



Six reasons customers hate your live chat: And how to fix it

And how to fix it

What's Inside

03 || INTRODUCTION

05 || **PROBLEM 1:** THEY HAVE TO WAIT FOR AN AGENT TO
“ENTER THE CHAT ROOM”

07 || **PROBLEM 2:** THEY CAN'T STEP AWAY WITHOUT GETTING KICKED OUT

09 || **PROBLEM 3:** THEY CAN'T ACCESS THE CHAT LATER

11 || **PROBLEM 4:** THEY'RE TIED TO ONE PAGE, ON ONE DEVICE,
UNTIL THE CHAT ENDS

13 || **PROBLEM 5:** THE USER INTERFACE IS OUTDATED AND IMPERSONAL

15 || **PROBLEM 6:** MOST CHATBOTS ARE OVERUSED, ANNOYING
AND INEFFECTIVE

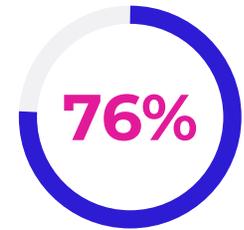
17 || CONCLUSION

Introduction

Chat is your best digital investment

Digital channels have completely changed the ways in which consumers prefer to interact with brands, and now great customer service is only a few keystrokes away. Today, the most popular digital channel for customer service is live chat on a brand's website. According to a [2019 Dimension Data](#) survey, **45%** of brands use live chat, and it's a top growth channel, with **37%** planning to implement it in the next 12 months.

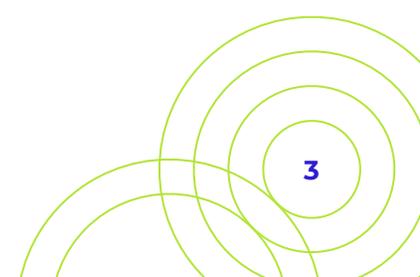
Another [research report by ContactBabel](#) shows that among contact centers in the US, **44%** are using live chat, and another 1 in 3 have plans to invest in live chat. **28%** of contact centers are planning to implement or replace live chat in the next 12 months



of contact center leaders say live chat will become more important to their CX over the next five years - [CCW](#)

CONTACT CENTER SIZE	USE, NO PLANS	USE, REPLACE	< 12 MONTHS	> 12 MONTHS	NO PLANS	DON'T KNOW	USING NOW
Small (< 50 seats)	37%	2%	20%	15%	22%	3%	40%
Medium (50 - 200 seats)	34%	2%	29%	11%	20%	5%	36%
Large (200 + seats)	42%	15%	22%	12%	6%	2%	58%
Average	38%	6%	23%	13%	17%	3%	44%

Current technology usage and short-term investment plans – web chat by contact center size, end 2019



CHAT MUST MEET CUSTOMERS' EXPECTATIONS

Even though live chat is growing so quickly, it doesn't always live up to customer expectations. Businesses like chat because it is very visible to the consumer and deflects expensive phone calls with a typically short handle time. But, for the consumer, many chat experiences end with frustration, unresolved issues, or a need to dial the 1-800 number.

Part of the reason traditional live chat isn't meeting consumer expectations is because consumers expect convenient interactions with brands — just like the messages they send friends and family every day. Over **76%** of smartphone users use consumer messaging apps like Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, and even texting to send billions of messages a day. This has fundamentally shifted consumer expectations for how they interact with brands on all channels — including chat.

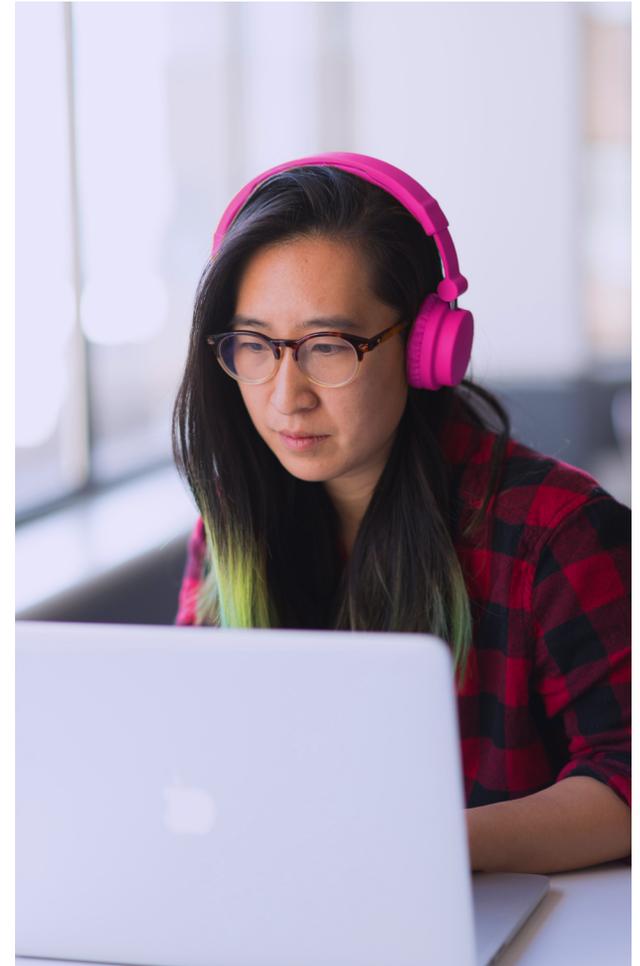
Traditional live chat is synchronous: like a phone call, it is a real-time exchange with a clearly defined conclusion. Modern chat, on the other hand, enables consumers to move fluidly from synchronous live chat to asynchronous conversation, which can span multiple hours or even days.

