# The Ultimate Guide to Chat and In-App Chat Support

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Live chat can be referred to as the mother of all support channels.

It currently holds the highest customer satisfaction level compared to email and phone support. Chat also offers convenience, real-time attentiveness and responsiveness, and can provide an increase in online revenue. It's a no-brainer that it should be integrated into **your CX channel strategy**.

Before you implement or relaunch live chat support on your site, you need to ensure that you have the right foundations or your strategy will fail. Effective training, proper selection of live chat solutions, and the creation of customized upsell recommendations all play a part in an effective live chat strategy.

According to SuperOffice, 63% of consumers reported that they are more likely to return to a website that offers live chat

**1**

# AGENT TRAINING

It's a common mistake to move email or phone agents to live chat without training and expect them to maintain a consistent customer support experience across all channels. However, a chat agent has three key areas to master in order to effectively support your customer base, and these aren't necessarily picked up through other customer support channels.

**1**

The first key area is understanding how to use the live chat software to communicate with customers. If the live chat support solution ties in with other departments, such as technical support or sales, the agent must know how to transfer a customer to another department seamlessly.

**2**

Your live chat agents not only need to be familiar with your products and services, but they also need to know the website navigation and functions thoroughly. Many customers reach out through chat when they are frustrated or when they encounter a pain point during the shopping process, so being able to fix the issue without automatically transferring them to a technical support agent is essential.

**3**

Instant messaging solutions like live chat often lend themselves to an informal tone. Chat support agents must position themselves as trusted friends wanting to help a customer instead of a customer support agent waiting to get to the next person in line.

A key element in successfully deploying agent training is to create company voice guidelines. This will ensure that your brand's voice, service standards, and message come through consistently on every channel, but also enable chat agents to leverage tone adjustments to embody the casual nature of chat.

**2**

# WHAT CAUSES CHAT SUPPORT STRATEGIES TO FAIL

When 42% of customers prefer to contact companies via chat, you need to get this right. Here are 6 common reasons why chat support strategies fail and how to avoid them.

## Wrong Staff For The Job

What type of customer service skills do your customer support agents have? If they don't have the right mindset and skills for the live chat environment, then they can't provide a quality experience for customers. When reassessing or building your chat support team, look for people who are excellent at written communication and have a heightened sense of empathy for people. These skills will help them to handle customers who may be irate or frustrated, and be able to de-escalate those situations without their manager's involvement.

## Limited Hours

Is your live chat service available during peak hours for your customers? If you only offer support during normal business hours, then you could miss out on when your customers need you the most. Look at your historical data to determine when you get the most inquiries so you can adjust your schedule based on actual need. You can work with a **service provider like us** to expand your coverage and deliver 24/7 availability to your customers. **Check out this real-life client story on how we partnered with an e-commerce giant on their follow the sun model and increased CSAT by 12%**.

## Poor Response Time

How long does it take for your chat support agents to respond to a customer inquiry? Customers expect that you'll answer it quickly, but the average chat response time is more than two minutes, when it should be 30 seconds to a minute maximum.

**In order to examine the causes behind poor response time, go through these questions with your team:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Do your live chat agents have to handle other support channels at the same time? | Are the new chat notifications not displaying properly? | Do you simply not have enough people to answer messages? |

Once you can identify the answers to these questions, your team can begin to fix these problems to improve CX.

## Chat Support System is Difficult to Use

**Problems with chat support can occur for both customers and your internal team. Some common issues include:**

| Live chat options hidden on the website | Slow software creates delays in responses | Lack of mobile-friendly options for smartphone and tablet users |
|---|---|---|

Your organization may need to look into other types of live chat platforms to address these fundamental concerns, or use a **customer experience consultant** to help you get it right.

During the procurement process, get feedback from customers and support representatives to see what they expect out of chat support and compare them to your original goals for implementing it. You can match their feedback to industry-leading platforms to ensure a good match.

## Lack of Data Integration Between Support Channels

Customers don't want to repeat themselves after communicating through another channel previously. Your chat support system should integrate with the rest of your support options so you can view support history without asking the customer. These proactive support opportunities will help you improve resolution time and decrease customer frustration.

