

TEXT MESSAGING: THE FUTURE CHANNEL FOR CUSTOMER CARE

"I think we basically saw that the messaging space is bigger than we'd initially realised, and that the use cases that WhatsApp and Messenger have are more different than we had thought originally."

Introduction

Consumers and businesses send 8 billion messages every month on messenger. It is clear today that **businesses must be ready to offer social media as an additional channel in customer care.**

Every brand is different and faces unique obstructions when incorporating a new customer contact channel, however it is now critical to offer a messaging platform within customer support services.

The incoming of the new messaging era

The era of social messaging is upon us and the fundamentals of delivering a good customer experience over social mobile channels are more consistent.

Customers expect convenient in-channel resolutions that take little effort on their behalf.

In the last few years, many changes took hold of the relationship between technologies and consumers. One considerable aspect is the fact that **today customers prefer to get in contact with companies through private messaging channels, rather than public social channels.**

This maturity in customers' expectations has been brought about by their own inexhaustible demands for ease and the platforms that actually provide it.

Messaging platforms (first of all Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp) are at the forefront of digital customer care.

These channels offer customers continuous threads of conversations with real-time, personal interactions that assist them in every step of the digital journey.

As many social customers now prefer private conversations, the format has changed from mass venting sessions on social to meaningful one-on-one engagements that drive customers' satisfaction and brand loyalty.

Messaging applications as a business-to-consumer communication channel

Using messaging platforms like WhatsApp, as a business-to-consumer communication channel allows brands and consumers to interact quickly and easily, the same way consumers are used to doing with their friends and family.

This will enable brands to provide their customers with a seamless customer care experience, improving their contact center productivity and reducing costs.

In the last few years, the major messaging applications are opening themselves up for business-to-consumer communications, taking different approaches and developing their strategies in different ways.

Facebook Messenger, for example, is now focused on driving customer care engagement across brand properties. To that end, the famous platform has released some specific functionalities in order to allow brands to utilise Messenger on their site.

WhatsApp also joined the flow and in the last years released WhatsApp

Business and then the Business APIs, to help smaller and bigger companies interact with their customers through the famous messaging platform.

Benefits of using messaging for digital customer care

Text messaging platforms offer a unique opportunity for brands that want to embrace it as a scalable care channel.

However, while the one-to-one private nature of messaging is somehow similar to live chat, there are some differentiation aspects which impact workflow, KPIs, and agent training.

- Chat can be asynchronous: the conversations can pause and resume between messages. In this way, agents can have a real-time conversation while the customer is present, but can also shift to another conversation if waiting for the customer to answer.
- Sometimes customers will answer after many hours, in this case, the agent that later picks up that conversation needs to be able to quickly read up on the context of

the conversation and continue where it was left off.

- The core of messaging channels is strictly linked to automation and they are much more productive than the traditional channels in intertwining human and virtual agent's interactions. In this case, it is also necessary for agents to be taught and be prepared in order to take the conversations that the virtual agent sends to them and manage them seamlessly.

Conclusions

"The conversational interface is not replacing apps, but it's enhancing the way users access them," said Jessica Ekholm, research director at Gartner, "We expect messaging apps such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, or Line to become increasingly engaging and rich as more features are added to them, whether creating more engaging user-generated videos, chatting with customer services, or having more e-commerce possibilities within the app itself."

