



Live Chat Benchmark Report 2019

Table of Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
Customer Satisfaction and Chat Rating	5
Canned Message Utilization	11
Proactive Chat Acceptance Rate	13
Chats Per Agent Per Month	18
Co-browsing	22
AI-Powered Chat	23
Highlights by Team Size	24
Highlights by Industry	25
Key Take-aways	27
Looking Forward	29
Data and Methodology	31

Foreword

Organizations know that providing great customer experiences (CX) is no longer optional in today's competitive business landscape.

Four years ago, Gartner predicted that by 2019 more than 50% of organizations would invest more money into their CX strategy than ever. While they were right about the trend, today's numbers signal that even more organizations have made CX a priority.

Your success or failure heavily depends on how you treat your customers. If their expectations are not met, they will simply move on and unfortunately, some organizations do make the mistake of taking their customers for granted. Smart businesses recognize that customers gravitate to organizations that put effort into meeting, or even exceeding, their expectations.

Customers aren't just comparing you to your competitors anymore; they're comparing you to the best experiences they've had with any organization. A thoughtful and well executed CX strategy can be your differentiator.

Organizations can disrupt their markets by delivering a better experience – and with the ability to provide always-on, real-time, personalized communication, live chat is a key tool to help get you there.

Digital transformation means customers don't have to pick up the phone when they have a question. They can simply hop onto a website or mobile app to instantly chat with an agent. Your customers want – and expect – a quick

response, and more and more they are using alternatives to the traditional phone call, such as chat, to get their answers.

Live chat has evolved considerably since this benchmark report first appeared four years ago, growing into a mature customer communication channel. And chatbots are progressing at a rapid pace. What chat can do to enhance customer service and CX is amazing compared to just a few years ago.

We're in a boom time for innovation in every area of business. By 2020, CX will overtake price as a key product differentiator, signalling how experiences are a deciding factor for the customer and will become even more so going forward. Using live chat to strengthen your CX strategy can help your business secure greater customer loyalty.

Customers are getting smarter and expecting more. Live chat offers the personalized, meaningful engagement they demand. With full confidence in the value of live chat I am excited to introduce this research, containing invaluable data and insights that will undoubtedly help you shape your live chat and CX strategy to truly exceed customer expectations.

Enjoy!



Shep Hyken
*customer service and
experience expert*

Introduction

By its very definition, benchmark data is supposed to serve as a yardstick for self-evaluation; you compare your own numbers to the industry standard to see how you stack up, and where you may need to improve (spoiler: there's always room for improvement). Now in its fourth year, the Comm100 Live Chat Benchmark Report contains everything you need to know to fully evaluate your live chat operations and the impact it's having on your organization. You can compare yourself to your industry group, or to contact centers of similar size.

Is your satisfaction rate better or worse?

Are you keeping visitors waiting too long before chatting?

Is your bot helping you deal with growing chat volume as your business grows, or is it negatively affecting your customers' experiences?

Has your contact center found the sweet spot where both agent productivity and customer delight are optimized?

All the answers you seek – and more – are in the pages that follow. We've crunched the numbers on more than 45 million chats to help you figure out where to go to further improve how you use live chat. Pouring through the charts and accompanying analyses, you can discover new killer features that you haven't tried yet, or you can smile smugly at how much better you are. If it's the latter, drop me a line, I would love to know your secrets.

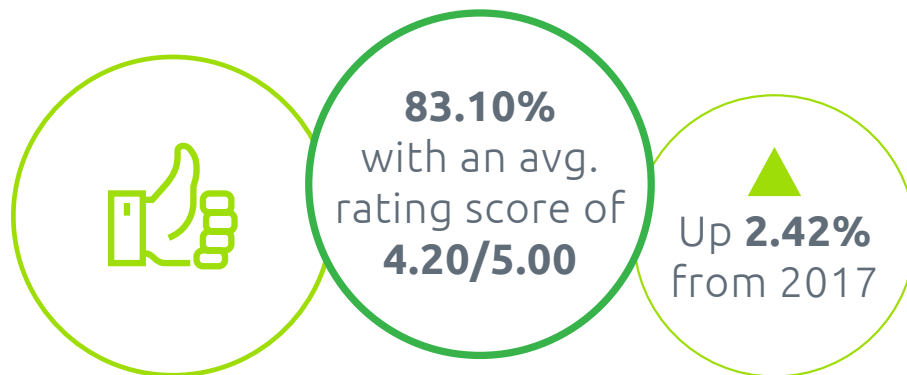
My big goal for 2019? To watch how your human agents get smarter, faster, and more effective through artificial intelligence tools served up through the Comm100 agent console, because not every bot will be customer-facing. AI has the potential to reinvent the agent experience as much as or maybe even more than the customer experience.

I'll leave you with one more question: if your customers expect more from you, shouldn't you expect more from your live chat?

