

# The Guide to Becoming a Top Performing Live Chat Agent



# Contents

Introduction	01
1. Personalize Your Greetings and Messages	02
a. Address the Customer by First Name	02
b. Give the Customer Your Name	03
c. Thank the Customer for Visiting Your Website	03
d. State the Customer's Reason for Contacting You	03
e. Make the Offer to Help	03
2. Empathize with Your Customers	04
3. Spoon Feed with Bite-Sized Chunks	04
4. Canned Messages Are Great, But...	05
5. Prepare Your Canned URL Arsenal	06
6. Reducing Hold and Wait Times	07
7. Be Careful with Grammar and Typos	08
8. Review Chat Histories	08
9. Do Not Make Excuses	09
a. When the Customer Asks a Question You Cannot Answer Immediately	09

b. When the Customer Complains about Your Brand/Company	09
10. Never Promise Too Much	10
11. Never Assume It's Over	10
12. Learn from Your Customers	11
Conclusion	12
About Comm100	13

# Introduction

This white paper discusses all the essential tips for live chat operators to communicating effectively, addressing customer issues efficiently, and representing your brand or company in a professional manner.

While some of the ideas covered here may seem obvious, their importance should never be overlooked. Effective communication between a live chat agent and a customer requires excellent soft skills, the ability to multi-task, and the drive to always want to go above and beyond of what is asked.

The main purpose of this white paper is to help you familiarize with all the necessary components for becoming an effective and efficient top performing live chat agent.

# 1. Personalize Your Greetings and Messages

*"73% of consumers prefer to do business with brands that use personal information to make their shopping experiences more relevant."*

— [Digital Trends](#)

In today's marketplace, service quality is everything.

**According to a research conducted by Digital Trends, "73% of consumers prefer to do business with brands that use personal information to make their shopping experiences more relevant."**

Consequently, it is extremely important for you to not only provide exceptional service, but to provide exceptional 'personalized' service.

In this section, we will offer tips and tricks that will help you do just that.

**"Hi, how may I help you today?"**

This question is simple and innocent enough. However, it doesn't really do much to inspire confidence in your ability to help via live chat. Why? Put simply, it's just not personal enough. Customers want to engage with an agent they view as a friend or an ally who understands their needs - especially when they are experiencing issues. So, how does that friendship or alliance begin? By greeting the customer with their first name, and introducing yourself, of course.

Instead, try a greeting like this:

**"Hi Robert! This is Maria. Thank you for contacting ABC Company via Live Chat. I understand you have billing questions. To better serve you, could you please tell me more about your concern?"**

This greeting is much more effective because it does these five very important things all at once:

## a. Address the Customer by First Name

If your company's live chat software includes a [pre-chat survey](#) feature, you should utilize it to request for your customer's name before the chat session begins.

Conversely, if your live chat supports [custom variables](#) or any similar type of mechanism, the software should be able to automatically pull the customer's name from their login account on your website.

Either way, **you should always address the customer by his/her first name in the greeting.** If you were not provided the customer's name in the pre-chat survey, you should always ask for their name, and be sure to use it often during the chat.

For example, **"Thank you, James. Could you please tell me how I may be of assistance today?"**

*Customers are much more comfortable when operators introduce themselves directly.*

## b. Give the Customer Your Name

Introducing yourself to the customer is an equally important first step to establishing rapport, and any possible alliance or friendship.

By providing your name, you are not only inserting a human element to the interaction, but more importantly, you are assuring your customer that you will personally take ownership of their concern.

Never rely on your avatar photograph and/or name in the visitor's chat window to inform your customer who you are. Customers are much more comfortable when operators introduce themselves directly, and in an open and inviting manner.

## c. Thank the Customer for Visiting Your Website

This is much more important than it seems. Picture yourself walking into any brick and mortar shop in your local area. Consider the way you feel when you walk into a shop and someone greets and thanks you for stopping by as soon as you walk in the store. Makes you feel like you matter to them, right? Well, the same thing applies online. It's much easier to build rapport with customers who feel like they're appreciated.

If you're not thanking your customers in your greeting, you may just be making it harder for yourself to enhance the customer experience during the chat.

## d. State the Customer's Reason for Contacting You

If your company's live chat software utilizes a pre-chat survey form, it might be wise to include a drop-down list for the title, "**Reason for Contacting Us**" or "**I Need Help with...**" as a mandatory field for your customers to disposition before being routed to a chat agent best trained to assist them.

