

# The Era of Messaging

How businesses can use conversational AI to create delightful experiences.

EBOOK





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# Introduction

Messaging is the future of customer engagement. In just a few short years, messaging has impacted our interactions with friends, coworkers, and the companies with which we do business. In fact, a great number of those businesses have already integrated messaging into their communication strategies.

But that doesn't mean a company can just assign agents, or deploy bots, and start messaging customers. It's far more complicated than that. Deploying modern messaging requires an integrated customer service platform, advanced AI technology, and staff with the skills to operate them both.

Such challenges, however, aren't insurmountable. All it takes is a willingness on your part to engage customers in the way they prefer, and the right partner with the right capabilities to make messaging an effective part of your customer service mix.



## The numbers tell the story<sup>1</sup>...

54%

Consumers who have higher expectations for customer service **today than they did a year ago.**

#1

The rank consumers gave customer service as a reason **to trust a company.**

89%

The number of businesses Gartner predicts will compete mainly on **customer experience.**

# Why messaging is vital

## Consumers have high expectations

Customer behaviors are changing. Nobody wants to navigate annoying phone menus or fill out a lengthy website form. Few have the time nor the patience to wait on hold for a voice agent. Many want to communicate from their smart phone without turning on their laptop. Customers prefer to interact on their timetable, and they want to pause and resume conversations at their convenience. They want simple and straightforward self-service, yet they also want the option to connect to a knowledgeable agent whenever they need live help.



## The numbers tell the story<sup>4</sup>...

42%

People on the planet who have a smartphone.

87%

Smartphone owners who use messaging.

## The move to messaging is happening fast

Messaging is currently experiencing a wave of adoption around the whole world. People spend more time messaging than they do on just about every other online activity. Billions of messages are transmitted each and every day. 75% of US consumers say a text message is the best way to reach them.<sup>2</sup> 75% also report they would prefer that businesses message them when communicating about essential service updates and purchases.<sup>3</sup>

The messaging public is rapidly turning to channels like WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger to communicate with friends, family, coworkers, and everyone else in their lives. This trend hasn't gone unnoticed by the major messaging services.

- ➔ With 1.5 billion active users across 180 countries, WhatsApp grew by 3,162% in 2019.
- ➔ Facebook Messenger saw 50% growth in that same period, and it's no surprise. Over 20 billion messages on Facebook Messenger flow between consumers, people, and businesses every month.
- ➔ Google Messaging has a potential reach of 2.5 billion Android devices.
- ➔ Apple Business Chat can access 1.4 billion iOS devices.



## The numbers tell the story<sup>5</sup>...

# #1

With a CSAT of 98%, messaging apps have the top customer satisfaction rating of any channel.

## Businesses need to adapt

With the skyrocketing popularity of messaging, businesses can't afford to ignore its potential. There's little doubt that a seismic disruption is coming. Our voice-centric world is shifting into a messaging-centric one, right before our eyes. Automation technologies and evolving consumer behaviors are driving the transformation, and businesses will need to respond.

Today's organizations must meet consumers where they are. They must make interactions effortless and efficient. And, perhaps most important, they must leave customers feeling satisfied with the experience. But first, these companies will have to change their point of view. They can no longer consider messaging as "just another channel to add." They will need to view it as a way to identify and resolve customer requests.

**Leading call center providers estimate that between 40% and 60% of inbound contact center calls are a result of a Google search.**

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## Business challenges

### Digital transformation continues

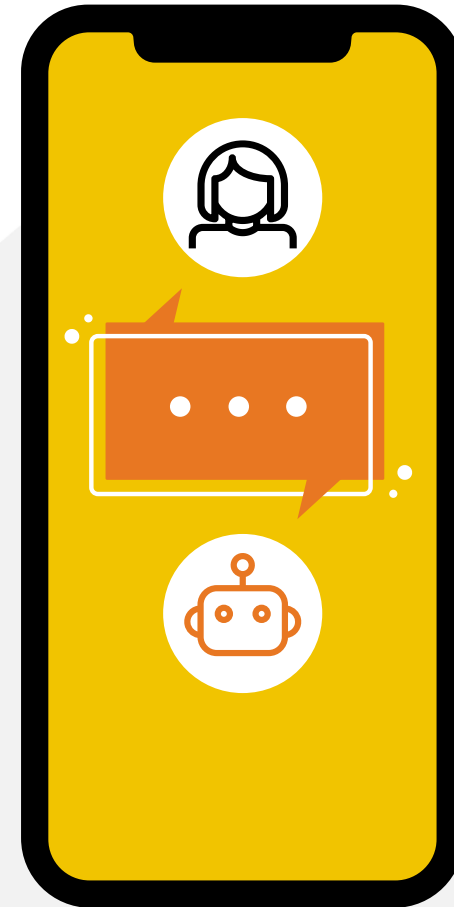
Despite the popularity of messaging, many companies haven't gotten the memo. Many of today's contact centers remain voice-centric—90% of all agents are voice agents with the other 10% being digital agents. Most callers begin online and get numbers from searches, maps, contact pages, or business directory services.

