

# Why do Microsoft customer records use the abbreviation "cx" for customer?

 [devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20120119-00](http://devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20120119-00)

January 19, 2012



Raymond Chen

As is common in many industries, Microsoft customer service records employ abbreviations for many commonly-used words. In the travel industry, for example, *pax* is used as an abbreviation for *passenger*. The term appears to have spread to the hotel industry, even though people who stay at a hotel aren't technically *passengers*. (Well, unless you think that with the outrageous prices charged by the hotels, the people are being *taken for a ride*.) For a time, the standard abbreviation for *customer* in Microsoft's customer service records was *cu*. This changed, however, when it was pointed out to the people in charge of such things that *cu* is a swear word in Portuguese. The standard abbreviation was therefore changed to *cx*. If you're reading through old customer records and you know Portuguese and you see the word *cu*, please understand that we are not calling the customer a rude name. The person who introduced me to this abbreviation added, "I just spell out the word. It's not that much more work, and it's a lot easier to read." Some years ago, I was asked to review a technical book, and one of the items of feedback I returned was that the comments in the code fragments were full of mysterious abbreviations. "Sgnl evt before lv cs." I suggested that the words be spelled out or, if you really want to use abbreviations, at least have somewhere in the text where the abbreviations are explained.

If I had wanted to demonstrate the social skills of a thermonuclear device, my feedback might have read "unls wrtg pzl bk, avd unexplnd n unnec abbvs."

[Raymond Chen](#)

**Follow**

