

[24]7.ai

Transforming Your Retail and eCommerce CX with AI

Many retail companies are struggling to keep up with the recent pace of change. Find out how the right AI-powered solution can help you meet customer expectations, stay one step ahead of the curve, and deliver measurably better outcomes.

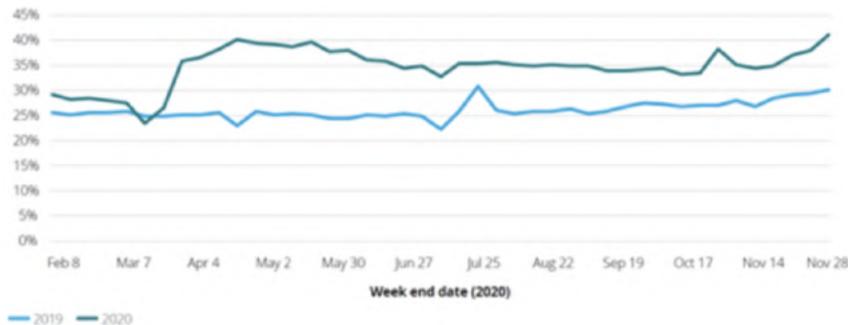
HOW-TO-GUIDE

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Evolution of shopping

In recent years, changing customer behavior coupled with digital transformation has reshaped the retail industry. Commerce has increasingly moved from brick-and-mortar stores to online shopping and the global pandemic threw that shift into overdrive. Changes that may have taken years to occur in the pre-COVID world instead happened in a matter of months—and many traditional retailers are scrambling as a result.



US retail spending – % of total spend online (online share of total retail spend by week)

When the pandemic forced businesses around the world to close their doors overnight, stores that made most of their sales in person suddenly had to accommodate surging retail eCommerce volume as well as customer inquiries. With businesses caught off guard and agents also moving to a work-from-home environment, customers experienced long wait times—which led to high abandonment rates and low satisfaction, damaging many brand reputations.

To meet this sudden demand, retailers needed to shift high-cost voice calls to lower-cost digital channels. They needed to scale automation. And they needed to create new operational efficiencies.

Most importantly, they needed to do it all fast.

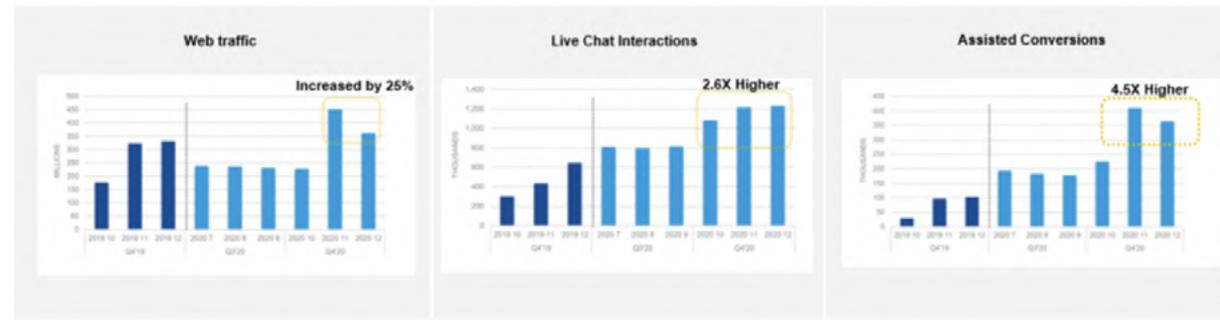
However, as many retailers have realized, fast-tracking digital customer experience (CX) transformation is neither simple nor easy. For many in the industry, early implementation of new CX strategies produced mediocre outcomes. The problem is, driving real efficiencies while also maintaining the kind of high-quality CX today's shoppers demand calls for a carefully crafted combination of proven tactics and purpose-built technology.

What can we expect in the post-pandemic retail world?

Many of the new behaviors people adopted during lockdown will continue, changing the way we shop. Customers might not be going into stores—at least, not as often as they used to. For retailers, this means you need to level-up your website to ensure they can get whatever they need online, including help.

Retail Traffic Migrated from In-Store to Online in Q2 2020

[24]7.ai retail clients faced an astonishing increase in consumer web traffic, chats, and messaging.



As more and more shoppers get Digital, identifying and predicting consumer intent, and understanding their journeys is critical.