Some companies are simply unaware of the importance of messaging. Others consider the addition of messaging to be a burden, viewing it as one more channel they'll need to support. As a result, these businesses haven't yet transformed messaging into the highly effective channel it promises to become.

And for those organizations who believe in the potential of messaging, the road is no less daunting. Many don't realize just how disruptive it can be to integrate a messaging channel into their current infrastructure. Some businesses discover it the hard way—deploying their new channels prematurely, watching the channels fail, and then shutting them down because they weren't ready.

## Messaging is complex

Deploying a messaging channel can be more complicated than some organizations first think. For comparison, take chat. Chat is a traditional, synchronous mode of communication in which a single, short-lived interaction takes place, and the conversation history is deleted. Short and sweet. Messaging interactions, on the other hand, live in the asynchronous world where conversations can continue across multiple channels and over long periods of time. Users communicate wherever and whenever it's most convenient for them, pausing at times, and returning to the conversation later. In addition, the conversation histories are preserved so that they can be referenced in the future.





## Operational obstacles await

**Asynchronous communication is a new concept. And the questions businesses have about it are numerous:**

- ➔ Where do we start?
- ➔ Which channel is best for my company?
- ➔ Can we handle the additional volume?
- ➔ How will it affect our customers' experience?

Asynchronous messaging also requires a slightly different operational model. Contact centers will need to sit down and rethink and refine their agent incentive models, program success criteria, and key performance indicators, as well as their staffing and scheduling process.

The transition from using synchronous chat to using asynchronous messaging is a significant one. As with any transformational change, there will always be some resistance. People are comfortable with what they know, and asynchronous messaging presents "the unknown." This unease can sometimes impede the progress of deployment.



## The path to success

### Integrating major messaging channels

As we mentioned earlier, users are flocking to the big messaging channels. Providers such as Facebook Messenger, Apple Business Chat, WhatsApp, and Google Business Messaging are experiencing unprecedented growth. For your company to share in this success, you'll need to support customers on these messaging channels, as well as any new major channels that emerge in the future.

### Adapting your content and experiences

Messaging is not a single channel, but rather a collection of channels with a UI defined by each messaging provider. To seem familiar to customers, the messaging experience should leverage the native features of each channel, such as payment services, calendars, list pickers, quick replies, and so on.

Many companies will develop a solution for only one messaging channel. When the time comes to add another, they deploy a second solution. Before they know it, they are struggling to support messaging with multiple platforms, multiple bots, and numerous sets of resources.

A much simpler alternative is to manage the various messaging channels with a single, central platform. By approaching it this way, you can automate and deploy the same bots, content, and agent handling procedures whenever you decide to launch a new channel. In essence, you are building your solution once and deploying it everywhere.

There's an even greater benefit to this approach. Because every one of the channels that you create all use the very same systems, the user experience will be consistent, regardless of the channel users choose to first engage your company. Rather than communicating with a marketing representative on one channel, a bot with limited functionality on another, and a capable conversational AI system feeding into human agents on a third, users will experience the same kind of interaction regardless of their entry point.





## Delivering blended service

Orchestrating conversations that involve both AI and human agents is no longer an “either/or” proposition. Companies can now enjoy the best of both worlds, taking advantage of the best aspects of both digital and human interactions. AI enables you to determine customer intent, deliver consistently accurate answers, or take relevant actions, all on a very large scale. Human agents, meanwhile, offer the kind personal touch—through intuition, empathy and experience—that AI-based systems can only emulate.

Human agents can step in when necessary to accelerate issue resolution. They can also be called into a conversation when a customer requests a topic or category that the AI system hasn’t been trained to recognize. Similarly, AI can relieve human agents of mundane tasks and provide a broad range of advice based on the collective knowledge of the entire agent population.

Ultimately, the adoption of approaches that combine artificial intelligence with human intelligence will be driven by business needs and customer experience priorities. But the mandate is clear—organizations must meet their customers where they are and communicate with the tools they prefer.

## Additional messaging features:

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- ➔ Messaging can be integrated into multiple touchpoints throughout the entire customer experience.
- ➔ Messaging can be your customers' first point of contact when you can position it on search engines.
- ➔ It can appear as a prominent feature on your website or mobile app.
- ➔ Voice to Messaging gives callers the option to initiate a Messaging conversation instead of waiting on hold.
- ➔ Due to its flexible nature, messaging also simplifies the process of adding new and emerging service channels.

## Messaging benefits

### How businesses benefit

Messaging technology features a number of capabilities that increase efficiency, decrease costs, and build customer trust.