Modern chat can also follow users across devices, giving them a slick user interface that supports file sharing, emojis, and notifications no matter where they are.

We recently surveyed over 1,000 consumers in the US to better understand their preferences regarding live chat, and the results are clear: consumers want the real-time resolution they're used to getting from traditional, synchronous chat, but with the flexibility and benefits they experience every day through asynchronous messaging apps.

CHAT AS WE KNOW IT IS IN THE MIDST OF A RENAISSANCE

Contact center, customer service, and customer experience leaders are rapidly replacing legacy chat systems with modern chat solutions — solutions that more closely resemble the messaging apps consumers use in their everyday lives. When a brand replaces traditional chat with modern chat, **48%** of consumers say it increases their customer service satisfaction. Not only does this improve support center efficiency and lead to happier, more productive agents, it also improves the customer experience, in at least six ways.



Problem 1.

They have to wait for an agent to “enter the chat room”

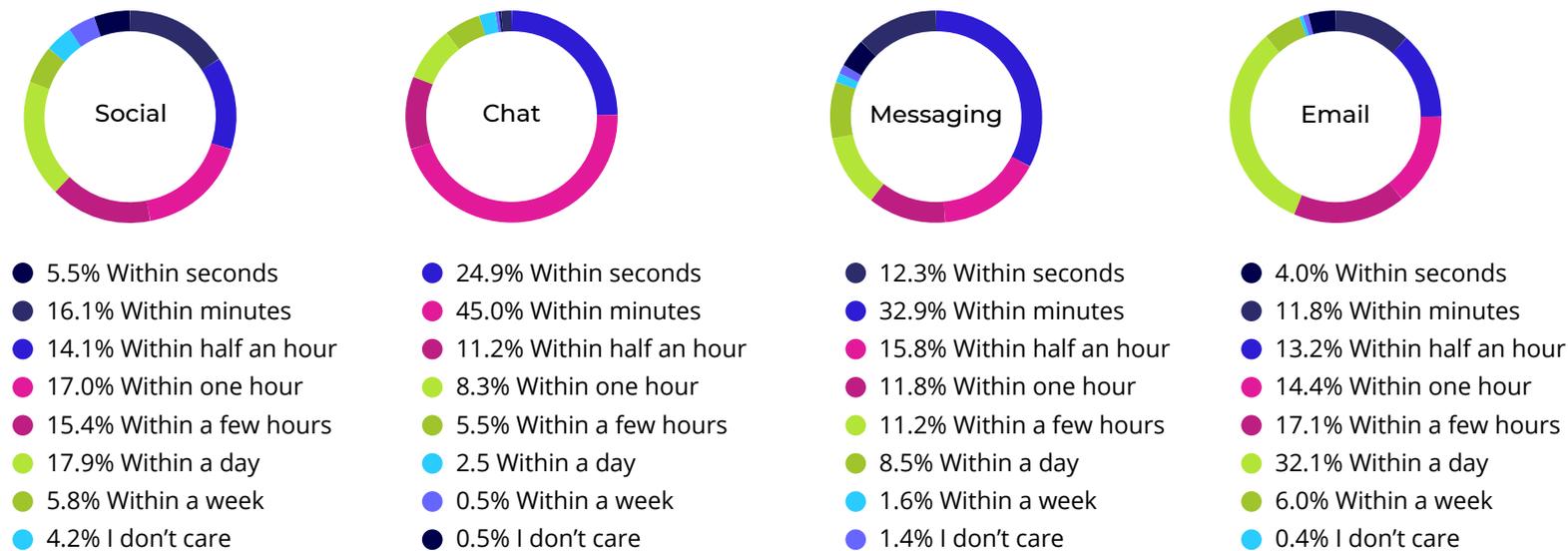
Consumers have higher expectations of speedy response times on live chat than on any other channel. The majority expect someone to respond to their chat inquiry within minutes, and one out of four consumers expect an agent to join them within seconds. This is significantly faster than they expect responses on other channels, including phone, messaging apps, social media, and email.

