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Messaging vs. Chat: What's the difference?

Both traditional chat and messaging enable businesses and customers to communicate with each other for the purpose of answering questions, getting support or making buying decisions. However, there are some key differences between the two types of communication.

Like phone support, chat support is synchronous, meaning the customer and agent have to be available at the same time to communicate. If one person leaves, the chat session is terminated forever. Messaging, on the other hand, more closely resembles a text message or social messaging exchange where customers and agents get the best of both worlds: they can respond immediately, or in a few hours, or even after a few weeks.

"Brands that have adopted messaging for customer service achieve 2.9x greater NPS compared others (12.3% vs. 4.3%)."
—Aberdeen Research[2]

WHY YOUR CUSTOMERS WILL LOVE MESSAGING:

- It's asynchronous, enabling them to have ongoing conversations with brands when and where it is most convenient
- It's a more personal method of communication, replicating the way they communicate with friends and family
- Conversations can transfer to different devices and channels, following them as they move throughout their day
- Conversation histories are always available, so they can search for and reference previous answers

WHY YOUR BUSINESS WILL LOVE MESSAGING:

- Agents are more effective, managing a higher volume of asynchronous conversations at the same time compared to chat
- You'll reach more customers by extending conversations beyond your website onto social, SMS and your own branded app
- You'll have flexibility to leverage third party messaging apps like Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp, in addition to your own branded messaging, all in a single interface
- Agents can be synchronous when needed, but can also handle asynchronous conversations when a customer re-engages at their convenience

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A BREAKDOWN OF KEY DIFFERENCES:

Chat	Messaging
One-time, session-based chat	Ongoing relationships and conversations
Real-time participation (synchronous)	Flexible participation (asynchronous)
Customers and agents must stay "in the chat"	Both parties can come and go as needed
Sessions expire after lack of activity or upon exit	Sessions can live indefinitely, always able to restart
Transactional	Conversational
Typically text-based only	More modern design that allows emojis, GIFs, etc
Conversation history only available to agent	Customers can access conversation histories
Available on web and mobile web	Available anywhere your brand and customers are (web, app, social, SMS)
2-3 concurrent chats per agent[1]	20-30 concurrent conversations per agent

MESSAGING IS THE FUTURE

With saturated social media newsfeeds, the popularity of mobile phones, and the ease of communication on the go, it should come as no surprise that messaging is quickly becoming a preferred method of communication. Now that three billion people use messaging apps on a regular basis, this conversational interface is also transforming how consumers expect to interact with businesses. With over two billion messages exchanged between consumers and companies monthly, messaging is quickly becoming the preferred method for conducting customer support.

1- http://www.gofcr.com/a-survey-of-chat-support-best-practices/
2- Aberdeen CEM Executive's Agenda 2017