By using AI to understand a consumer's intent, you can quickly route customers to the most appropriate virtual or human resource. Meanwhile, messaging records a history of the interactions to provide contextual assistance during future engagements. With alternative POD style service models, any agent can pick right up where the last one left off. And by setting issue resolution expectations, you'll reduce your need for peak resourcing models with live chat. Combined, these capabilities will reduce your IT dependency and lower both your cost per contact and your cost per resolved conversion.

Messaging produces better outcomes for every customer interaction as well. Bots and human agents collaborate seamlessly to provide a blended messaging experience that resolves issues faster. AI-driven technologies help customers help themselves and increase self-service rates. Enabling customers to engage with minimal effort, at their convenience, across every channel, can be a significant differentiator for your brand. In the end, your customers' satisfaction will grow, and their loyalty will strengthen.

**By incorporating messaging into your service model, you give customers exactly what they want.**

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## How customers benefit

What people like about messaging is that it's easy. What they don't like about customer service is that it's not. By incorporating messaging into your service model, you give customers exactly what they want.

With messaging integrated into search engines, you make it easy for customers to find you. You create a consistent experience across all channels. You allow customers to inquire and respond whenever it suits them. And your unique blend of AI technology and human agents creates a seamless, satisfying experience. Customers will appreciate your responsive service and trust the relationship you build together.



## Why [24]7.ai?

### We do it all on one platform

[24]7.ai can help you map out the customer journey across channels and evolve your service model to include messaging. You get built-in support for web chat, Facebook Messenger, Apple Business Chat, Google Business Messaging, and WhatsApp. And if you're thinking ahead to the messaging channels that will become popular in the future, that won't be a problem. [24]7.ai uses an open API system that allows you to easily add additional messaging channels as your needs evolve, even Voice to Messaging experiences. The best part is this—with [24]7.ai you build the platform once and then deploy it everywhere across your enterprise.

### A quick success story

A major credit monitoring provider asked us to help them optimize Messaging placement on their web site. Once we did, they began to experience ten times their typical messaging volume. Even though the messaging volume skyrocketed, the deployment was a success because the combination of AI and human intelligence helped manage the volume appropriately. The bots answered all the basic questions, and human assistance was only required for complex inquiries.



## We offer unrivaled operational capability

At [24]7.ai, we know AI, automation, and support technology better than anyone. We've been at this since 2000, and our expertise in both AI and customer service has grown immensely since then. Our team also has extensive contact center experience. So, while we have an intimate understanding of the technology that drives our platform, we also understand the demands faced by agents in your call centers. Lastly, we're the company that's pioneering asynchronous business messaging. If you agree that messaging represents the future of customer service, with [24]7.ai, you couldn't be in better hands.



## The numbers tell the story<sup>1</sup>...

30%

Customer journeys that begin and end in live, **agent-assisted channels**.

9%

Customer journeys that begin and end **in self-service channels**.

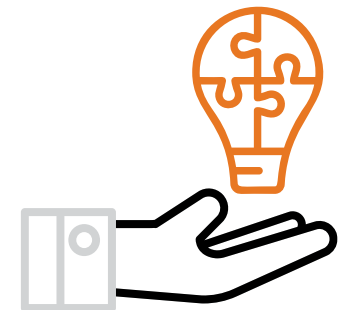
61%

Customer journeys that begin in self-service channels but end **in live, agent-assisted channels**.

## We know conversational AI inside and out

While customers are open to using new service channels, they also continue to use the higher-cost, traditional voice channels that they always have. Gartner found, after examining over 8,000 customer journeys, that most customers use both live channels and newer self-service channels in their attempt to resolve issues.

Naturally, when customers use multiple channels to resolve issues, it makes managing the customer service experience more complex and more costly. That is precisely why conversational AI is so vital. If you don't use automation to streamline services and increase efficiency, your efforts are doomed to fail in the long run. [24]7.ai excels at conversational AI, and we can make sure you leverage automation in ways that make your business more successful.





## The future of customer service

### Taking customer service into the future

The proliferation of messaging is undeniable. Within the next two years, messaging is destined to profoundly change the way that businesses and customers interact. Any company that fails to recognize this and doesn't adopt business messaging risks being left behind while those who do adopt messaging gain more market share and reduce the risk of traditional channels failing. [24]7.ai, with its innovative [messaging solution](#), is poised to help organizations improve customer experiences, earn greater trust, and become more competitive.

**It was only a matter of time until some provider created a customer service solution that finally put everything together.**

**That provider is [24]7.ai.**

#### Sources:

1. [Customer Thermometer](#)
2. International Smartphone Mobility Report by Infomate
3. Interview with Joshua March of Conversocial
4. [Statista](#)
5. [24]7.ai customer data

Thank You.



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[24]7.ai is redefining how artificial intelligence and human insight are combined to produce satisfying customer experiences. Our conversational AI platform predicts consumer intent to create frictionless interactions, across every channel, that strengthen relationships and increase brand loyalty, at the lowest cost per resolved conversation.

**For more information visit: [www.247.ai](http://www.247.ai)**