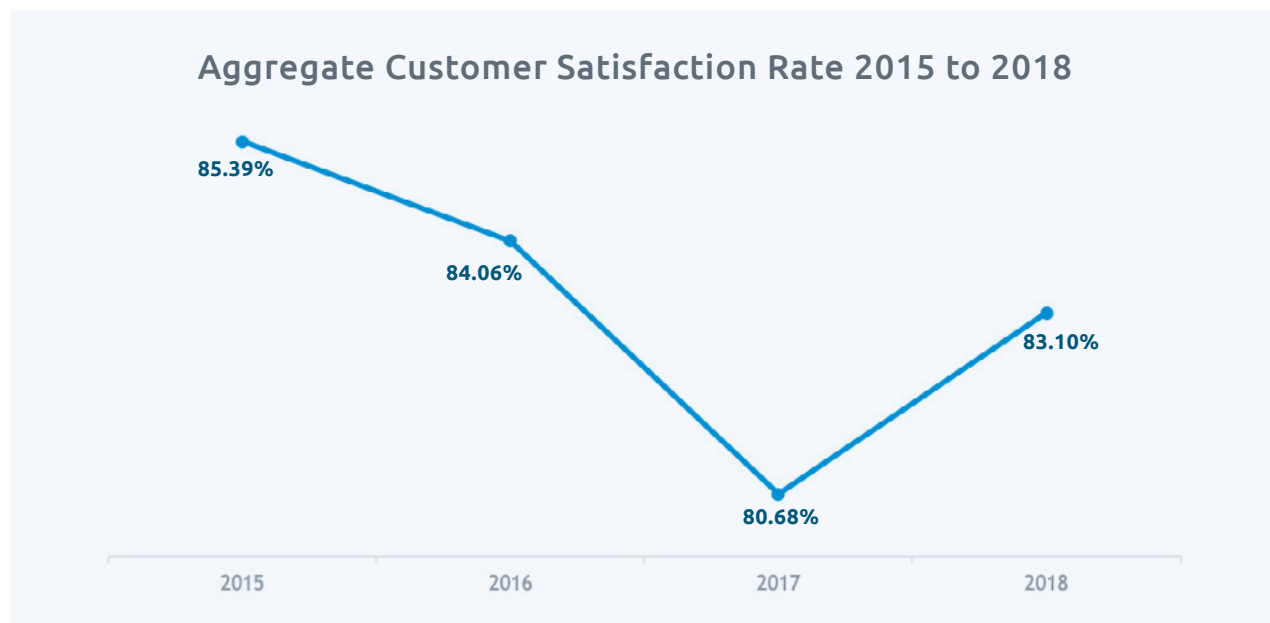


Kevin Gao
CEO, Comm100 Network Corporation

Customer Satisfaction and Chat Rating



Customer expectations continue to climb in our increasingly information-intensive and hyper-competitive world, and organizations are stepping up in response. The uptick in customer satisfaction¹ recorded in 2018 is a welcome break from the downward trend that began in 2015, the first year we published benchmark data.



This increase of 2.42% in customer satisfaction from 2017 to 2018 signals a hopeful changing of tides. Facing rising demand for personalized, meaningful interactions and seamless, 'everychannel' experiences, organizations are rolling up their sleeves to meet and exceed customer expectations. We're still off the 2015 peak but the reversal in direction is significant and deserves celebration.

1. Defined as the percentage of post-chat surveys scoring at least 3 out of 5 stars.



It's wonderful to see Customer Satisfaction finally on the rise. Could it be that many Contact Center leaders are getting omnichannel right? Given the scope and complexity involved with these projects, it's taken longer than expected for many brands to fully implement new technologies. Even so, many have persevered and excelled beyond the hump. I believe we are seeing the fruits of these labors presently, with more great things on the horizon!



Nate Brown
Co-founder, CX Accelerator

Customer Satisfaction and Rating by Team Size, 2018

Team Size	Average CSAT	Average Rating
1-5 agents	82.7%	4.18
6-10 agents	84.2%	4.26
11-25 agents	82.9%	4.22
26-50 agents	82.7%	4.16
>50 agents	85.7%	4.30

When segmented by team size, our findings show that teams in the range of 11 to 25 agents and 26 to 50 agents are lagging behind other segments. As shown below, this could be the result of this segment having both the highest chat volumes and the shortest chat durations. They're spending less quality time on more chats, causing their satisfaction score to degrade.

Lower CSAT and rating scores for teams of 1 to 5 agents are to be expected, as this tier is less likely to have agents 100% dedicated to live chat, and may also boast less mature customer experience practices.