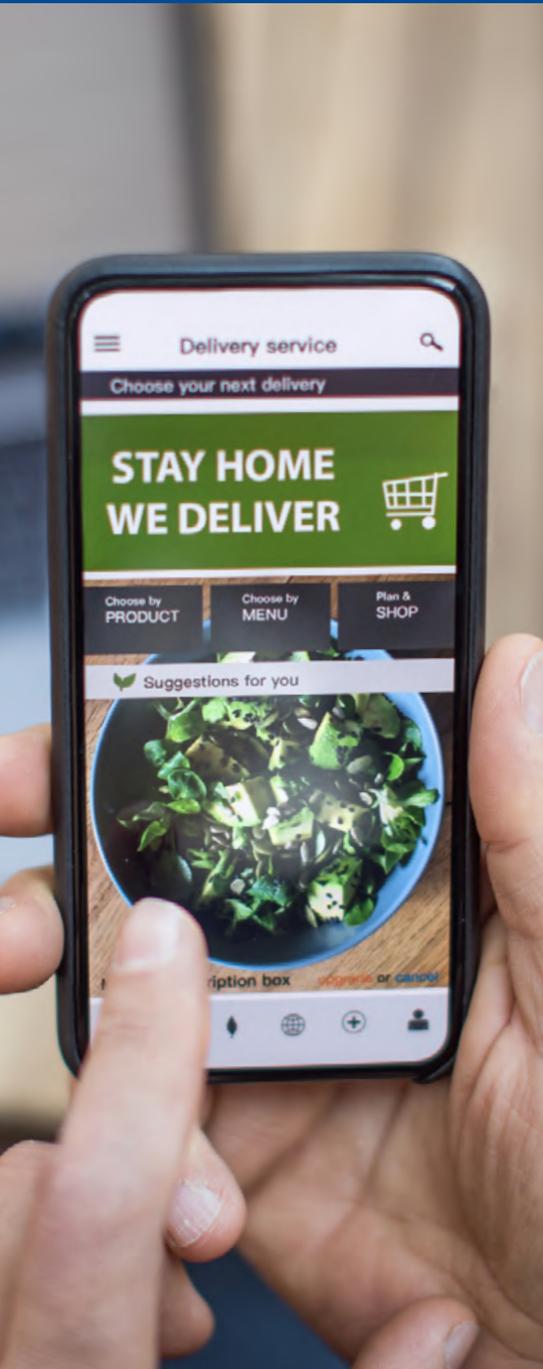
Source: [Retail Traffic Migrates from In-Store to Online. How's That Going?](#)

This change also calls for cultivating your digital brand experience to parallel your in-store brand experience, and shifting your CX strategy to stay relevant. Being proactive instead of reactive. Offering personalized recommendations. Making returns easy. And making payments simple and secure.

When it comes to online shopping, customers will always turn to a trusted brand first. That's why now is the time to focus on CX transformation, powered by intelligent AI.

The new normal means:

- Less in-store shopping, support, and returns
- More online purchases, inquiries, and interactions
- Web presence is central to the brand experience
- Personalization at scale requires dynamic AI



02 Reimagining Your Contact Center With AI and Automation

The best shopping experiences share the same qualities whether they happen in person or online. Convenience. Ease. And personalization. A successful, digitally transformed CX is also seamless, even when it occurs across channels.

Retail investment priorities for 2021



Source: [Deloitte, 2021 Retail Industry Outlook: The New Rules of Retail](#)

For digital brand interactions, AI makes the customer journey better by automating most tasks, making it easier to get things done. With an omnichannel platform, AI can maintain the context of any conversation—even across channels. This lets shoppers come back to it at their convenience without losing the thread. An advanced AI system can understand everyday language and even predict customer intent, anticipating needs and proactively offering support. The goal is to understand what your customers mean, not just what they say.

No matter what you sell, consumers want easy online retail experiences. The simplest way for shoppers to find what they need without waiting for an agent is through effective self-service. From a brand perspective, the easiest way to handle common inquiries and keep up with rising volumes without increased staffing is by integrating an intelligent chatbot into digital and voice channels. Don't waste valuable agent hours on simple questions such as "product details" or "store hours." Instead, automate those queries and escalate the more complex, high-value issues to agents for further assistance.

Providing quick, accurate answers on your website, app, or other channels, such as social media, messaging, and IVR, helps to build customer loyalty as well as driving conversions. And for the contact center, increasing automation helps to reduce repeat calls, increase first contact resolution, and boost agent productivity. Plus, it improves satisfaction for both customers and agents.

