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chat

# How to grow your business with proactive support



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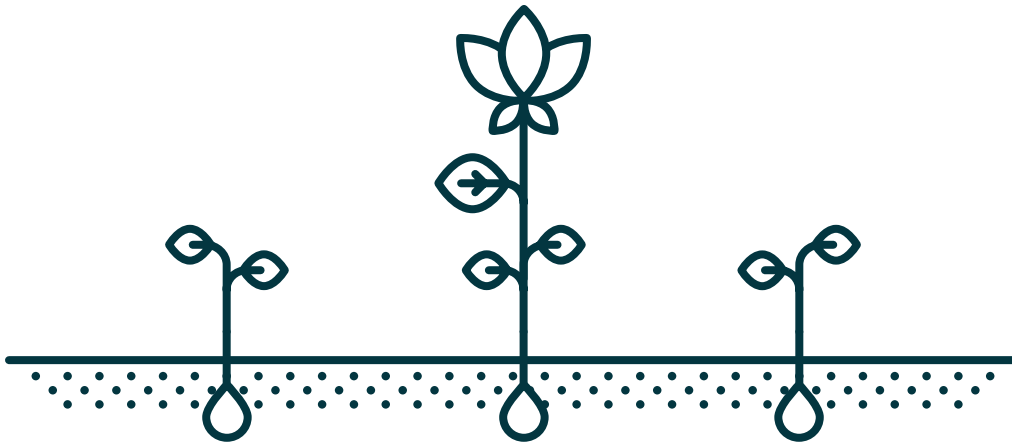
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We live in a world where real-time communication is the norm; not the exception. Where immediate access to friends and family is no further than the devices at our fingertips. In this world, consumers expect brands to be available 24/7 and the easiest way to meet that expectation is by providing Live Chat support.

Live Chat is redefining the parameters of customer and company communications. Instead of traditional channels with long wait times—email and phone support—Live Chat compresses all the back and forth by providing the immediate support customers need, exactly when they need it. You could say Live Chat just happens to be in the right place at the right time, every time.

For customers, Live Chat experiences are familiar, convenient, and secure. Interactions are in real time yet preserved forever for their records. There is no room for error from mishearing someone on the phone. For businesses, Live Chat is efficient and effective. Agents are able to help more customers in a shorter amount of time. They also collect valuable user data to help them solve issues more efficiently.

From both perspectives, it's certain that Live Chat has a place in today's customer-centric marketplace. So instead of questioning whether chat is a useful channel, it's time to ask: How do we get more value from Live Chat?



## The budding possibilities of proactive live chat

One of the largest benefits of Live Chat is that it can be used as a proactive support channel—unlike email or phone support, which are traditionally limited to reactive support. Agents can use Chat to start engagements and offer relevant support to your customers before they even ask for help. Offering proactive support in this way is about becoming a resource at a critical point in the customer journey. As long as it is done in a non-intrusive way, this kind of well-timed intervention can make the key difference between a customer completing a purchase or abandoning their shopping cart.

In fact, according to [Forrester Research, Inc.'s October 2014 report, "The Six Key Elements of Proactive Chat,"](#) 55 percent of U.S. adults are likely to abandon their online purchases if they cannot find a quick answer to their questions. This is exactly where the business opportunity exists. Thoughtful customer service drives more conversions.

## Shifting from reactive to proactive support

Successful customer service is about making it easier for the customer to use your product by anticipating their needs. This is exactly what proactive chat can do. Take this common scenario: a customer is lingering on the same page on your site for 10 or more minutes without making a purchase. They are clearly shopping—they've clicked on different products and have even put a few in their cart. It's safe to assume that the customer is interested in the product but hesitant to make the next move. We can make assumptions about the reasons behind their hesitation based on user data, but it is ultimately unknown.

So how can you turn this browsing customer into one who's ready to buy?

The beauty of proactive chat is that your support team is empowered to take the initiative. Agents can jump in during any point of the purchasing process to say, "Hi, I'm here for you if you need me." And it can really be as simple as that. Customers can close the window, or they can respond.