But, brands can’t always meet these lofty expectations, so consumers often have to wait. Initiating a live chat and then being told you have to wait for an agent to join is the digital equivalent of being put on hold over the phone — only worse. At least when you’re put on hold over the phone, you can turn on the speakerphone, move about the room, and easily jump in when you hear the music end and the agent join. With chat, on the other

hand, you’re glued to the computer screen waiting for someone to join. And if you walk away, you run the risk of an agent entering the chat and then ending the session because you didn’t engage fast enough (see the [next section](#) for more on why that’s problematic).

EXPECTATIONS FOR BRAND RESPONSE TIMES

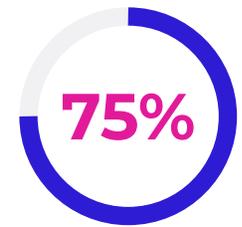
Consumer expectations for how quickly a brand responds to them varies by channel.



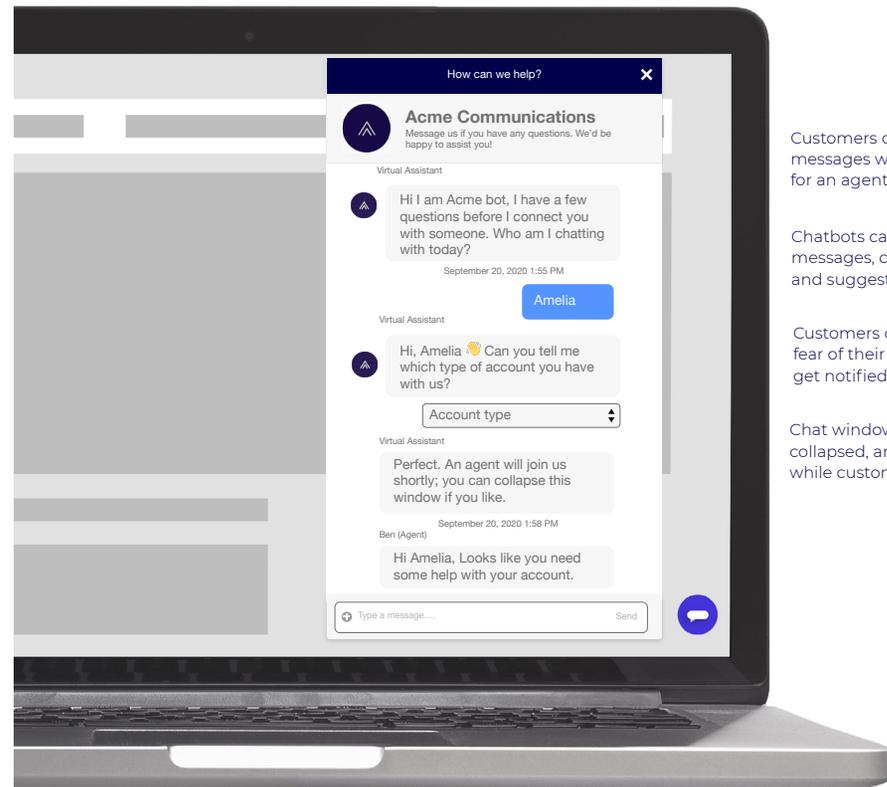
Solution

With modern chat, customers aren't locked in the waiting room. They can initiate a conversation, send messages about their issue, and receive a notification when an agent responds. Furthermore, chatbots were designed to work with modern chat solutions to quickly engage customers by collecting topline information, suggesting self-service options, or just keeping customers informed

while they wait — all with a seamless handoff to human agents when needed. Best of all, modern chat allows agents to manage a higher volume of concurrent conversations, meaning they can get to more customers more quickly. **21%** of chat requests are not answered. **70%** of consumers expect an answer to chat requests within minutes.



of brands have used chatbots to reduce customer wait times by 5+ minutes



Customers can begin sending messages without having to wait for an agent

Chatbots can send welcome messages, collect important details and suggest self-service content

Customers can step away without fear of their session ending, and can get notified when an agent joins

Chat window can be expanded or collapsed, and remains persistent while customer browses website

Problem 2.

They can't step away without getting kicked out

A big problem with traditional, synchronous chat is that it simply doesn't fit into most busy consumers' lives because it is session-based. It is built on the assumption that consumers will start a conversation and finish it, in less than 20 minutes, on one device. But most of us are constantly multi-tasking and device-switching, with very little ability to give anyone our full attention, let alone a customer service representative.

So when a customer gets interrupted or distracted, the chat session is suddenly an inconvenience. If they step away before an agent accepts, the chat is "missed" or "dropped". If they step away after a session has started, the chat is "abandoned". And once a session is ended, it's gone; and the

customer has to start a new chat and repeat themselves in order to resolve their issue. Asking consumers to repeat their issues is less than ideal; three out of four of consumers find it either frustrating or very frustrating.