Undertaking a CX transformation initiative can be overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. To help savvy retailers reach your CX goals, we've broken it down into five areas of focus.

“ AI investment is particularly important right now because of margin compression. By investing more in AI, it could create efficiencies while reacting to customers' needs more quickly. ”

Deloitte, 2021 Retail Industry Outlook

“
In 2020, 42% of US online adults said that it was important for retailers to offer live online chat on their websites, up from 27% in 2019.”

Forrester, The State of Chat in Retail 2021

#1: Increasing web and digital presence

What customers expect

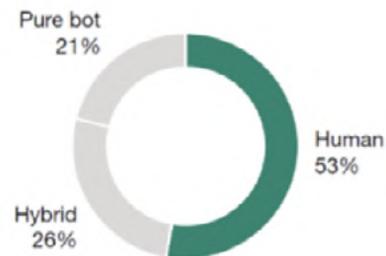
In the post-pandemic world, customers expect a similar experience whether they're shopping in-store or online. They want shopping to be integrated into chat and messaging channels too, so they can not only ask questions but find what they're looking for and even make purchases with maximum convenience. And they expect personalized, proactive recommendations.

Where to start

Meet your customers where they are by adding digital retail entry points. If you don't have a chatbot—more specifically, an effective chatbot—on your website, start there. Chat has become a must-have for consumers, an easy option when they need help or have a problem. And chatbots are able to offer live support around the clock.

According to a recent [Forrester](#) report, the global pandemic has driven increased chat adoption for two reasons: to give consumers choice, and to create cost efficiencies—because experienced chat agents can handle five to seven concurrent conversations and chatbots can handle even more. Chat also helps drive conversions by giving consumers the information they need to buy, not just browse. Other web entry points to consider include checkout, error codes, and email. And you can replace knowledge articles with an FAQ chatbot for a more conversational experience.

1-3 Most chat experiences are with humans



Base: 230 chat experiences

1-4 Most chat experiences are synchronous



Base: 230 chat experiences

Source: Forrester's 2020 State Of Conversational Interfaces Evaluation

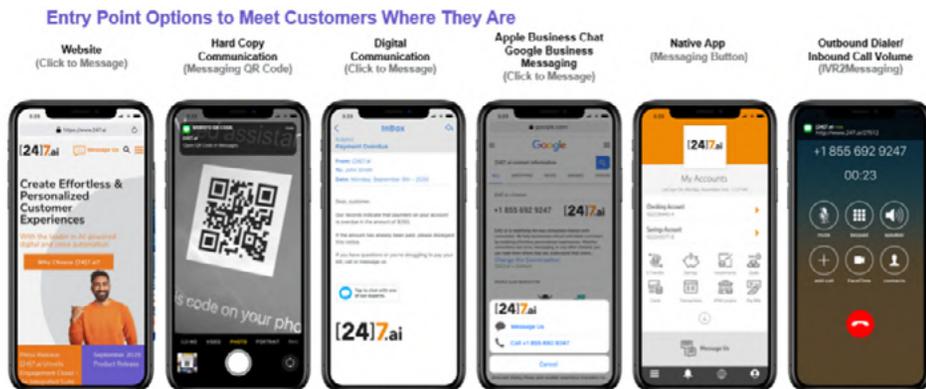
03 What It Takes: 5 Keys to Transforming Retail CX for the New Reality

Next, consider asynchronous messaging channels. People are already using messaging apps every day to stay in touch with friends and family. The next logical step is to use them to contact businesses, too. Many CX leaders are already meeting their customers on their favorite messaging apps—from Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp to Apple Business Chat and Google Business Messages.

Messaging helps brands:

- Meet your customers where they are
- Fit the conversation into their day
- Increase contact center volume + efficiencies

Messaging offers multiple entry points, including email, QR code, and native apps. When customers search for your business using Google Maps or Safari search, you can suggest messaging to deflect high-cost calls. [24]7.ai even offers an IVR to messaging flow to help you get ahead of escalations.



While synchronous messaging can be helpful for urgent issues, asynchronous messaging is often preferred—because consumers can come back to the conversation at their convenience. And in the contact center, agent productivity skyrockets when they're managing multiple asynchronous conversations.