That way, you will be able to include in your personalized greetings statements like:

**"I understand that you have billing questions..."**

**"I noticed that you are concerned about..."**

By doing this, your customers are assured right off the bat that you understand the reason for their chat request, and are fully prepared to assist them.

## e. Make the Offer to Help

When offering assistance to customers, always ask how you can help in the form of an open ended question in your greeting:

**"Tell me more about..."**

**"How may I be of assistance..."**

This way, your customers are more likely to communicate their expectations to you in

*It's much easier to build rapport with customers who feel like they're appreciated.*

*The longer you wait to get to the point, the more likely an irate or upset customer will become ever harder to handle.*

an open manner, and the types of replies you receive from customers will be much more elaborate than a mere "Yes" or "No" answer.

Don't wait until you're two or three sentences into the chat to ask. The longer you wait to get to the point, the more likely an irate or upset customer will become ever harder to handle.

## 2. Empathize with Your Customers

As mentioned above, customers want a friend or ally to assist them whenever they need service or support. While being friendly and engaging is a definite step in the right direction, it's not all that you need to build rapport and trust with a frustrated or irate customer.

*To really connect with your customer, you need to empathize with your customer and the issue at hand.*

To really connect with your customer, you need to empathize with your customer and the issue at hand; show your customer that you can relate to their experience.

Empathizing with your customer shows that you respect the dilemma or problem that he/she is experiencing, and are eager to help find a solution.

Say, for instance, your customer informs you that he/she is experiencing a problem with a product purchased from your brand or company. You could go straight to asking what the issue is, and how you can help.

However, a much better approach is to first empathize with a statement like this:

**"I can understand how frustrating it must be for your product to not work properly. I will do everything in my power to get this resolved for you as soon as possible."**

By simply adding the **"I understand" sentence**, you've shown your customer that you empathize with their concern, and really care.

Don't underestimate the power of acknowledging and relating to the customer's emotion when handling customer concerns. Customers expect it from great customer service operators. It helps them feel like you can relate to their pain or inconvenience, so you're likely to be more eager to find a solution for them.

## 3. Spoon Feed with Bite-Sized Chunks

One of the biggest obstacles new chat operators face is getting through several concurrent chats quickly and efficiently.

However, this is usually not because of slow or poor typing skills; it's usually the result of an agent who tries to pack too much information into a single message or reply. Here are some rules to follow:

- Keep your messages and replies short, concise, and straight to the point.
- Always try to limit your replies to one or two short and easy-to-read sentences.
- Avoid overly complex wording and vocabulary, and never exceed more than 3 or 4 sentences in a single reply.

*Longer replies not only take operators more time to type, but they also take longer for customers to read.*

Longer replies not only take operators more time to type, but they also take longer for customers to read. If you need to provide step-by-step instructions or details on how to perform a task, break them down into bite-sized chunks and send them out one step at a time.

If you attempt to write a "book length" reply, the time needed to create the message may cause the customer to become frustrated or grow tired of waiting. Sending quick replies in short successions give the customer a feeling more akin to having a real discussion and makes him/her more comfortable as he/she is able to digest the responses quicker and easier.

Many operators create simple, yet customizable, canned messages so they won't have to manually type out long replies. If you really do need to send a long canned message, split it into multiple parts, and give the customer a few seconds to read one before sending another. If you send them all out too quickly, the customer experience may become compromised, since the customer will most likely catch on to the fact that you are using canned messages.

## 4. Canned Messages Are Great, But...

Canned messages – pre-written messages to frequently asked questions that operators can select and send instantly without typing the message out – are one of the options included in your live chat software that makes handling concurrent chats much less overwhelming.

While canned messages are indeed intuitive "quick-launch" tools, you must be careful not to overuse them.

Overall, customers are very pleased with the way live chat works, and how it allows them to contact brands or companies quickly. Still, some of the common customer complaints or unfavorable comments about live chat are regarding the use of canned messages due to multitasking concurrent chats.

According to eDigital Research, the most common feedback about live chat is the fact that customers often feel that they could never receive an operator's undivided attention when handling their issue because they're also chatting with other customers at the same time.

When using canned messages:

- Personalize them with the name of your customer.
- Avoid sending canned messages that sound too generic or robotic.

Remember, customers are usually perceptive at identifying canned messages, and may become discontented if they feel they are not receiving the personalized service that they want and deserve.

*Nothing beats quick thinking and fingers for becoming a top performing live chat agent.*

If you are relying heavily on canned messages to get through busy periods with multiple customers, you may want to invest more time in improving your typing speed and skills. In the end, nothing beats quick thinking and fingers for becoming a top performing live chat agent.