Additionally, **69%** of consumers in our survey indicated that it is very or extremely frustrating when a brand closes a chat session due to inactivity before their issue is resolved. Ending chats this way has steep consequences:

- **22%** will choose to not re-engage, and simply never get a resolution
- **37%** will avoid future contact with the brand
- **59%** will complain to the brand



of consumers will tell others about their negative experience

Solution

With modern chat solutions, conversations with customers are built around resolutions — not sessions. This is important because customers in our survey want it both ways: they want to be able to engage in an active “session” and get real-time help through synchronous chat, but they also want the flexibility to come and go as needed, just like they do on Facebook Messenger.

With modern chat, support centers don’t have to choose between synchronous and asynchronous chat. Brands use the flexible workflows in modern chat for real-time conversation when needed, while maintaining the freedom to respond on the consumer’s own timetable.

In addition to providing a superior experience that is more aligned with how consumers message friends and families, this mode of chat empowers agents and customers to collaborate on more complex issues — issues that may take several days to research, work through, and resolve.

With traditional chat, these types of issues would typically be rerouted to phone or email, but we know from our 2019 research with Forrester that **57%** of consumers are frustrated when asked to use a different mode of contact than the one they used to reach out in the first place.

CUSTOMER QUOTES FROM THE STUDY

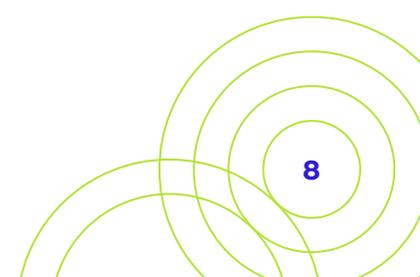
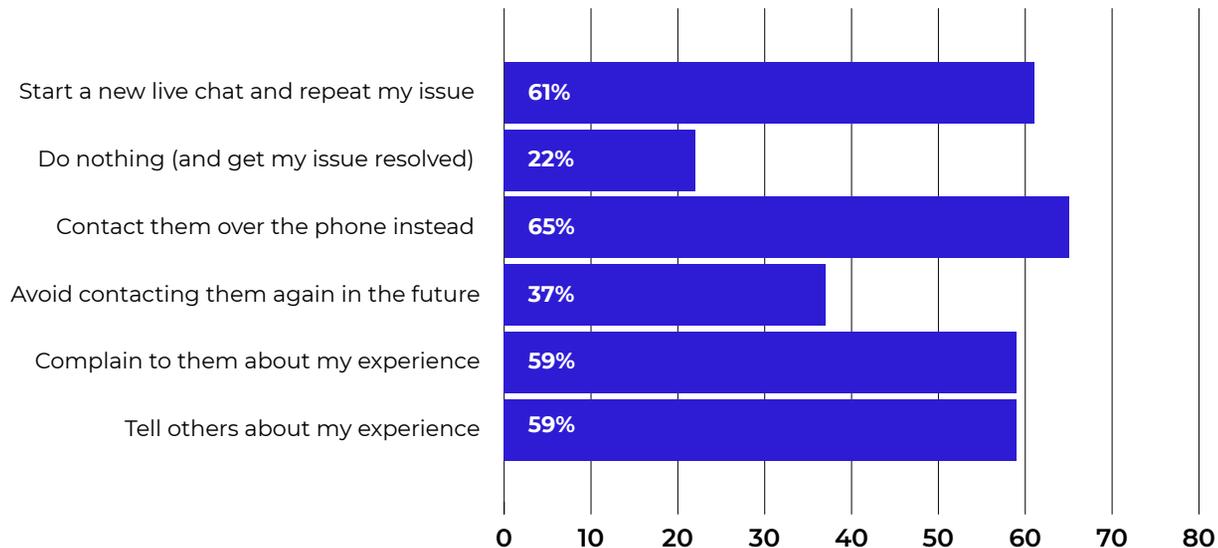


Sometimes I need real-time which simulates an in-person chat and other times I want to switch to “come and go as needed” when I need time to put my thoughts in order.

I have little kids, and they’re not always conducive to finishing a conversation in real time. I do like real time, though, because if I can make it through the whole conversation, it goes much faster.”



HOW CUSTOMERS RESPOND TO CHATS CLOSED BEFORE THEIR ISSUE IS RESOLVED



Problem 3.