How AI can help

The right AI platform can predict what consumers are trying to do, prioritize urgent queries, and prompt agents with quick responses. To increase conversions even more, add personalization into the equation—for example, proactively offering information or options about a specific product the customer is looking at. And natural language processing (NLP) helps create conversational, natural chatbot experiences that feel human. Adding AI-assisted and proactive bots that drive deeper engagement also helps to increase revenue.

#2: Automating journeys and increasing self-service

What customers expect

When it comes to self-service, shoppers expect convenience, speedy resolution, and seamless returns. They want to be able to make online payments easily and securely. And now, they also want the option to buy online and pickup in store (BOPIS) or curbside—quickly and without any hassle.

03 What It Takes: 5 Keys to Transforming Retail CX for the New Reality

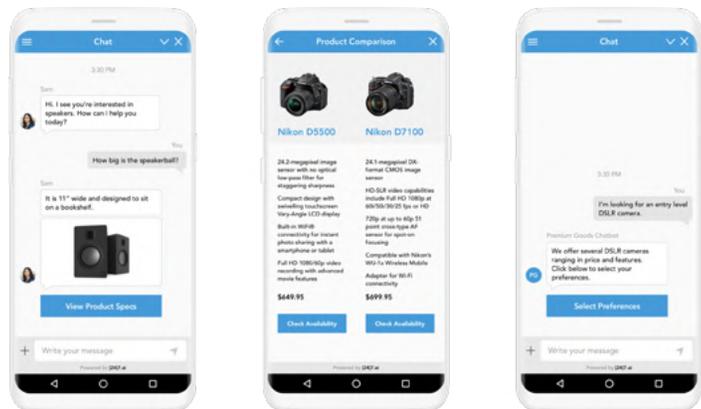
Where to Start

Combine insights from your customer interaction data with AI intent models to determine where and how to automate online retail experiences that matter the most. We'll cover this in more depth in the next section, but here are a few of the top retail journeys to automate.

Customer Acquisition

Win new customers by making it simple and seamless to get the information they need.

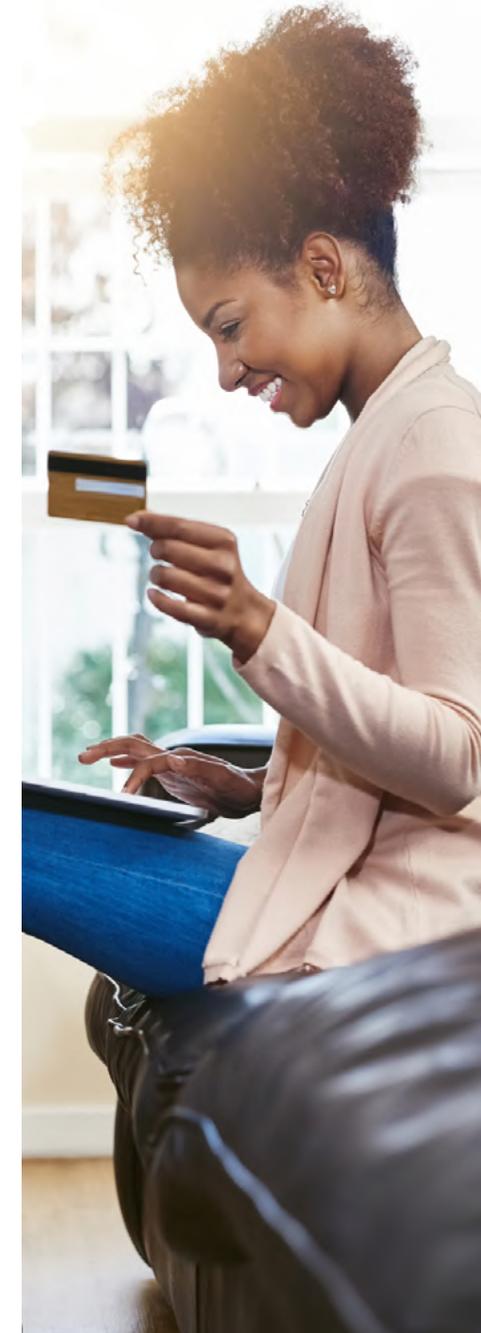
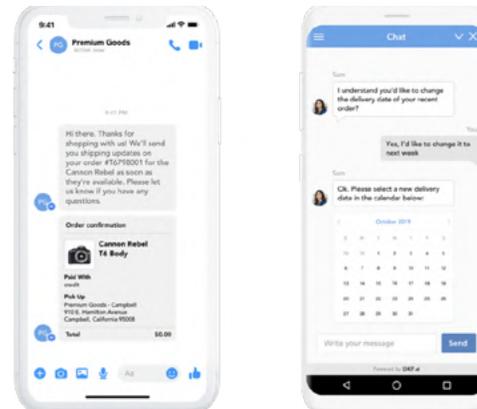
- Research, compare, and recommend products
- Targeting and personalization
- Cart and checkout experiences
- Proactive outreach to improve demand



Retention and loyalty/customer service

Keep your customers happy so they keep coming back.