## Irrelevant Scripted Responses

Scripted responses are an excellent way to convey common information to customers, but sometimes they are poorly suited for the task at hand. Irrelevant canned replies make the customer feel like they aren't receiving personalized service and the agent may fail to address their concerns. Following the bad experience, the customer may post bad reviews, share the experience with others, or end up having their screenshotted conversation go viral.

When training and retraining your customer support agents, make sure you advise them to go outside the script when it's warranted. For example, if a customer has a complex issue or one that the company hasn't encountered before, they need unscripted assistance. Use the set replies as a foundation for more personalized communication and provide guidelines. It may take longer for your representatives to edit these responses, but it leads to a more relevant customer experience. Periodically review your script to see whether it actually reflects the questions that customers ask and update any outdated information.

Learn how we helped our client create a more personalized chat experience to optimize service levels while also increasing their sales revenue to more than $2,500 per agent through better upselling strategies with **our latest case study**.

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# MEASURING LIVE CHAT EFFECTIVENESS

Once you have an end-to-end chat strategy and well-trained agents, it's time to analyze how chat is performing with your customers.

You can start this process by identifying what areas need improvement and analyzing if both your business and CX channel strategy goals are aligned. You can approach this by segmenting chats by those that are initiated by the customer and chats initiated by the agent through an automated greeting or triggered contact. Similar to phone support, look at the average resolution time for chat support. However, don't rate your average chat resolution time based on your phone support metrics, since customers may multi-task while they are using chat support and also because your agents might be answering multiple chats at once.

With an effective training program, live chat does more than take the load off other support channels, it provides you with a valuable sales channel. Live chat is more sales heavy than other support options, as the agent has an opportunity for customized product recommendations for upsells. By tracking these sales, you can identify which agents are particularly good at handling customer upsells so you can staff accordingly.

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# IN-APP CHAT VERSUS SHORT MESSAGE SERVICE (SMS)

In 2018, eMarketer found that consumers spend over 3 hours per day on their cell phones and that 90% of this time is spent using apps. With stats like this, in-app chat is a no-brainer when it comes to customer support offerings.

