"

NEXT STEP

Advanced to debrief with Experience Design Director

ABOUT THIS WORK

What I bring to UX writing

I've spent 8 years translating complex, technical, and regulated information into content that people can actually use — at Citi, Ericsson, and through independent content strategy work. UX writing at Home Depot is where that skill meets real customer moments: the purchase, the installation question, the order that didn't arrive.

I write from the customer's side of the screen. I evaluate every word by whether it helps someone complete what they came to do. And I'm comfortable explaining my rationale — not just delivering copy, but defending the thinking behind it.

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