- Check order status
- Report missing items/order not received
- Price match
- Coupons
- Account management



“
**Half of consumers
said their most
preferred starting
point for their
holiday shopping
journey was online
search engines or
online-only retailers**
”

Deloitte, “2020 Deloitte
Holiday Retail Survey,”
October 2020

How Can AI Help

With so many consumers shopping digitally, you need a bot that can do more than solve simple inquiries. An intelligent AI-powered solution can really understand what customers are trying to do—not just basic intents, but multi-turn conversations and multi-part needs.

While most bots struggle with interactions that rely on customer history and context from other channels, an intelligent virtual assistant or chatbot can understand context, discern intent, and communicate in everyday language, making conversations feel natural. An advanced bot can even detect when a customer is upset or unhappy and escalate the conversation to an agent to triage before it’s too late.

In addition to responsiveness and accuracy, the right bot can maximize intent coverage by allowing you to build content once and deploy on any channel. When customers are able to ask questions, get support, and process transactions seamlessly, that’s a good brand interaction. And happy shoppers are more likely to keep coming back, boosting both short- and long-term revenue.

#3: Making life easier for agents, too

What customers expect

Whatever channel customers use to connect with your brand, they expect the experience to be seamless—especially if they get transferred across channels or escalated to an agent. That means no starting over. And they want any issues to be resolved as quickly as possible, with minimal effort.

Where to start

Customers aren’t the only ones who benefit from AI. Automated workflows and AI-powered prompts help your agents be more efficient and effective with less effort. Start by identifying which agent workflows can be automated to reduce workloads, relieve them from repetitive, mundane tasks, and free them up to focus on the more high-value customer needs.

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How AI can help

[24]7 Agent Assist integrates with your knowledgebase to dynamically deliver the just-right nugget of information at just the right time. Offering smart guidance at every step helps agents drive more productive, personalized conversations.

#4: Visualization

What customers expect

With more purchases being made online, shoppers want to be able to compare products the same way they would if they were in store. Comparison shopping helps customers make better purchase decisions, faster—increasing revenue while reducing returns.

Where to start

Implement interactive visual cards on your chatbot and messaging channels to let customers compare product and offer details on their screen without leaving the chat or messaging conversation. Visual cards can even be used to transform IVR calls into rich, interactive digital experiences—with automatic smartphone detection.

How AI can help

An AI-powered CX platform can render relevant cards during automated voice and digital conversations and present them to the customer, increasing containment and self-service success. And with an omnichannel platform like the [\[24\]7.ai Engagement Cloud](#), you can build visual content once and deploy it on any channel, increasing operational efficiency as you scale.

#5: Content adaptation

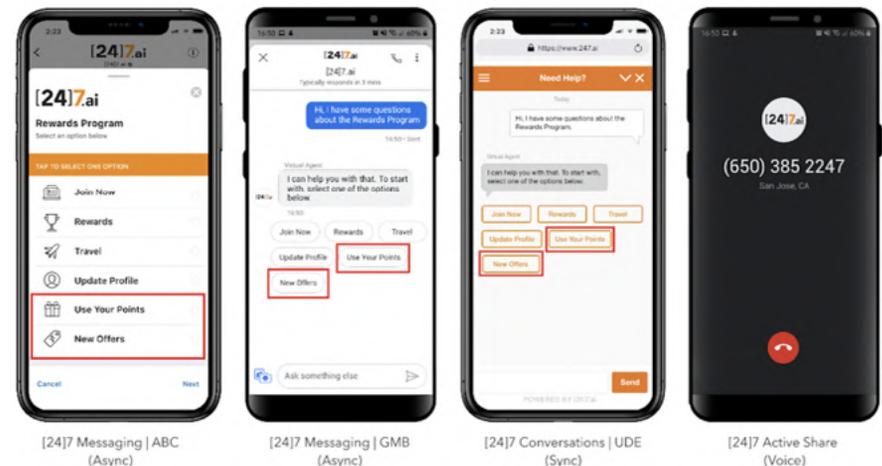
What customers expect

With so many devices, channels, and touchpoints to choose from, delivering a consistent experience wherever customers connect with your brand is vital. While each channel has its own unique requirements and user experience, from the shopper's perspective, they just want to see the same thing no matter which channel device, app, or channel they're using.