## 5. Prepare Your Canned URL Arsenal

*It's not enough to have a bunch of canned links or URLs available; you have to know what the links lead to and how to find them quickly.*

While you need to exercise more constraint when using canned messages, canned links or URLs are a different story altogether. With canned links, there is no such thing as having or using too many.

Canned links and URLs are not only great time savers, they will usually get you a big "Thank you" or "Wow, that's just what I needed" response from your customers.

Many of the questions you get from customers will be of the "Where can I find this?" variety. The questions may be product-related or they may be for self-help information. Regardless of the type, it's always a great idea to have your canned link arsenal prepared, and ready to fire.

Your manager or supervisor may or may not have already created a pool of canned links for you to use (if they haven't yet, you should suggest it). Follow the steps to create your own:

- Go through your company website.
- Determine which pages are the most popular and sought after by customer.
- Copy and paste the links to those pages in your canned links repository.
- Go over them thoroughly.

It's not enough to have a bunch of canned links or URLs available; you have to know what the links lead to and how to find them quickly.

Therefore, if possible, memorize the contents of your canned link repository so that you can easily find the ones you need, and send them out quickly. Canned links are not useful if it takes you a long time to sift through them in order to find the one you need.

## 6. Reducing Hold and Wait Times

Efficient live chat agents can handle five or more chats simultaneously. Still, even the best live chat agent never knows when a new incoming chat request will be assigned to them in their live chat system.

In a survey of 2000 consumers, [eDigital Research](#) discovered that 64% of the respondents expect to wait one minute or less to reach a live chat agent (refer to Figure 1 – Data from eDigital Research).

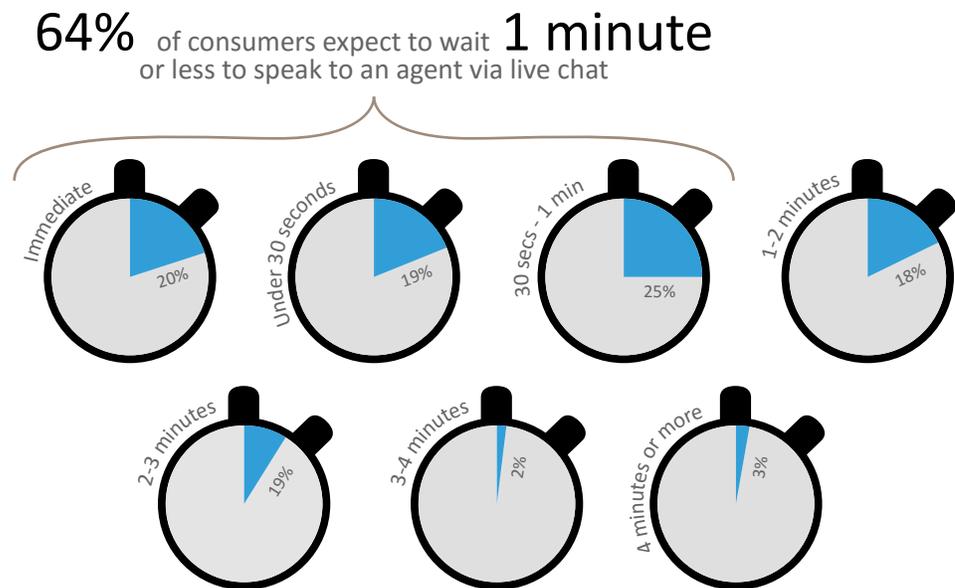


Figure 1 - Data from eDigital Research

*Never stay away from the chat for more than 5 minutes, if possible.*

Essentially, consumers who use live chat never want to wait in queue very long for you to greet them and assist them.

Below are the two typical scenarios where you might keep customers wait:

- When a new chat request comes in

It's important to respond and greet the new customers as soon as possible. **Emphasize on the "as possible" part.** For instance, if you're already in the middle of typing a reply to an existing chat, do not abandon it in order to greet the new customer.

- If you need to leave a chat for more than 1 minute

Inform the customer that you will be away for a couple of minutes to gather more information or to find a way to better assist him/her.

Never stay away from the chat for more than 5 minutes, if possible.

*Providing the best customer experiences is the main goal, not how many people you can chat with at the same time.*

Customers who use live chat usually will not wait on hold very long; so, check in often to let the customer know you are still working on his/her case or issue.