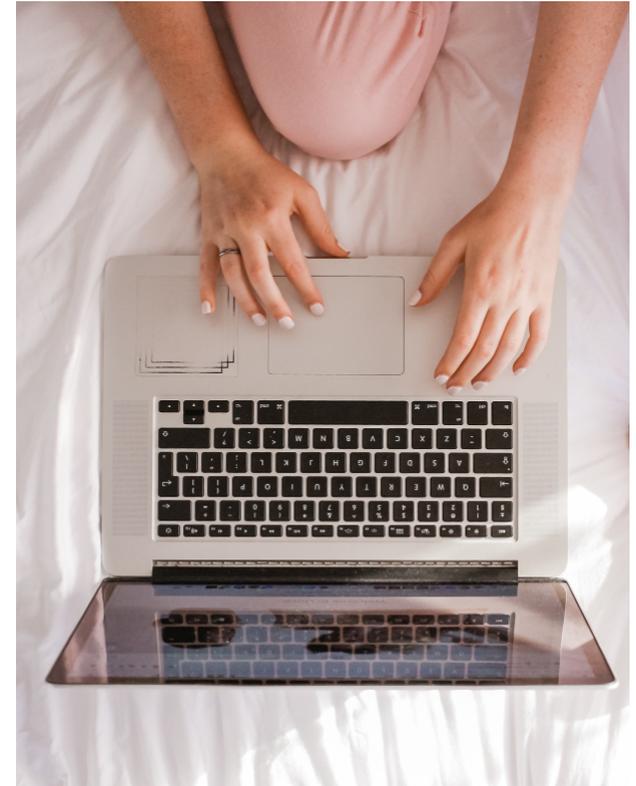
They can't access the chat later

There are myriad reasons consumers may want to refer to their chat conversations. If a customer got busy and then later reengage to resolve their issue, having the full chat history allows them to simply pick up where they left off. They could be troubleshooting a problem and need access to the step-by-step solution offered by the agent during their chat interaction. If they have the same problem/question at a later date, they may want to refer back to what was said rather than contacting the brand again.

With traditional chat, options for accessing those conversations are typically limited

to either printing or emailing a transcript once the session is ended. Of course, some platforms don't have these options, and even if they do, customers may still have to remember to print the transcript or request the email, otherwise it's gone forever.

In our survey, **90%** of consumers told us they want to be able to access their live chat conversation history, [but another recent study reports that 55% of companies](#) don't offer the ability to email or print the chat transcript. This leaves your customers with no choice but to start over if they need to revisit their question or issue.



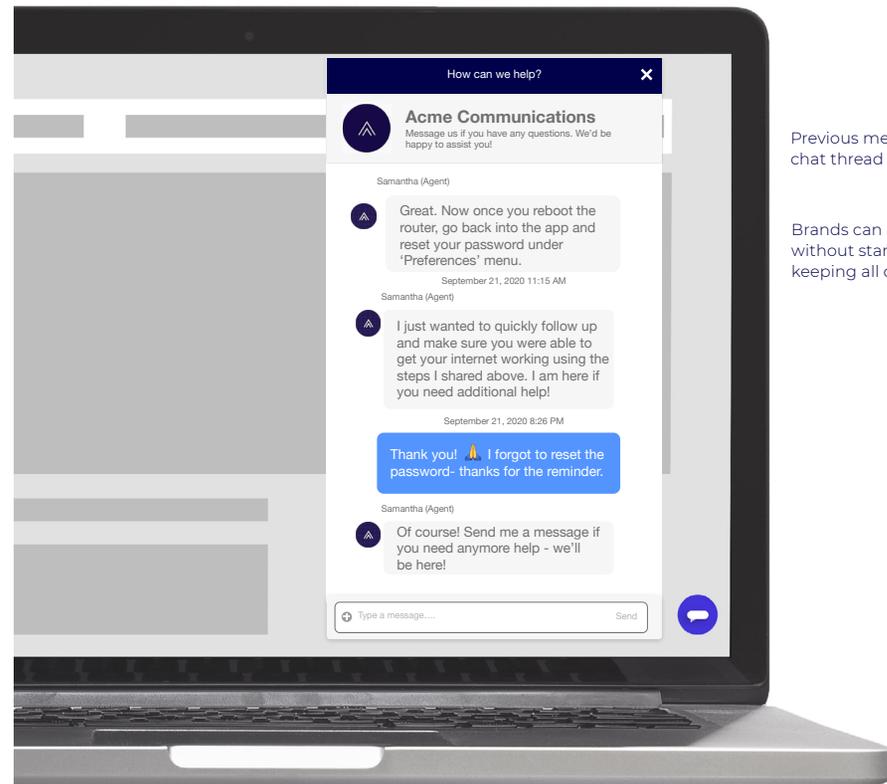
Solution

With modern chat, even when a session ends, the conversation history remains in the thread and is available to both agents and customers indefinitely, so either can access the information or pick up the conversation where they left off. This experience mirrors how they communicate with friends and family: when they open a text thread all of their previous messages are right there in the thread. All they have to do is scroll up.

Another benefit of storing conversation history is that it unlocks the potential for brands to communicate more proactively, which **55% of enterprise brands say** will improve their customer engagement the most. Because modern chat saves the conversation history, agents can follow up with customers a day or two later to make sure the issue was fully resolved, without opening an entirely new thread.



of consumers want to be able to access chat conversation histories



Previous messages remain in the chat thread indefinitely

Brands can proactively follow up without starting a new thread, keeping all context and information

Problem 4.