Where to start

The key to creating consistent experiences across channels is content adaptation. This allows brands to create content once and deploy it anywhere, with automatic adaptation for various digital and messaging channels—for example, using quick replies on Facebook Messenger versus list pickers and time pickers on Apple Business Chat.

Content Adaptation for Adding Options
Build once, deploy everywhere



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How AI can help

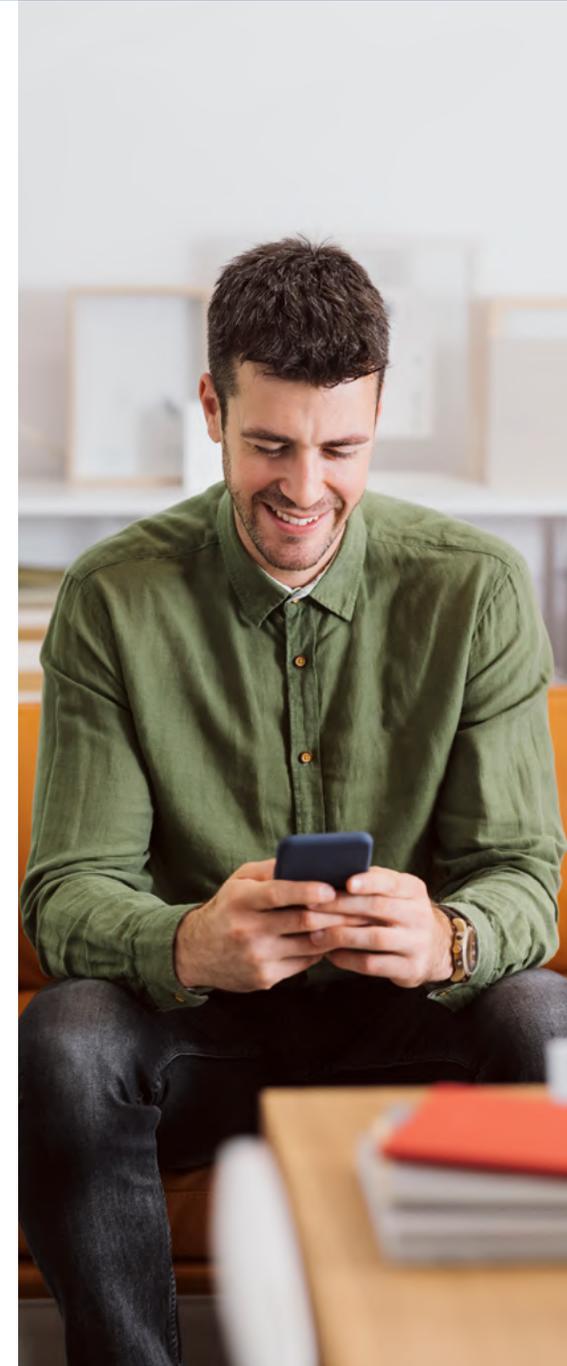
The right platform can automatically adapt content for any messaging channel, including Facebook Messenger, Apple Business Chat, and Google Business Messages, as well as traditional SMS and web. This allows content designers to focus on conversational goals, mapping, and outcomes, without having to worry about translating content for each channel.

For example, if a customer carrying out a conversation on Apple Business Chat needs to make a payment, that would be rendered in ApplePay. But if the conversation took place on SMS or web, a standard secure payment card would be presented instead. It's all about minimizing effort and maximizing ease.