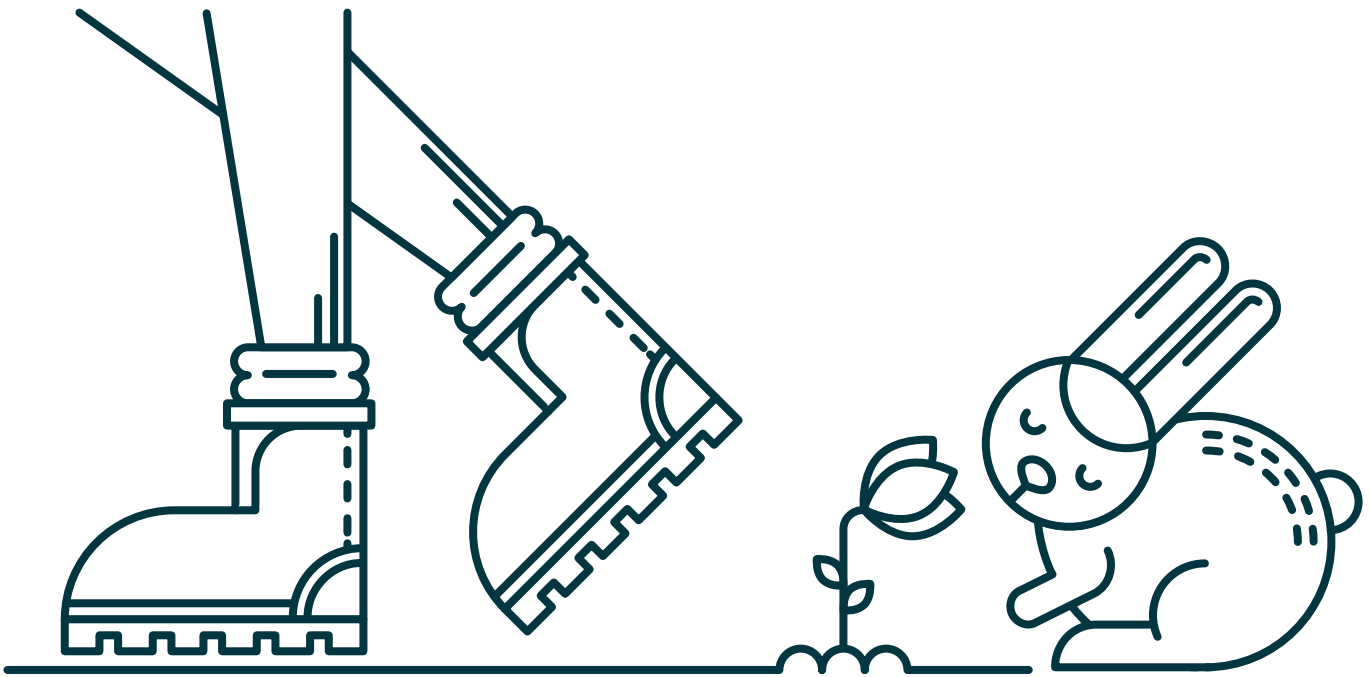
It's important to be proactive because even when Live Chat is available, some customers may be reluctant to initiate the conversation. Fortunately, research shows that consumers are increasingly open to proactive chat. Forrester Research, Inc. reported that 45 percent of U.S. online consumers say that they like having a chat invitation appear to help answer questions when they're doing online research or making a purchase—up from 33 percent in 2012 and 27 percent in 2009.

When help is delivered on a silver platter, it's hard to turn down. So it's no coincidence that increased engagement between agents and customers leads to lower cart abandonment rates and more purchasing. The same Forrester study also reported that one third of online consumers who did not complete their purchases in the last 12 months said it was because they wanted to engage with a live person first. While not an overwhelming percentage, analysts concluded that proactive chat would, in these situations, result in incremental revenue uplift.

Proactive chat is also a great way for businesses to gain valuable feedback as to what's holding the customer back from completing a more immediate purchase.

# Put a spring in your step

(and a dollar in your pocket)



The bottom line is that putting the right Live Chat strategy into action—whether it's reactive, proactive, or a blend—drives your return on investment (ROI). Chat has earned its place as an expected channel and its high satisfaction ratings speaks to its value for businesses.

In Forrester's report, Lenovo was cited as an example of a company that saw its online sales jump from less than one percent to up to 30 percent after implementing chat. Lenovo also saw its revenue per agent increase fourfold. There's no doubt that live assistance can help companies increase conversion rates.

Chat can also reduce costs through the power of ticket deflection. By bringing conversations from the call center to the chat widget, companies can help many customers at a time, reducing resolution and wait times, as well as costs.

## Building for growth with live chat

As companies grow, it becomes more challenging to manage customer expectations and agent productivity. Having access to the right data is key. Too often, support organizations need to prove the value they bring to the company—direct revenue, customer satisfaction, number of customers served, etc.—but are left without the proper data to prove their claims.

The good news is that there are powerful analytics tools built into most Live Chat platforms. These tools allow agents to drill into where support is performing well, and to highlight areas that need more time and attention. For instance, the Chat Premium Plan highlights the importance of workforce management and gives companies the tools they need to engage in real-time monitoring of agent performance.



When managing and scaling your Live Chat support, ask these questions:

- How can you handle increases in chat volume?
- Is the right strategy to hire more agents?
- How do you ensure your agents are operating efficiently?
- What's the right number of customers to chat with at any given time?
- How do you measure success?

Use data to help answer these questions, restructure your support team, and tighten your strategy, as well as to predict future trends.



**Data tells no lies**

When you rely on data rather than instinct, you'll gain insights on how long it takes each support agent to help each customer, what satisfaction rates they're receiving, and how that impacts revenue generation. If there's a particular type of customer you're targeting, these insights will help you determine which agents are best for the job.