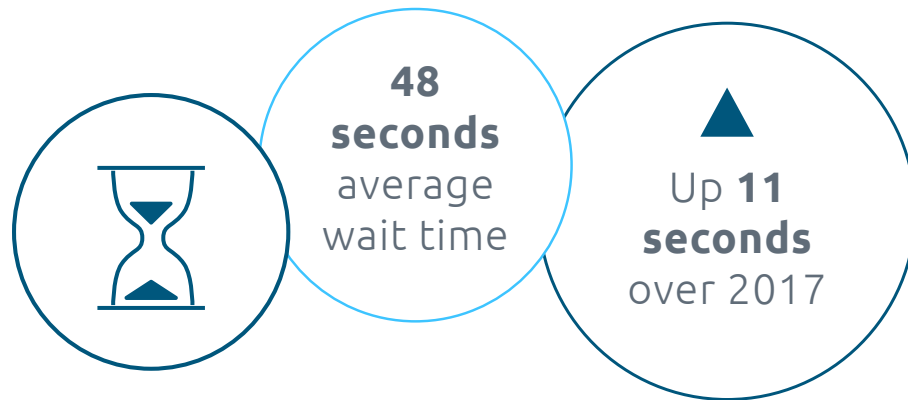


Live chat cuts out the noise and helps our customers get answers instantly – something that's especially important for us as we serve a highly technical audience. Chat has played a critical role in our ability to provide above and beyond customer service, evidenced by our 94% customer satisfaction score. In recent years, good customer service means more than just answering questions, it's become more about the relationship between your business and the customer. Your customer satisfaction score is directly tied to how well you're building those relationships. Live chat is an effective tool to bridge that gap.



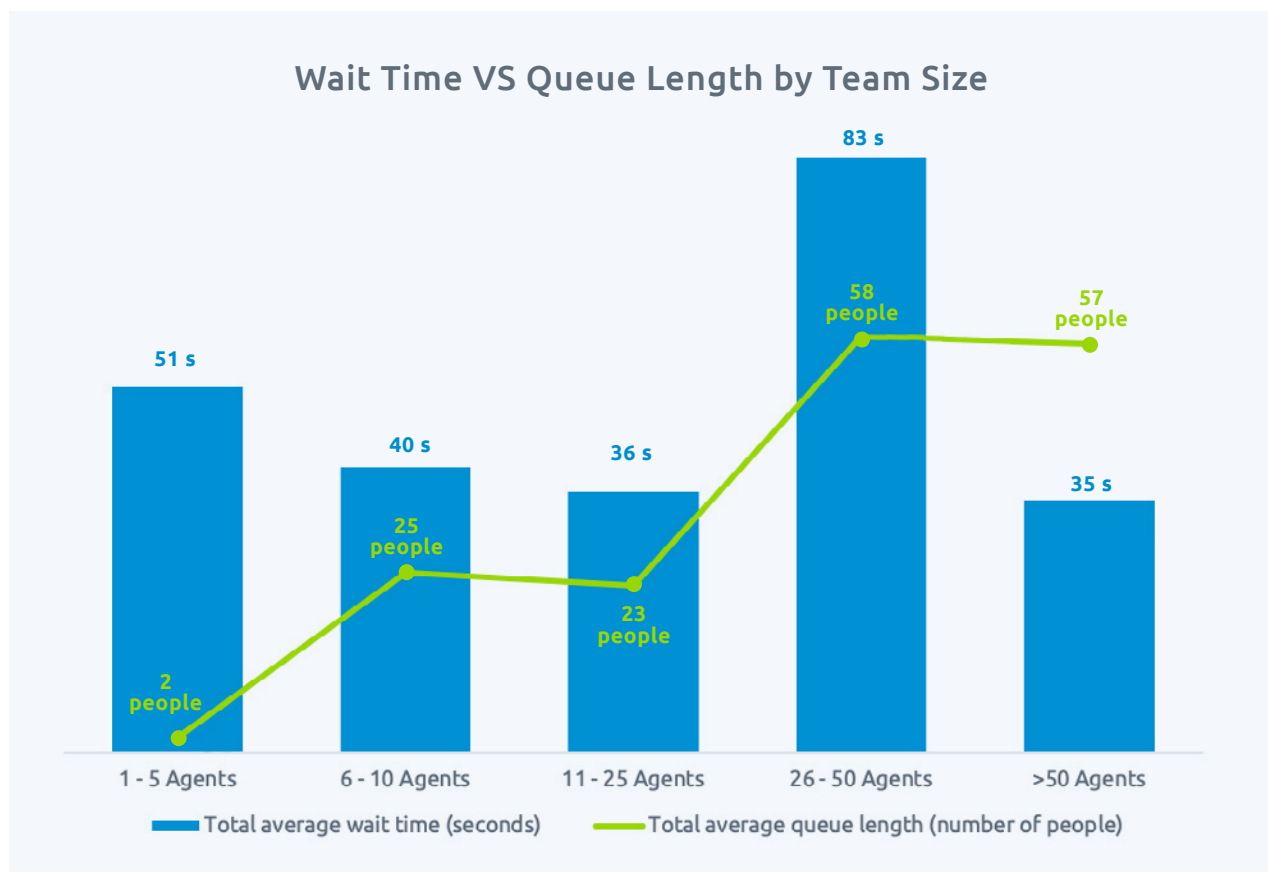
Tim Grooms
Director of Marketing, Xylem Analytics NA

Wait Time



Average wait time increased from 37 to 48 seconds in 2018 – breaking a downward trend. However, this increase is not necessarily a negative signal.