They're tied to one page, on one device, until the chat ends

As if the limitations of being trapped in a session weren't frustrating enough for consumers, they're exacerbated by the fact that many chat widgets are only available on one page of a website. This presents two potential problems. First, as [one chat UX research study found](#), this leaves many consumers struggling to find the one page where the "Chat With Us" button lives. Second, once they initiate a chat, the customer is unable to browse to other pages without inadvertently closing the chat widget and ending the session. Some chat platforms solve this issue by opening the conversation in an entirely new browser window, but this introduces a host of other issues: opening a new window

takes the user out of the website, clutters their desktop, and makes it easier for them to forget about the chat while browsing. This solution can also be disorienting for novice web users or people with visual impairments, who might not even realize that a new window has opened or experience difficulty switching between windows.

Furthermore, unlike the modern messaging apps consumers use in their everyday lives, live chat typically limits sessions to a single device. There is no ability to start a conversation on your desktop and resume it on your mobile phone, for example. In fact, **45%** of consumers in our survey note one of the top limitations of live chat is that it ties them down to one device.



Solution

Modern chat solutions solve these challenges by making the chat widget persistent. It can be placed on any or every page of your website or app, and customers can expand or collapse the conversation all while continuing to browse pages or navigate away. And if they accidentally close their tab or browser, they can simply navigate back to the website and resume their conversation.

When a user is authenticated or logged in as a customer, modern chat solutions are sophisticated enough to link their chat conversations to their customer profile. This allows the same user to access their chat conversations from any device where they are logged in — much like they

are able to do with messaging apps like Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp. This flexibility offers a level of convenience to customers they have come to expect, and brands who offer this will be rewarded.

- **70%** of consumers would be more likely to buy from brands who offer modern chat where conversations can switch between devices.
- **45%** of consumers say a limitation of live chat is that it ties them to one device
- **70%** of consumers would be more likely to buy from brands who offered modern chat where conversations can switch between devices.



of consumers would be more likely to download a brand's app if it had messaging capabilities such as push notifications when a customer service agent responds to one of their chats/questions

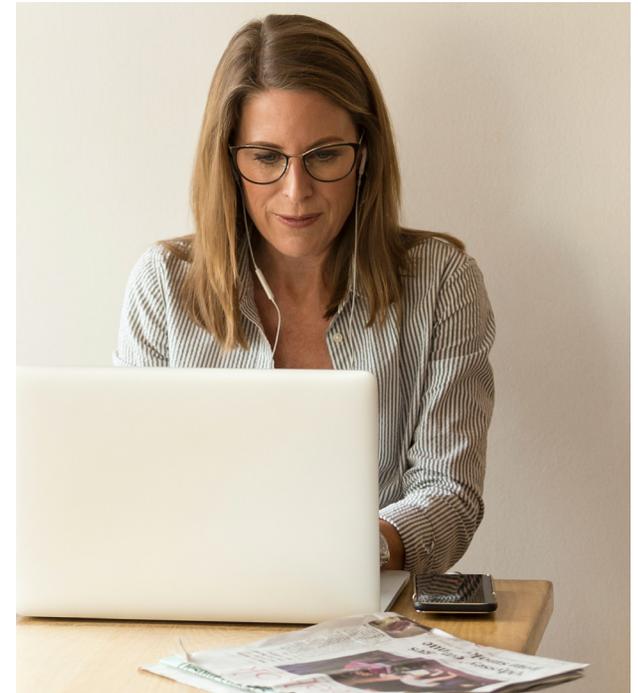
Problem 5.

The user interface is outdated and impersonal

Most live chat solutions were developed decades ago. For this reason, many have an outdated, unfamiliar look and feel to a lot of users — especially those who grew up in the age of the smartphone. In fact, one in five consumers under the age of 36 in our survey told us one of the top limitations of live chat is that it is an “outdated experience.”

Another **19%** of consumers across all ages noted that traditional live chat is “annoying to use.”

In addition to reflecting current design standards, chat should integrate naturally into a website, matching the look and feel of the brand. Everything from the color and font choices to the container styling and brand voice should align with your website to create a sleek, seamless user experience. A chat window that looks and feels different from the rest of the website creates a disjointed customer experience.



