

BEST PRACTICES IN CHAT AND MESSAGING



Introduction

Live chat has increased in popularity as a preferred customer digital engagement channel, growing and growing in the last years. IT leaders should follow these best practices in order to better fulfil customer expectations of convenient, fast and meaningful engagements.

Most of us have been using online instant messaging since the late 90s, but the technology and its abilities have advanced dramatically in the last few years.

More companies discover that **the key to providing effective, real-time customer support is online messaging platforms.**

Businesses that initially questioned whether online chat and messaging were useful channels are now focused on getting the most value from them.

Done well, online chat and messaging are the customer support tool that never stops giving. It can funnel more customer interactions into chat, reduce operating costs, increase customer satisfaction, boost agent

productivity, and make an impact on sales conversions.

What is Live Chat?

Live chat is a customer service channel that allows businesses and customers to communicate in real time from their computers, tablets, or smartphones.

With live chat for business, online visitors can message customer service and customer service can also reach out proactively to visitors. Companies that use live chat can set automated chat invitation rules, which allows the system to automatically target and send messages to specific visitors.

For example, it is possible to introduce a proactive rule that allows the system to automatically send a message to customers who have spent more than 3 minutes on a specific page, or to customers who have more than \$200 of merchandise in their shopping carts, in order to help reduce the rate of shopping cart abandonment.

Since research shows that **average documented online shopping cart abandonment rate is about 70%**, this has been an important feature for many companies who introduce a live chat customer service channel to their business.

Many live chat systems also include reports and analytics, such as website traffic monitoring. Information such as which pages visitors are browsing, what country or city they are accessing the site from, and how visitors found it, can help to better know customers, and can be useful for marketing and social media strategies.

What is live messaging?

Like live chat, **live messaging is a customer service channel that allows consumers to chat with an operator online.** However, the key difference between these two chat programs is that conversations held over live messaging are not always done in real-time.

Live messaging interaction are carried out in a structure like Facebook or WhatsApp: the customer sends the message, and a representative responds, perhaps right away or maybe later.

This setup intentionally mimics a conversation that a customer might have with their family or friends: there is no guarantee of exactly when they might receive a response; all they know is that it should come eventually.

What to consider when choosing

When choosing a chat program, it is useful to take some considerations into account, in order to use it at its best:

1. Customer Expectations:

The chat service needs to be able to meet and surpass customers' expectations.

Research shows that by 2020, customer service is projected to overtake price and product quality as the leading brand differentiator.

Studies have shown that speed trumps everything but quality is customers' number one priority. Since live chat immediately connects customers with agents, it's safe to assume that it is the best product, by these parameters.

2. Convenience

When it comes to convenience, both live chat and live messaging go a long way.

For a customer who is doing many things at once, and who can afford to resolve an issue step by step rather than quickly solving it all at once, live messaging can be more convenient.

However, for other customers, it is more convenient to get something out of the way quickly, so that they can move on with their day; in this case live chat is the better option.

3. Urgency

For customers who don't have a sense of urgency with their issue, messaging can be a good choice.

This low-pressure chat system is based on a respond-when-you-want-to mentality.

However, often there is no choice but to get things done quickly. In this situation, customers may also attempt to contact a company through multiple channels just to get the quickest response, clogging up queues with the same repeated issue over different channels. While messaging provides the same leisurely style of conversation that one might have in an informal context, expectations are very different when asked to pay for a service, and it is needed to get in touch with a company.

Where urgency exists, live chat beats live messaging by far every time.

4. Staff Availability

With live messaging, customers don't have to worry about switching to email correspondence; their inquiries will be addressed directly in the chat box once business hours resume.

On one hand, live messaging can be easier for businesses; companies may not need to have such a large full-time chat team if requests don't have to be replied to straight away. On the other hand, **customers expect companies to conform to meet their schedules, not the other way around.** Companies that have the resources to do so should invest in immediate customer service care, so as not to risk the appearance of lazy or outdated customer service.

5. Lead Conversion

44% of online consumers say that having questions answered by a live person during an online purchase is one of the most important features a website can offer. If you want to make sales and engage with potential customers when they need it, you need to be there in the here and now, with live support. When it comes to better lead conversion, live chat wins every time.

6. Mobile vs Desktop

Depending on what device your customers are accessing your site from, you may find that live chat and live messaging each have some benefits. Live chat has an advantage on desktop: the speed of live chat service tends to be better for desktop users, as opposed to the leisureliness of live messaging.