Last year we suggested that ‘a fast response does not equal a quality response’ and this still holds true for 2018: organizations that scored 90% or higher for customer satisfaction had an average wait time of 46 seconds while customers with the lowest customer satisfaction had an average wait time of 25 seconds.



Wait time refers to how long a visitor is waiting for an agent to pick up their chat while queue length is how many people are queued when all agents are busy.

When segmented by team size, our findings show that teams with 26 to 50 agents have the longest average wait time, while teams with more than 50 agents have the shortest. We can also see that teams with more than 50 agents have the same queue size as teams with 26 to 50 agents yet boast shorter wait times. Based on this data, we can opine that the largest contact center teams have truly mastered the science of matching team size to audience size, something the next tier down needs to address.

Regardless of size, organizations need to make sure they are focusing on the right metrics, emphasizing quality metrics over time and productivity metrics.



*For the past five years, ICMI research has shown a steady increase in the complexity of customer interactions. While many brands are trying to cut costs, or rely more on automation, the contacts frontline agents are handling aren't as straightforward as they used to be. Pair this reality with disjointed systems and a lack of up-to-date internal knowledge, and you've got a recipe for higher handle times, which translates to longer wait times for customers. So while I'm not surprised to see that customer service wait times are on the rise, I am concerned. Organizations have to figure out a way to serve customers more efficiently - whether that means offering more robust self-service, ramping up live chat, arming agents with better resources, staffing up, or some combination of all of the above. In his book *Call Center Management on Fast Forward*, Brad Cleveland identifies ten critical expectations of the modern customer. Number four? "Do what I ask promptly." Brands that can't meet that expectation will struggle to keep their customers loyal and satisfied.*



Erica Marois
Content Manager, ICMI

Chat Duration



While wait time increased slightly last year, the average length of a chat continues to decrease. This year shows the smallest drop since 2015 (compared to last year's drop of 14.5%), indicating that organizations are closing in on the sweet spot between speed and quality service.

While balancing productivity with quality may be a challenge, it is a crucial undertaking. Just like the case with wait time, where shorter doesn't mean better, we see a positive correlation between chat duration and customer satisfaction: organizations that achieved a 90% or higher customer satisfaction score had an average chat duration of 12 minutes and 26 seconds, 13% longer than organizations with lower scores.



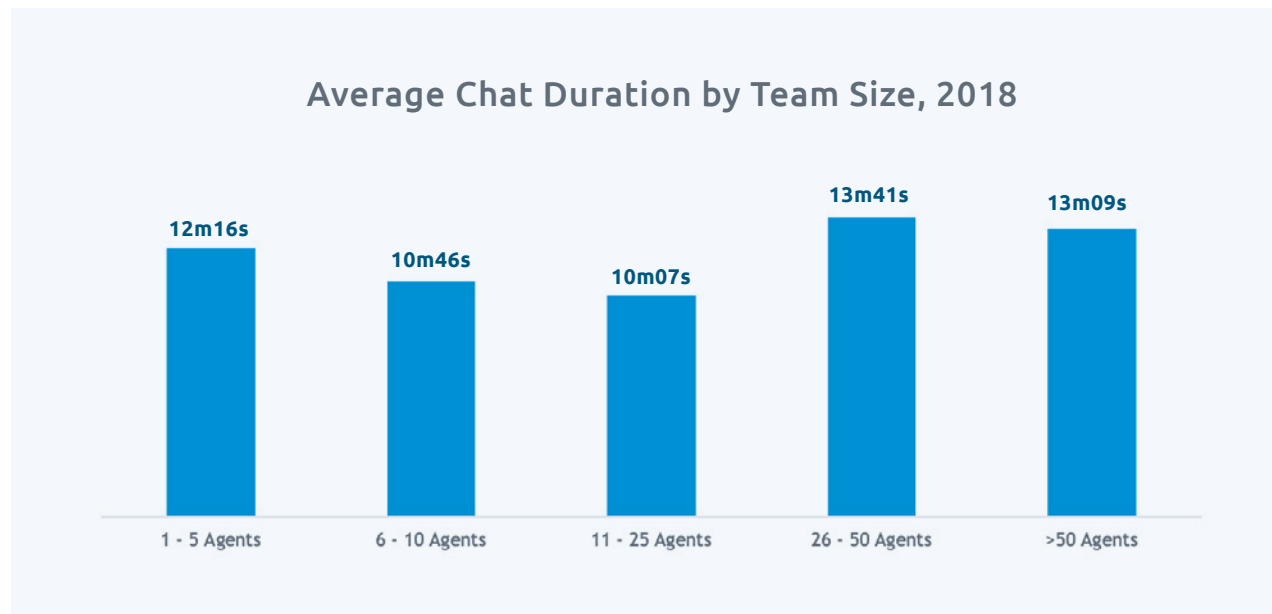
I've found that on customer service teams, average chat duration tends to vary much more widely on chat than it does on phone, due in large part to the ability to handle multiple chats concurrently. There are still many opportunities to gain efficiencies in this channel. It's important to continue to train agents to use shortcuts and macros effectively without negatively impacting the customer experience.