Solution

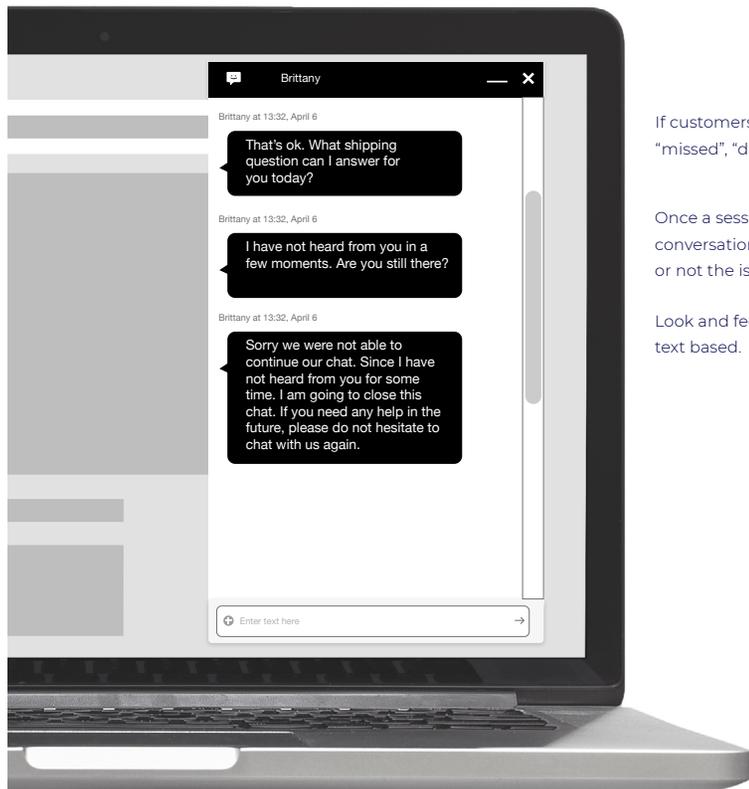
Most modern chat solutions were designed in the last five years and adhere to more current UX design philosophies. They feel more seamless, more on-brand, and reflect the sleek styling consumers have come to expect from their favorite messaging apps.

Additionally, modern chat goes beyond just text to also allow automation, images, buttons, emojis and file sharing, creating the personal, captivating, and intuitive conversation that **64%** of consumers demand.



of consumers aged 18 – 35 say live chat is an outdated experience

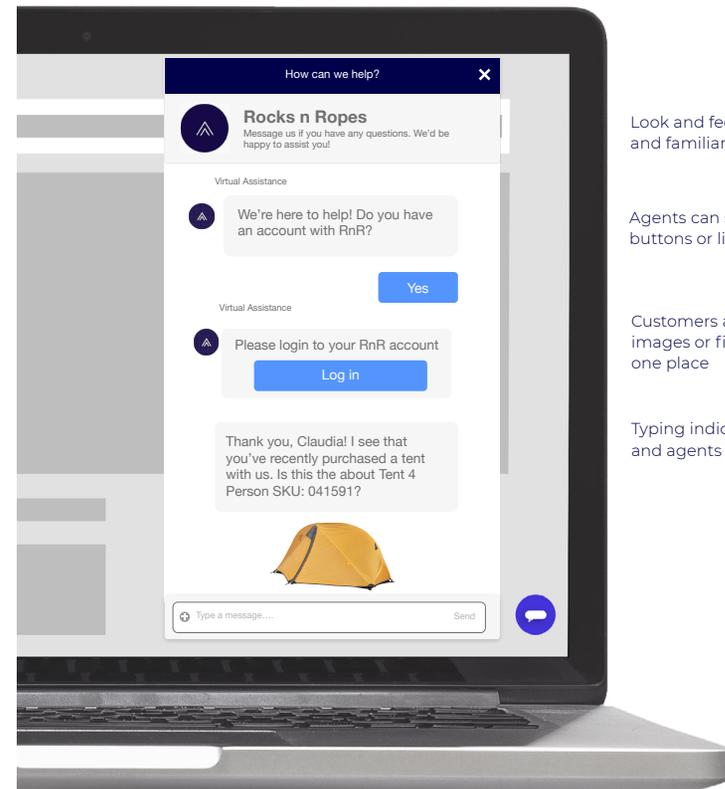
TRADITIONAL CHAT VS. MODERN CHAT



If customers step away, the chat is “missed”, “dropped”, or “abandoned”

Once a session is ended, the conversation history is gone – whether or not the issue was resolved.

Look and feel is outdated, clunky, and text based.



Look and feel is modern and familiar

Agents can send visual, easy-to-use buttons or links in one place

Customers and agents can share images or files, and use emojis in one place

Typing indicators help customers and agents know when to engage

Problem 6.

Most chatbots are overused, annoying, and ineffective

Last year, [Forrester predicted](#) that consumers would revolt against bad chatbots in 2019, and consumers in our 2020 survey confirmed this to be true. Three out of four consumers have some level of familiarity with chatbots, yet very few have positive perceptions of chatbot efficiency, speed, or helpfulness.

In another [research report produced by Acquia](#), **45%** of consumers considered their interactions with chatbots to be “annoying.” Only **35%** think chatbots can solve issues or answer questions faster than a human agent.

Nevertheless, brand use of chatbots is booming. Gartner predicts that by next year, more than **50%** of enterprises will spend more annually on bots and chatbot

creation than traditional mobile app development, and by 2022 chatbots are expected to save businesses \$8 billion.

So brand investment in bots is increasing, while consumer satisfaction with bots is tanking. The reason for this growing divide? Many brands are relying on bots to do too much too soon; they’re building bots to handle **100%** of customer interactions instead of orchestrating bots to work alongside human agents.