The live messaging model works well for customers who are contacting companies on the go from mobile devices, or who will be away from the computer for short periods at a time and may not be able to answer an agent right away.

Best Practices for chat & messaging

1. Bring proactivity

The model of proactive support can reduce the costs related to the help desk, increase customer loyalty by actually increasing revenues.

2. Simple pre-chat form

Pre-chat forms let you gather important information about the customer proactively. The forms can help prepare agents for the conversation ahead.

3. Speed up your response time

Agents have to be fast while addressing queries. Use the following techniques:

- Train your agents to face all kinds of questions.
- Pre-write replies for FAQs.
- Limit number of chats per agent.
- Transfer chats when useful.
- Display messages to agents while they are being typed.

4. Boost profits with up-sells

It's usually easier to get an existing lead to spend more, than it is to get a new lead to convert.

5. Develop relationships by down-selling

Suggest a more affordable alternative that meets the needs of undecided customers; the honesty and integrity you show to the customer gains their loyalty and pays in the long run.

6. Ask customers to engage with you on social media

Ask happy customers to follow you on social media and/or to share their positive experiences online.

7. Extend your live chat hours

If you're not able to provide 24/7 live chat coverage in-house,



consider outsourcing it. Otherwise you can assess where your strongest markets lie and extend your live chat coverage accordingly.

8. Identify problems with your site

Take care of your website pages and interactions. While certain pages trigger more conversations than others, you have to pay attention to what questions they ask consistently.

9. Include live chat in your cart abandonment emails

Provide an easy medium for asking questions by including a link in your abandonment emails that immediately takes the customer back to your site, launching a chat window.

11. A/B test everything

Utilise A/B tests to guide changes that will help you increase the number of customers that use the live chat function.

Proactive Chat Data

The primary research project coupled with the benchmarking analysis reveal some compelling facts about proactive chat:

- The median percentage of website visitors that accept proactive chat invitations is 6%.
- Proactive chat increases chat volume by between ~40 and ~100 percent.
- Chatters that engage via proactive chats will convert at 6.3 times the rate of visitors who do not chat.
- 52% of those surveyed were receptive to receiving proactive chat invitations.
- 60% of those who have engaged in a live chat interaction before, were receptive.
- 72% of those whose average online transaction is greater than 150 euros, were receptive.

Use the right tool

To be able to communicate and engage with your target market, you need a tool that is able to cover all your online customer engagement activities.

Advanced tools such as Vivocha have been specially developed to cover all the engagement needs and preferences of your customers.

Vivocha can incorporate text chats on any or every page of your website, so if a website visitor has any questions, you can deliver answers quickly and even guide them towards the right service or product they are looking for. This also allows you to seize more opportunities to increase sales as visitors are guided towards becoming customers.

Advanced Vivocha capabilities such as proactive engagement allows automatic pop-ups in certain parts of your page that offers visitors to connect with one of your representatives. This basically allows you to start the conversation first and further encourages visitors to engage with one of your agents.

Why Vivocha is perfect for managing customer support

With Vivocha, you can install chat capabilities on your website, mobile apps and integrate Facebook Messenger, Whatsapp, Apple Business Chat and additional messaging platforms.

This allows your customer service team to manage every request in one platform; no need to switch from one chat tool to another. Vivocha doesn't just allow you to easily manage text chats, it extends your chat capabilities and increases your engagement, making your chat activities more than just about providing customer support but also increasing leads and sales.

Take, for example, one of Vivocha's capabilities which allows you to prompt a chat popup on your specific website pages or when customers reach a certain point within a webpage. Instead of waiting for the customer to click the "chat with us" button on your page, you initiate the interaction instead. You can easily install this functionality in pages that

are meant to generate leads such as a pillar page.

You also have the opportunity to cultivate trust out of a text chat since, if the situation calls for it, you can just as easily switch into audio or video chat.

Conclusion

In our fast-paced, digital age, the biggest challenge to serving customers in several communication channels is responding quickly, but without losing the personal touch.

Customers demand immediate service, and response times of "within 24 hours" are no longer acceptable.

It has been established that chat and messaging are the highest rated contact methods for customer satisfaction compared to all other communication channels.

It goes without saying that today's customer service tools are not one-size-fits-all. Different communication channels—social, phone, email, chat—offer different benefits to the company and to the customer.