Jeremy Watkin
Director of CX, FCR

When broken down by team size below, our findings show that teams with 26 to 50 agents have the longest chats, while teams of 11 to 25 agents have the shortest.

While freeing up agents' time can have positive resource implications, organizations need to consider how to execute on their strategy without sacrificing quality, striking the right balance between business and customer needs.

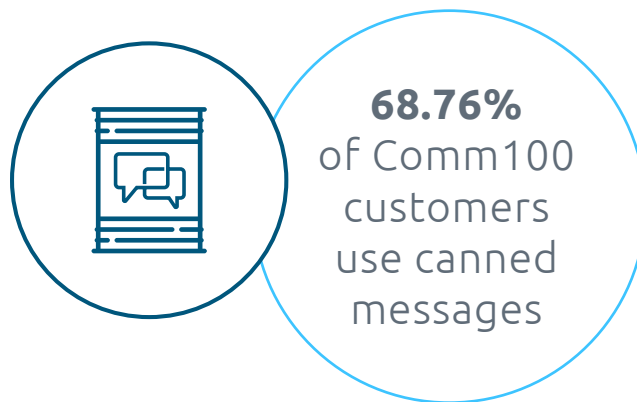


It is not necessarily chat duration that is important for customers, as shown by the data, but instead the perception of responsiveness is what is critical in driving customer satisfaction in this channel. If customers have to wait a long time for a response from an agent during a conversation then satisfaction is likely to fall dramatically. As long as agents can maintain conversations flowing smoothly, satisfaction is likely to remain high.



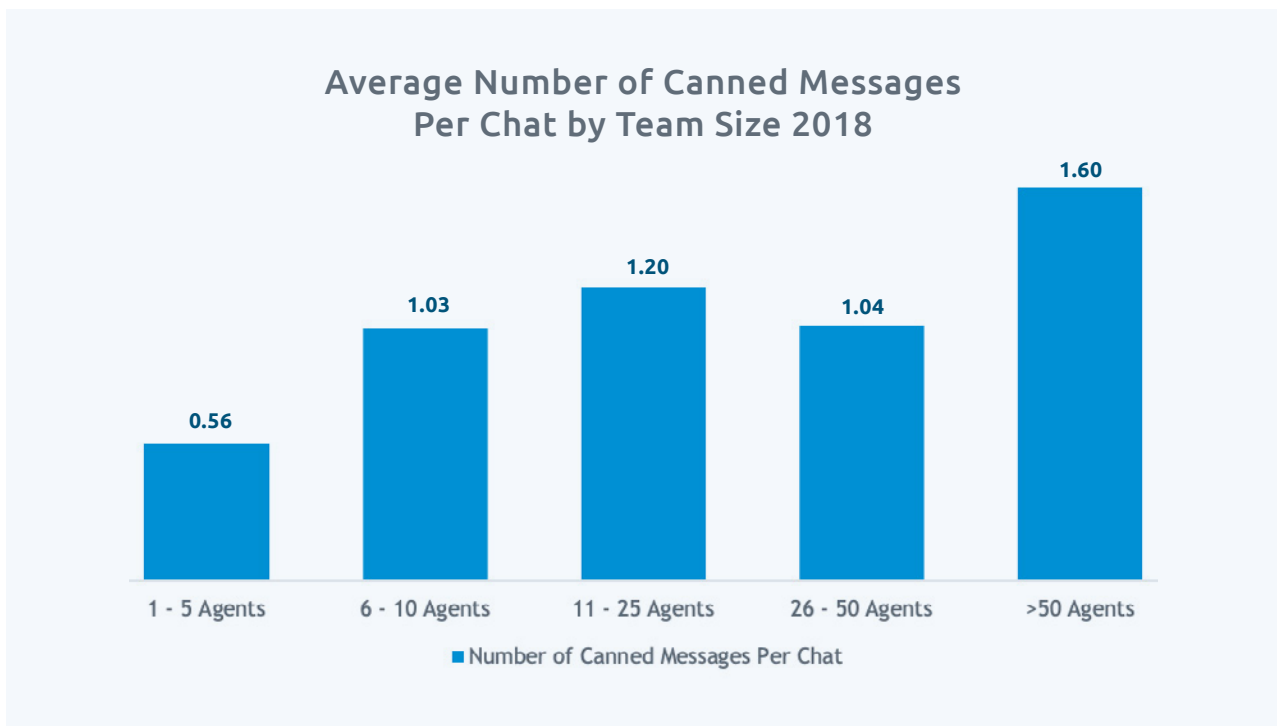
Shane Goldberg
Founder and Principal of CustCore Consulting

Canned Message Utilization



More and more organizations are discovering the convenience, consistency, and speed of canned messages. 68.76% of Comm100 customers used canned messages in 2018, compared to less than half in 2017. But there is still room for improvement.