And when brands rely too heavily on chatbots, it results in customers receiving robotic, unhelpful responses – which **70%** of consumers find frustrating or very frustrating.



of consumers think chatbots have more access to info or knowledge than a human agent

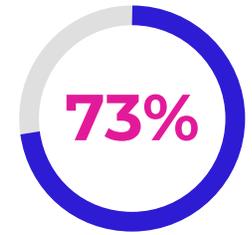
Solution

In our survey, the vast majority of consumers prefer chatbot interactions to be limited.

74% said chatbots should only be used for certain types of customer interactions. To effectively use chatbots for support, brands need to balance business efficiency with customer experience, otherwise they risk alienating consumers. The most important strategy is to use human support when needed. Chatbots can make mistakes that a human agent wouldn't, so there will be times when a person has to step in. Second, brands should be upfront with customers when they're talking to a bot and when they're talking to a person. This increases trust and can help avoid frustration. Finally, it's always

important to keep bot communications concise. Two to three sentences are sufficient for most situations, and can still help divert inquiries and increase agent efficiency.

Ultimately, our survey shows that **53%** of consumers don't care whether a chatbot or a human agent is interacting with them, as long as they get the answer or help they need. But service leaders should strive for more than simply resolving customer issues using bots. They should also aim to improve the customer experience by designing bots that align with broader customer expectations.



of consumers think chatbots should only be used to ask a few questions before passing to a human agent



For more details on how to effectively use chatbots without frustrating customers, check out our guide, [The Bot Balancing Act](#).

[Read now](#)

Conclusion

The time to modernize your chat is now

Consumers want to chat with brands just like they do with friends and family: when and where it is most convenient for them, whether that means real-time communication or sending messages over an extended period of time when life gets busy.

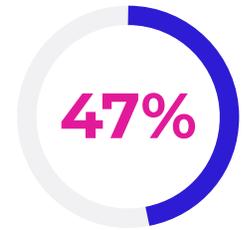
With modern chat, customers aren't limited by designated support hours, don't have to wait on hold until an agent enters the conversation, and can be notified when an agent sends them a message, eliminating the need to wait in a browser or stay connected to their device. This allows richer, more personalized conversations that prioritize issue resolution over brevity.

Our survey indicates that customer satisfaction will increase as a result of this superior experience: **48%** agree they would be more satisfied with customer service if their favorite brand replaced traditional chat with modern chat.

For service leaders used to working within the confines of a single session, this new paradigm can raise questions about how to manage customer conversations, set expectations, define open or resolved cases, handle conversations where the customer takes hours or days to respond, assign conversations to agents, and more.

But many service leaders have been managing these kinds of asynchronous interactions for years over email, social networks and messaging apps.

As new and innovative as modern chat is, support teams can still rely on tried and true strategies to solve problems. And while traditional chat vendors haven't solved many of these problems, most digital-first service providers have robust capabilities and analytics purpose-built for asynchronous conversations.



of consumers would be more likely to recommend their favorite brand to others if they replaced traditional chat

To help you in your journey to chat modernization, here are four things to remember

CHOOSE A CHAT SOLUTION THAT MIMICS CONSUMERS' FAVORITE APPS

Both customers and agents are frustrated with the limitations of traditional live chat software. Customers have a poor user experience, and teams can't improve because they're hamstrung by disjointed, clunky tech. Chatting with customers should be effortless for both, just like messaging a friend. Find a chat solution that can seamlessly toggle between real time and anytime, can span customer conversations across devices, and allows for richer, interactive conversations with a modern UI.

BRING ALL YOUR DIGITAL CHANNELS INTO ONE AGENT EXPERIENCE

Many legacy chat systems are disconnected from other channels — either in an entirely separate tool or a separate workflow/queue. This is inefficient for agents and results in a disjointed experience for customers as they interact across channels. Enterprise brands know this; **70%** agree

that it's difficult or impossible to manage the holistic customer experience when systems, tools, or teams aren't integrated, yet only **20%** have fully integrated their digital customer engagement technologies. Choose a solution that normalizes customer interactions across digital channels, enabling agents to interact digitally with customers from a single, integrated workflow.

LEVERAGE AI AND BOTS, BUT CAUTIOUSLY

In order to keep up with multiplying channels and increasing customer experience expectations, your brand needs to leverage the power of AI, specifically bots. When implemented in a balanced way, bots can offer brilliant, elegant solutions to your care challenges. The temptation to over-implement is real, so start small, think strategically, plan for growth, and build on a future-conscious platform. Doing so holds the promise of great gains for your organization. Not only does automation streamline business functions, helping your

team get more done, faster, it helps deliver better experiences for your customers and frees your agents to focus on the most challenging cases. When your agents are empowered to do more, it helps you achieve what matters: creating customers for life.

MODERNIZE YOUR METRICS

The differences between a synchronous chat platform and an asynchronous platform are huge — from a technical as well as analytics perspective. Many of the 'contact center' metrics chat teams are used to are not easily replicated in an asynchronous environment. Choose a vendor that has experience building real-time, operational analytics for asynchronous engagements so you can effectively manage your workforce and customer experience.