If you find that you are often overwhelmed by the number of chats you are handling, ask your manager or supervisor to consider lowering the number of concurrent chats you handle at any given time.

After all, providing the best customer experiences is the main goal, not how many people you can chat with at the same time. If you're still having trouble keeping up, you may want to request additional training or support from management.

## 7. Be Careful with Grammar and Typos

*Always take an extra second or two to review your chat responses before clicking "Send" or pressing on the "Enter" key.*

Engaging in live chat sessions with customers and visitors is a lot different than chatting with friends and family on Facebook or instant messenger applications. Although the process is very similar, the rules are what make the two types of chat very different.

When chatting with friends and family on an instant messenger application, you may not place too much emphasis on **capitalization**, **spelling**, and **grammar** – this is acceptable as long as you're chatting in an informal environment.

However, when you are representing your brand or company in a chat session, you must always present yourself (and the company) in a professional manner by ensuring that you avoid grammatical errors and typos.

Always take an extra second or two to review your chat responses before clicking "Send" or pressing on the "Enter" key. This will help prevent embarrassing errors that do not reflect well upon yourself as an agent, or the company you represent.

## 8. Review Chat Histories

When accepting chats from customers for service or support issues, chances are good that you will receive requests from those who have already been to your site for one reason or another.

Reviewing customers' previous chat histories is a great way to learn about:

- Their past issues and experiences
- The solutions offered in the past
- Their past conversations with other operators or even yourself

In order to serve your customers better, if a visitor comes into the chat with a chat

*Chat histories are a great way of preparing yourself, and avoiding the time-consuming tasks of repeating questions and possible resolution methods.*

history, **dedicate at least 30 seconds to review their past interactions** so that you may bring yourself up to speed on their previous issues, concerns, commendations, etc.

Alternatively, you can ask your customer if he/she wishes you to check their chat history so that you can better assist him/her.

Chat histories are a great way of preparing yourself, and avoiding the time-consuming tasks of repeating questions and possible resolution methods.

## 9. Do Not Make Excuses

There are two conditions under which you should not make excuses:

### a. When the Customer Asks a Question You Cannot Answer Immediately

*Do not make excuses for not being able to answer a question and never dismiss the customer's question as unreasonable.*

You can never know everything, and most customers don't expect you to. So, if the customer asks a question you cannot answer immediately, **be honest and tell him/her as much**. Let the customer know that you don't have the answer to the question, but will try to find the answer as quickly as possible.

- **Ask a colleague or supervisor** for the information you need so that you can get back to the customer right away.
- **Research on your own.** Just tell the customer frankly that you need more time to find the answer. Then, get the customer's email address or phone number and be sure to follow up.

If after researching, you still cannot find an answer for the customer, be sure to inform him/her of the situation. Do not make excuses for not being able to answer a question and never dismiss the customer's question as unreasonable.

### b. When the Customer Complains about Your Brand/Company

*Be apologetic and empathetic as much as possible, and never be adversarial or be drawn into a fight or argument.*

If the customer complains about your brand or company, be apologetic and empathetic as much as possible, and never be adversarial or be drawn into a fight or argument. Never imply "well, it is your fault because..." or make any other similar statement.

In reality, customers may not always be right, but you cannot blatantly state that they are wrong. Just remain calm and professional.

When you sense that your customer is becoming more irate no matter what you try to defuse the situation, do not hesitate to excuse yourself from the chat for a moment, and ask your supervisor for assistance.

Sometimes, simply getting a different perspective on handling difficult customers can

make defusing the situation that much easier.

However, **only transfer the chat to a supervisor or manager when a customer has directly requested you to do so.** You never want to undermine your own abilities to resolve a customer's concerns. Otherwise, every time the customer experiences a similar issue in the future, he/she would request to chat directly with a supervisor without chatting with an agent first, believing that's the only way to receive a speedy resolution.

## 10. Never Promise Too Much

*If you promise to research an issue or problem and get back to the customer, then be sure you do so.*

In some cases, offering a customer a compromise or alternative can help defuse a tense situation, and also calm down an angry customer. However, **you should never offer a customer something you cannot deliver.**

Although it's sensible to offer an angry customer something to make them happier, always be sure that it's something that you can deliver.

For instance, if you need to offer a discount code, free shipping or other incentive, make sure to get the special offer approved by your supervisor or manager first, and don't simply offer something to make the problem temporarily go away.

If you promise to research an issue or problem and get back to the customer, then be sure you do so. Nothing speaks worse for a company than customer service operators that don't keep their promises.