Despite broader adoption, the average use of canned messages per chat declined. In 2017, of those that used canned messages, we saw most were using 2 to 5 canned messages per chat, but in 2018 we saw this range go down to between 1 and 2 canned messages per chat. This decline could simply be caused by the rise in number of organizations just getting started with canned messages.



Some of our customers do feel that canned messages are ‘robotic’ and ‘not personalized’, but when done right this tool can be a significant time-saver while also helping agents stay on brand and on tone. Canned messages are not designed to replace human interaction. Rather, they serve as shortcuts, either as complete answers to common questions or as snippets that can be easily personalized without having to re-write everything from scratch each time. Just how far you want to go with canned messages depends on your unique culture and training.



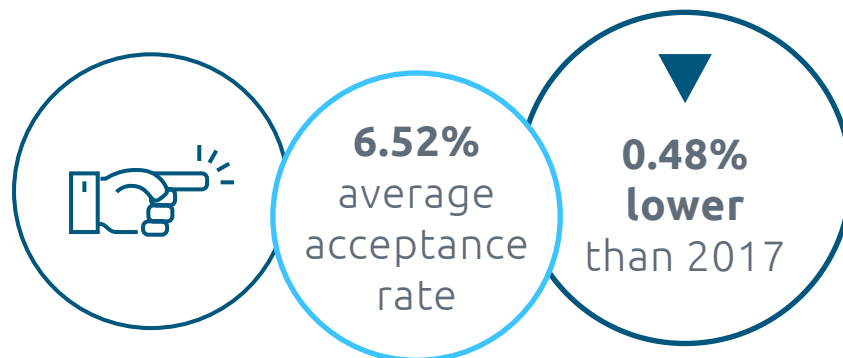
Even with extensive product and brand training, every agent has his or her own style that they bring to the job. But that doesn't mean they reinvent responses from scratch each time they encounter the same situation; as they get more experienced, they get more 'automated'. Canned messages let you accelerate that process by creating and distributing standard responses to your most common questions and ensuring that every agent delivers the same message, or at least starts with the same raw material. Agents can create their own private canned messages too, saving them time without compromising on their own personal style.



Jeff Epstein

VP Product Marketing and Communications, Comm100

Proactive Chat Acceptance Rate



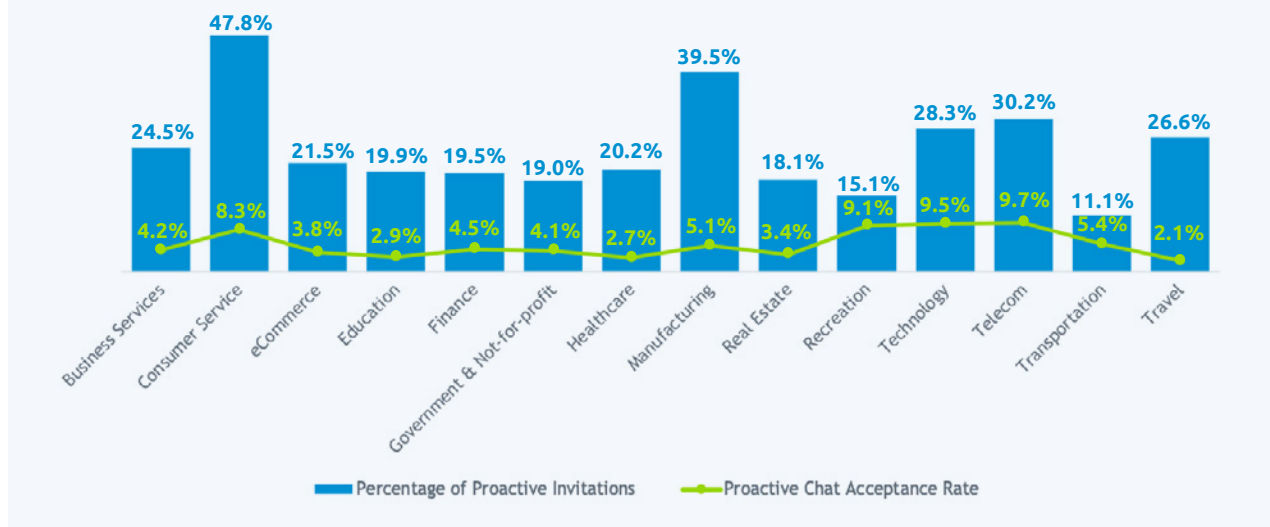
Proactive chat invitations – when the chat system or agent initiates a chat, not the customer – allow organizations to capture a website visitor’s attention quickly before they move on.

In 2018 Comm100 customers proactively initiated over 924,000 chats, accounting for approximately 2% of total chats. This includes both manual and automated invitations, and only counts accepted chats. The average acceptance rate across all industries was 6.52%, down slightly from 7% in 2017. A possible explanation for this decline is the volume of new Comm100 customers just beginning to experiment with proactive chat.