Content Adaptation for Card Designer Build once, deploy everywhere

Fully Self-Serve Card Designer

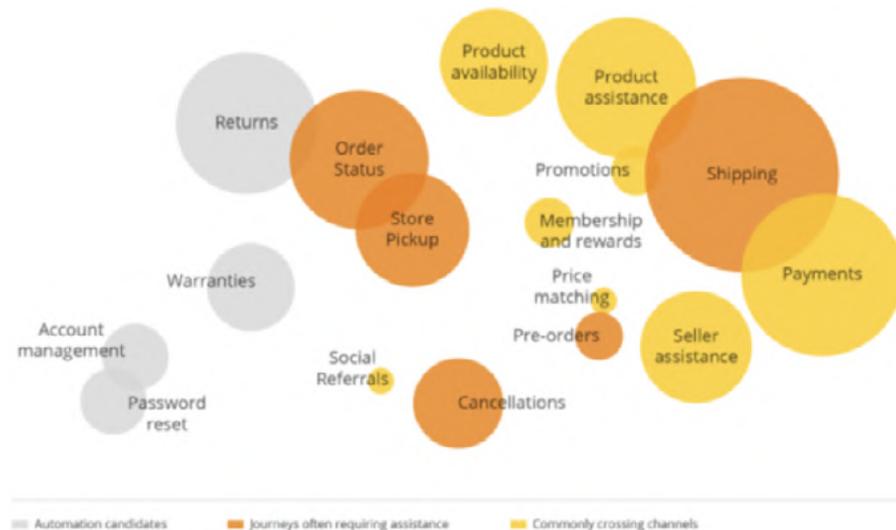
[24]7 Messaging | ABC (Async) [24]7 Messaging | GMB (Async) [24]7 Conversations | UDE (Sync) [24]7 Active Share (Agent Calls) [24]7 Vivid Speech (Voices)



Step 1: Identify

Start by analyzing your existing customer data to figure out which journeys you want to automate. Generally speaking, FAQs are a good place to start as they don't require a lot of personalization. Once you see which FAQs are performing well and which have low containment, you can determine where you need to increase automation to support more complex, transactional intents.

An intent discovery tool makes this step easy by combining customer interaction insights with prebuilt intent models to determine where and how to automate the online retail experiences that matter most.



Step 2: Build and test

Next, take stock of your requirements, content, and tools, so you know what you have to work with. For example, look at your business rules, knowledgebase content, what APIs and capabilities you have, and any self-serve tools that are available to you. Now comes the fun part—building and testing your flows and prompts. While this may sound daunting, if you get everything in order first and you have the right technology, it's actually pretty simple.

Step 3: Continuously optimize

Once you've rolled out your automated journeys, measure the performance and continually fine-tune flows to improve outcomes. This applies to both customer and agent services. Set your KPIs and check them on a regular basis—either daily, weekly, or monthly. Monitor your systems around the clock and look at which intents are being contained and which are escalating, so you know where you need to make changes.

Using reports and analytics to look at the big picture will also help you ensure that shoppers are being routed to best channel for fast resolution. [24]7.ai also offers professional services consulting, which lets you outsource this step to our industry experts. We'll help you reduce call volumes, increase digital and IVR containment, and deliver the best possible experience every time consumers interact with your brand.

What kind of metrics can retailers expect? Here are a few success metrics [24]7.ai has helped top global retail brands achieve through AI-powered CX transformation.

Customer success story: Omnichannel global retailer

When the pandemic struck, this multi-brand business needed help getting its digital experience up to speed. [24]7.ai provided an aggressive 90-day launch strategy to deliver:

- **32%** of customer contacts moved to digital within 60 days
- **86%** FAQ bot answer rate with immediate resolution
- **36%** automation containment within 90 days
- **188%** higher volumes handled than projected
- **4.2/5** CSAT rating—a 15% improvement

Customer success story: Large US consumer tech retailer

Due to its multi-year focus on digital transformation, this brand was ready for the shift to eCommerce—and [24]7.ai helped them scale up at speed in 2020:

- **300%** growth in digital interactions handled through [24]7 Chat
- **290%** year-over-year growth in digital interactions on Black Friday 2020
- **3X** more concurrent agents in holiday 2020 than in previous year

[24]7.ai can help you transform your retail CX for the new normal. Meet your customers where they are, exceed their expectations, and create real operational efficiencies. That's the power of our leading conversational AI platform paired with operational expertise. [Contact us](#) today to find out how we can help you reach your digital transformation goals and gain a competitive advantage.





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About [24]7.ai

[24]7.ai is redefining how artificial intelligence, human insight, and deep vertical expertise can produce personalized, satisfying customer experiences across all channels. Our advanced conversational AI platform predicts consumer intent and creates frictionless interactions that help the world's largest and most recognizable brands to strengthen customer relationships and increase brand loyalty. With more than two decades of contact center operations expertise, [24]7.ai empowers companies to deliver natural, consistent conversations that increase customer satisfaction while lowering costs.

For more information, visit: www.247.ai