## Average Time Spent per Day with Select Media by US Adults, 2013-2018

*hrs:mins*
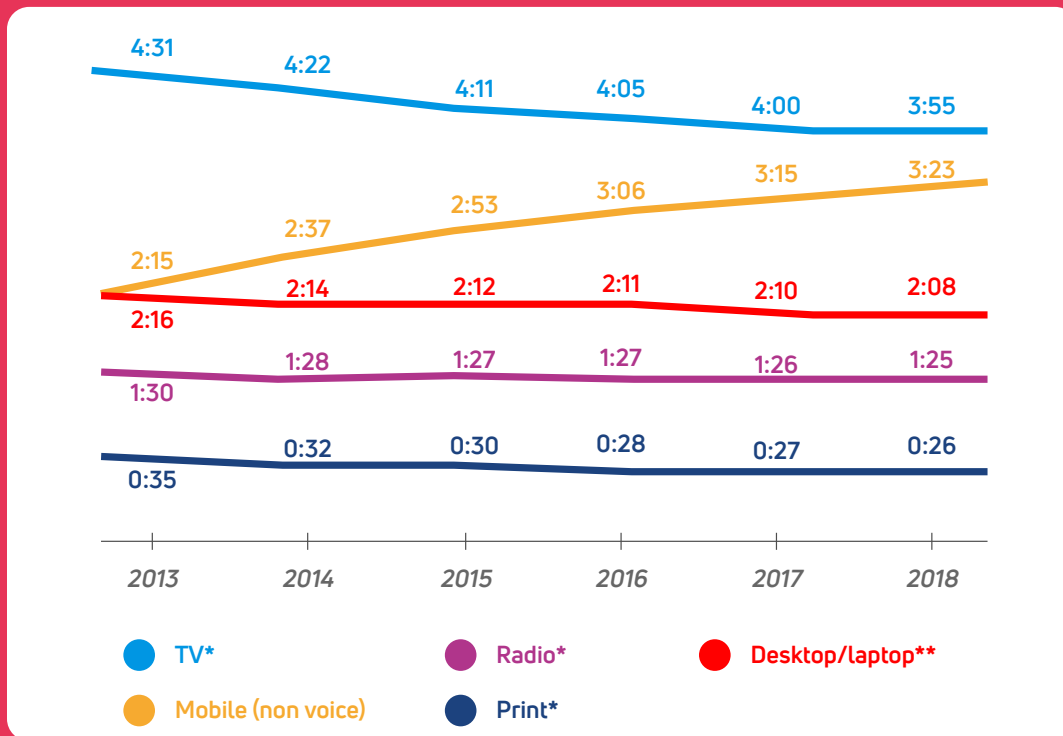


**Note:**

Ages 18+; time spent with each medium includes all time spent with that medium, regardless of multitasking; for example, 1 hour of multitasking on desktop/laptop while watching TV is counted as 1 hour for TV and 1 hour for desktop/laptop; *excludes digital; **includes all internet activities on desktop and laptop computers.

*Source: eMarketer, Apirl 2016*

If your customers are leveraging your app, provide an in-app chat function for an integrated, seamless experience. Making customers leave your app - particularly when they are actively making a purchase, is detrimental to the users' experience and can lead to cart abandonment. Currently, there are a handful of chat vendors that provide plug and play mobile SDKs, so you no longer have to build this functionality from the ground up which makes implementation a quick and smooth process.

The different modes of mobile messaging delivery like in-app chat and SMS messaging can be a little confusing and are often misrepresented due to their vernacular being so closely related.

Short message service otherwise known as SMS, is different than in-app chat because instead of communicating with customers in a chat window, you utilize mobile text messages. These text messages are capped at a 160 character limit which helps to keep conversations concise and to the point. SMS is slowly beginning to rise in popularity since it is a more direct way to engage with customers especially when you're sending reminders about follow-ups, appointments, and overall feedback. Other mediums such as TV, desktop/laptop computer, radio, and print are all in decline. This should be a wake-up call for your customer support team to provide mobile-friendly support whether that's through in-app or SMS support. Your mobile messaging channel strategy should be seen as a delivery tool and extension of your chat support.

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# SMS BEST PRACTICES

Currently, SMS is not widely used for highly interactive customer care; it is more commonly used for remedial updates like automated alerts, and "yes" or "no" responses like these:

> Your prescription is available for refill. Reply "YES" to refill now

> Your flight has been delayed; new estimated departure is 4 p.m.

> Your debit card has been used online,
> click here to go to your account home page

**44% of consumers say that having a live person answer their questions while in the middle of an online purchase is one of the most important features a website can offer.**

*Source: Forbes*

While convenient and intuitive for customers to be able to text a company, SMS has limited functionality. Companies are constrained to 160 characters, so it is not conducive for long, complex inquiries. An alert from a company or an inquiry from a customer might start via SMS but often requires the use of another channel to resolve the inquiry.

**In the end, companies that offer SMS messaging and in-app chat support will have a tremendous competitive advantage, and arguably create the most user-friendly experience.**

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# WHY GREAT CUSTOMER SUPPORT IS ESSENTIAL

Did you know that customers will pay more for a great experience? **PWC found that consumers will pay up to 16% more for the same products and services.** Live chat support is one component of your customer experience strategy, but it's an essential one. Take care of your front line agents by giving them the resources they need to succeed like training, incentives, and coaching to help your customer experience reach its full potential.

Your customers are happy to talk about their positive experience in reviews and within their social circle. When customers like the experience that you offer, they're also more likely to stay loyal to you, with 42% coming back for repeat purchases. Perfecting live chat support takes time and resources, but the benefits that it brings to the customer journey are well worth the investment.

Whether you need help curating the perfect CX channel strategy, or need additional experienced support experts to keep your business going, we have you covered. <u>Answer these 3 quick questions</u> and let's partner together on the right solution for your business.