	Proactive chats/ Total chats	Manual proactive chats	Automated proactive chats	Average acceptance rate
%	2.02%	56%	44%	6.52%
Quantity	924,412	517,670	406,742	

When considering that the majority of Comm100 customers deploy Live Chat for support purposes, these proactive chat figures aren’t much of a surprise; it’s the rare support team that reaches out to customers to see if they’re having trouble with anything, versus waiting for them to ask first. That Consumer Services leads the way in percentage of proactive chat invitations is further evidence of this situation, although it is a surprise to see Manufacturing using this tactic so often, and e-Commerce not using it as much as may be expected.

Proactive Chat Acceptance Rates



Telecom currently leads the race for proactive chat acceptance, with Technology and Recreation following closely behind. Travel has the lowest acceptance rate despite initiating almost the same percentage of proactive chats as Telecom and Technology. Conclusion: Travel may be ‘spamming’ its visitors with proactive chat invitations, who are not taking up the offer as frequently as other industries. The same goes for Manufacturing and Consumer Services. The clear winners here? Recreation and Transportation.

Proactive chat can have a stronger impact on engagement – think shopping cart abandonment, for example – but only when done correctly. Organizations need to take the time to structure proactive chat invitations that are tuned in to the visitor’s situation – the page they’re on, how long they’ve been on your site, the value of their shopping cart, etc. – and always respectful of the user experience. Proactive chat acceptance rates provide strong clues about chat strategy success and identify areas to optimize visitor engagement and conversions - if your customer is annoyed by constant invitations, it’ll quickly show.



Proactive chat is a great way to reach out a helping hand to your customers. When used in concert with browsing or customer data, proactive chat can help the customer see that you care about their personalized experience and are ready to answer any questions they may have. Proactive chat mitigates customer frustration and offers assistance before the customer feels tension in their journey on your site.

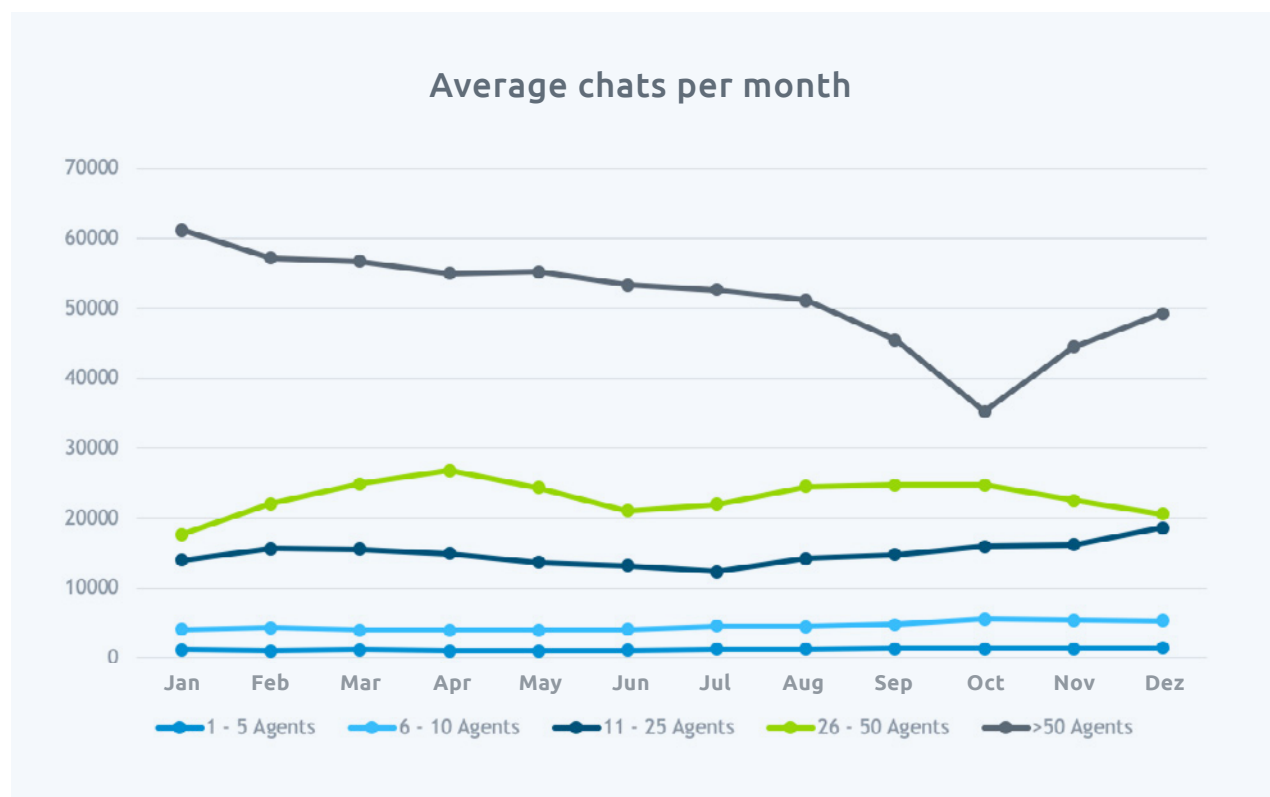


Becky Roemen
Senior CX Consultant

Average Chats Per Month



The smaller the team, the fewer the total chats. But team size is obviously not causal here. It goes without saying that chat volume rises more or less in concert with company size, which is also the typical cause of growth in team size. But growth is not linear: following the team size breaks we used in our analysis, the increase in average chats per month rises by 384%, 327%, 154%, and finally by 224%.