This also applies to operators that assist customers with sales. Never tell a customer that a product can perform or function in a certain way if it cannot.

Never make promises about a product or service unless you are absolutely certain that they are true. If you tell a customer one thing, and then he/she finds out it's not true, your name will accompany the company's name if, for example, the person posts negative comments on social media and other websites.

In short, your reputation and that of the company are linked. You are your company's brand ambassador in every way. Therefore, one angry and dissatisfied customer can result in many more lost sales for the brand or company.

## 11. Never Assume It's Over

As a chat agent, your ultimate aim should always be to fully resolve your customers' issues and/or concerns in one session (if possible). This means that your customer should never have to return for the same concern or problem because you should have already resolved it completely the first time.

*The easiest way to achieve a "first chat resolution" is to always ask your customers if all of their concerns have been fully resolved to their satisfaction before closing the chat.*

Helping a customer resolve an issue completely may take some time; however, it's much better to spend the extra time to help a customer solve an issue the first time, than to have the same customer return for assistance for the same problem.

For instance, if a customer is requesting for product set-up assistance:

- Patiently guide them through each step.
- Confirm that each step has been completed before moving on to the next.
- Ask the customer to double check that the setup has been officially programmed, and that no further actions are necessary.

The easiest way to achieve a "first chat resolution" is to always ask your customers if all of their concerns have been fully resolved to their satisfaction before closing the chat.

Always be prepared for the "well, there is also..." type situations, and always be eager to assist your customers with any issues that may arise.

From the moment your customers end the chat, you want them to feel that you truly valued their business, and that your aim is to ensure that they're fully satisfied with your quality of service.

## 12. Learn from Your Customers

*Becoming an effective chat agent requires that you grow, learn and evolve as well.*

The only constant with consumers is that they are always changing and evolving. What was popular or important with consumers yesterday, may not be today. What's trending today in customer service may not be applicable or practical tomorrow.

Becoming an effective chat agent requires that you grow, learn and evolve as well. One of the most effective ways to do this is to learn from your customers.

**Ask your customers** what would make them happy or how they would resolve an issue or problem. Some of the answers you receive from your customers will be practical and you can then forward them up the chain so the ideas can be used to better serve customers in the future.

Always **encourage your customers to rate or provide feedback** on your quality of service. Convincing your customers to leave feedback will help you and your department as a whole to continuously provide better service.

Positive feedback will certainly bolster your confidence, but you should not necessarily fear negative ratings - as long as you are not receiving too many of them. **Learn from your negative feedback, and apply the lessons to provide even better customer service moving forward.**

## Conclusion

By now, you should have learned the essentials for becoming an effective and efficient chat agent. However, learning the basics is just the start, and you should always strive to learn more and be more proficient so that you may provide even better service.

Becoming a top performing chat agent takes time. With continuous effort, impeccable attention-to-detail and plain-old common courtesy, however, you can become a chat agent who will represent your brand or company proudly and professionally.

## About Comm100

Comm100 Network Corporation is an award-winning global provider of live chat, email marketing, and help desk software. Comm100 Live Chat is an enterprise-grade live support solution that enables brands to engage website visitors in real time interactions. The prominent benefits of utilizing our live chat software include higher website conversion rates, increased customer satisfaction, improved service efficiency, and lower operating costs.

Trusted by thousands of global brands worldwide, some of Comm100's top clients include **G2A**, **Sears**, **Stanford University**, and **Whirlpool**. With "100% communication, 100% success" as our company motto, Comm100 is committed to ensuring that transitioning human-to-human interactions to real-life success stories is always possible in a digital world.

## Contact Us

TEL | 1-778-785-0464  
FAX | 1-888-837-2011  
E-Mail | [support@comm100.com](mailto:support@comm100.com)  
Web | [www.comm100.com](http://www.comm100.com)

Suite 238 – 1027 Davie Street Vancouver, British Columbia V6E 4L2 Canada

To find more resources about the live chat industry and more tips on improving customer service, you can:

- Visit [Comm100 official blog](#)

• Follow us on    

Copyright © 2016 Comm100. All Rights Reserved.

Comm100, Comm100 Live Chat, MaximumOn™ and other Comm100 brand or product names are trademarks of Comm100 Network Corporation in Canada and other countries. All other trademarks or registered trademarks are property of their respective owners.

The information provided herein and opinions stated herein are not guaranteed or warranted to produce any particular results, and may not be suitable for every individual.