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The Intent Router

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The classifier prompt, the five buckets with real examples, and the escalation rules that keep complaints in human hands — so your inbox gets worked in order of what each message costs you, not the order it arrived.

The five buckets

BUCKET	WHAT IT IS	WHERE IT GOES	HOW FAST
PRESALE	Someone about to buy	Whoever can close — fastest	Minutes
ORDER_STATUS	"Where's my parcel", "when ship"	Mostly answerable from order data	Same day
COMPLAINT	Anything wrong, damaged, late, refund	A human. Always.	Before anything else
SPAM	Promo, bots, "hi" with nothing after	Archive — don't delete	Never
UNSURE	The classifier isn't confident	A human	Same day

Four buckets plus an escape hatch. Not twelve — a classifier with twelve categories is wrong more often, and nobody on the team can remember what routes where.

Real examples, the way they actually arrive

MESSAGE	BUCKET	WHY
"boleh muat laptop 15 inch?"	PRESALE	Specific fit question
"ada stock navy lagi?"	PRESALE	Asking about a specific variant
"bila nak pos? order semalam"	ORDER_STATUS	Existing order, no problem stated
"tracking tak update 3 hari"	ORDER_STATUS	Status query — not yet a complaint
"barang sampai pecah"	COMPLAINT	Damage
"saya order navy dapat hitam"	COMPLAINT	Wrong item
"is this original? my friend bought and it broke"	COMPLAINT	Mixed — damage mentioned, complaint wins
"hi"	UNSURE	No intent to classify
"cheap followers 1k only rm10"	SPAM	Promo

Notice the mixed one. A pre-sale question that mentions something breaking is a complaint — a buyer who's already worried about quality.

The classifier prompt

Classify this customer message into exactly one label:
PRESALE, ORDER_STATUS, COMPLAINT, SPAM, UNSURE.

Definitions:

- PRESALE: a question from someone considering buying — fit, stock, variant, delivery time, authenticity, price.
- ORDER_STATUS: a question about an existing order with no problem stated.
- COMPLAINT: anything suggesting dissatisfaction, damage, a wrong or missing item, lateness, or a request to return or refund.
- SPAM: promotion, bots, or messages unrelated to buying from us.
- UNSURE: anything else, or anything you're not confident about.

Rules, in priority order:

1. If the message contains any hint of a problem — including words like rosak, pecah, salah, tak sampai, lambat, tipu, refund, pulangkan, broken, wrong, missing, late — label it COMPLAINT, even if it also asks something else.
2. If you are not confident, label it UNSURE. That is the correct answer, not a failure.
3. Short greetings with no request ("hi", "hello", "boss") are UNSURE.

The message may be in English, Malay, Chinese or a mix. Classify by meaning.

Return only the label on the first line, then one short line of reasoning.

MESSAGE:

[paste]

Rule 1 is the one that matters. Complaint beats every other bucket in the same message. That single rule prevents the most expensive routing mistake there is.

Rule 2 makes the classifier allowed to not know. Without it, a model forced to pick will file an odd message into a wrong bucket with total confidence.

Add your own words to rule 1. The list above covers common ones. After a month, look at which complaints the classifier missed and add the words they used.

The escalation rules

Write these down where your team can see them:

1. **Complaints always go to a person.** Never auto-answered, never auto-drafted without someone reading it.
 2. **UNSURE goes to a person** the same day.
 3. **If the classifier fails or errors,** the message is treated as a complaint.
 4. **Spam is archived, never deleted.** Occasionally something real gets caught; check the pile weekly.
 5. **ORDER_STATUS that goes unanswered for a day becomes a complaint.** Waiting is how status questions turn into one-star reviews.
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The misroute that costs the most

An angry buyer tagged ORDER_STATUS, auto-answered with a tracking link. You've just told someone who's already upset that nobody is listening — and they're far more likely to write a review about it than about the original problem.

This is why the rules are all biased towards COMPLAINT and UNSURE. You'll send a few messages to a human that didn't need one. That's the right trade.

Read the UNSURE pile every day

It takes three minutes and it's the most useful thing in the whole system. Every message in there is a message your rules don't handle.

Once a week, look for patterns:

- A question type that keeps landing in UNSURE → add it to a definition
- A complaint word the classifier missed → add it to rule 1
- A buyer phrasing you've never seen → add it as an example

After a month of this, the classifier fits your shop, not a generic one.

The one thing to remember

Sorting beats replying faster. A pre-sale question is minutes from a sale; a complaint is minutes from a review. Both are worth more than working the inbox top to bottom.

Questions? Reply to this email — I read them all. More at @jjwong.ai — one AI play for SEA sellers, daily.