This kind of insight isn't about singling out members of your team for particularly high or low performance. Instead, the data might indicate that an individual is performing heads and tails above the others, allowing you to dive deeper into what might be driving that agent's success. Are they helping fewer customers at a time, and therefore earning higher satisfaction ratings? Or are they helping more customers and closing more tickets? It all depends on how you define success.

One way to apply insights gleaned from analytics is to update your company's training materials with best practices that have proven effective over time. As you hone your best practices, you get more productivity from existing agents without having to hire additional staff.

**Real-time monitoring**

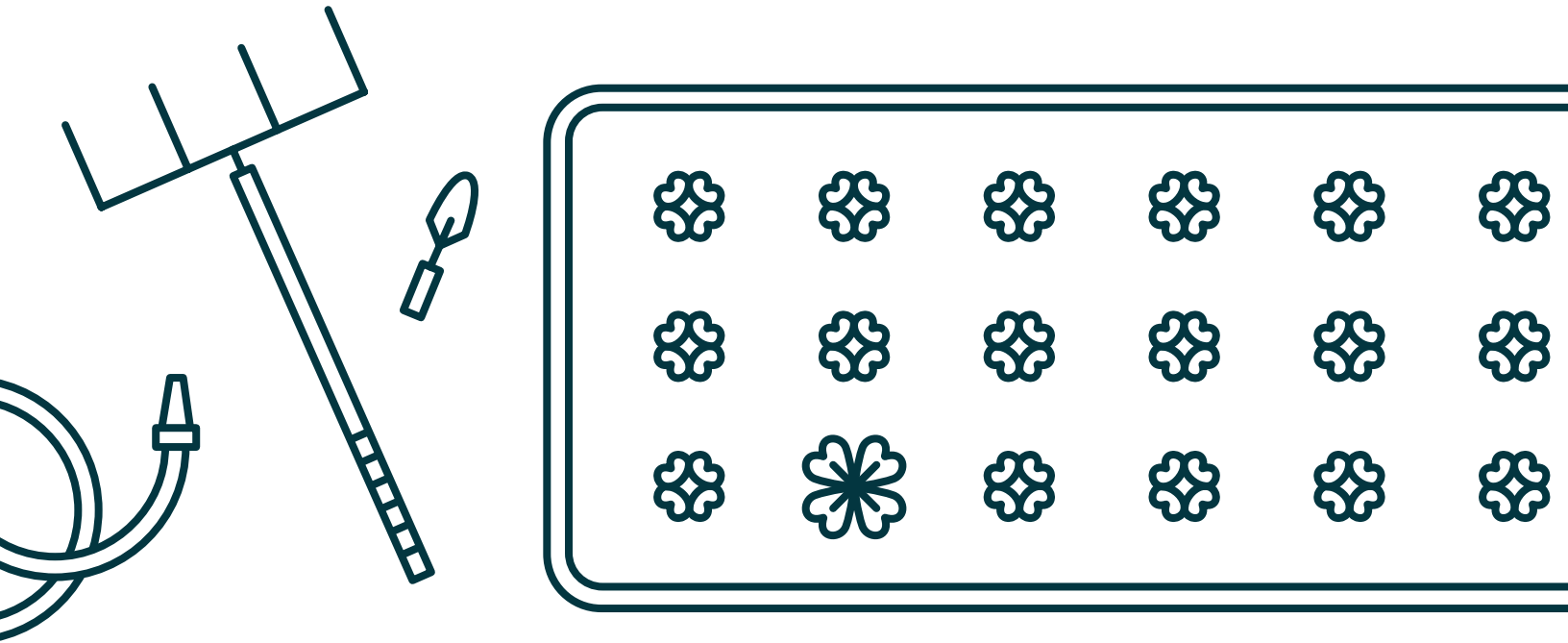
When there's real-time data that reflect current chat volume, visitor experience, and agent performance, managers can make informed decisions on the spot. With this kind of monitoring, companies can gain more insight into what's driving these chat conversations, sooner.

For example, if there's a common issue with your checkout system that's driving customers to chat, you'll start noticing that trend right away. Same thing goes for customer responses to your products. Using data to help your support team adapt is strategic, but it also helps to solve many problems on a fundamental level. You can extend support from proactively identifying common issues to taking preventative measures to keep these issues from resurfacing again in the future.

**Agent analytics**

If you've been curious to find out exactly what your agents are up against in their day-to-day, well, you're not alone. Agent Reports, a feature in [Zendesk Chat Analytics](#), is a function that helps you understand agent chat loads. This unique function takes the guesswork out of a work assignment, allowing managers to fairly distribute responsibilities among support agents so everyone can optimize their work.

This function can also be valuable when conducting performance evaluations. Managers can see the areas where each of their agents need to improve, as well as where they each excel. Drawing on these data points can help businesses make smart investments in existing agents, nurturing their growth within the organization.



## Change is good

Businesses strive to be operationally efficient so they can continue to provide great service without the overhead of having to hire more staff. While proactive support extends the power of Live Chat, using data to track these chat interactions can help businesses manage and build out the most efficient team. As your business grows, your support strategy must grow too.

The moral of the story: Be good with chat and chat will be good to you.