The challenge for organizations is to find the balance between supply and demand when making staffing decisions. You will need to look at chat volume, team size, chat duration, wait times, and queue length, and then you will need to consider your chat configuration options and the use of deflection channels like knowledge bases and bots. Finally, you will need to determine how best to reflect your organization's culture in your live chat strategy. Easy, right?



For several of our customers, we've studied the relationships between chat volume, team size, and effectiveness. We've consistently found that having a dedicated team of chat agents is superior to having agents that are handling chats, emails, and phone calls at the same time. Chat is a unique medium and high-volume, highly-focused teams are more capable of cracking the nut than larger teams that are multi-tasking.

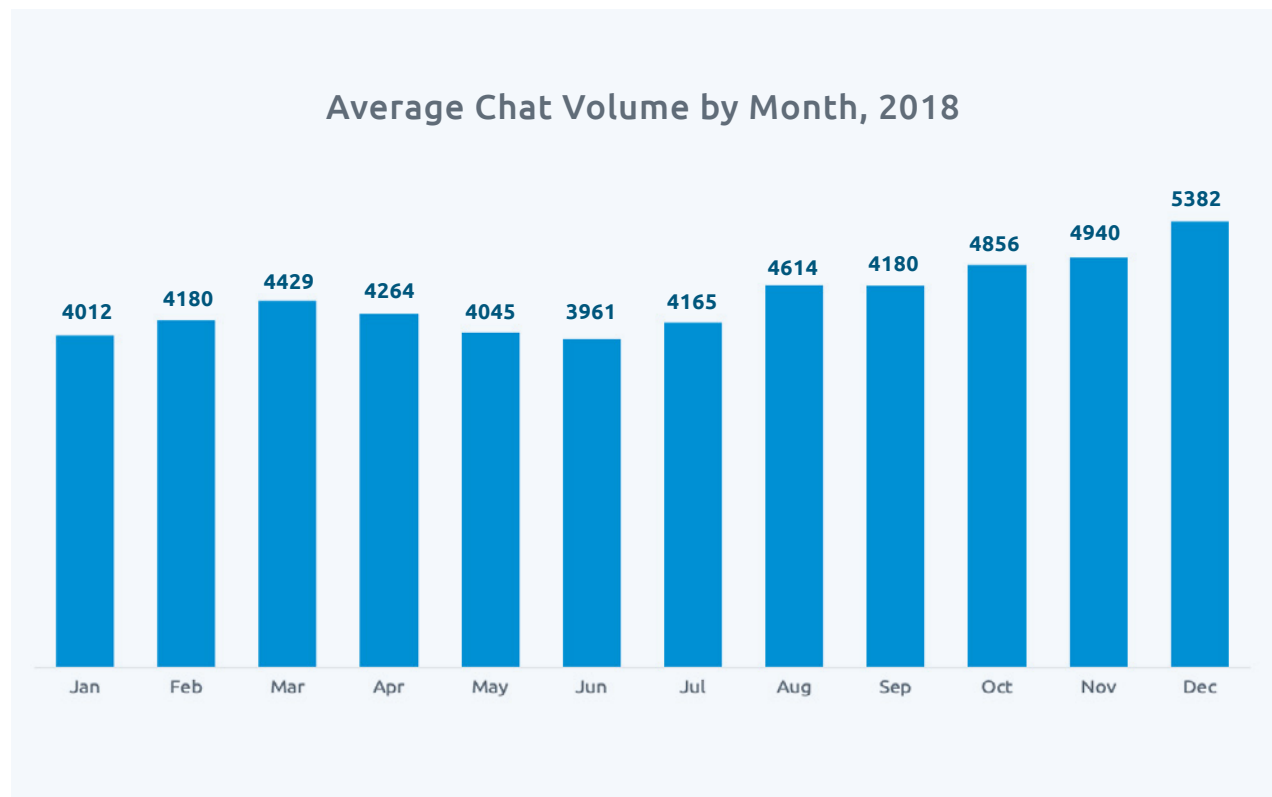


Michael Housman
Chief Data Science Officer, RapportBoost.AI

Chat Volume Distribution by Month



While individual businesses in different industries will experience their own peaks and valleys in monthly chat volume, there are some predictable seasonal fluctuations year over year: chat volume tends to dip slightly during the summer months and peak entering the winter holiday season (with fewer customers in the southern hemisphere, this data reflects northern hemisphere seasonality more strongly).



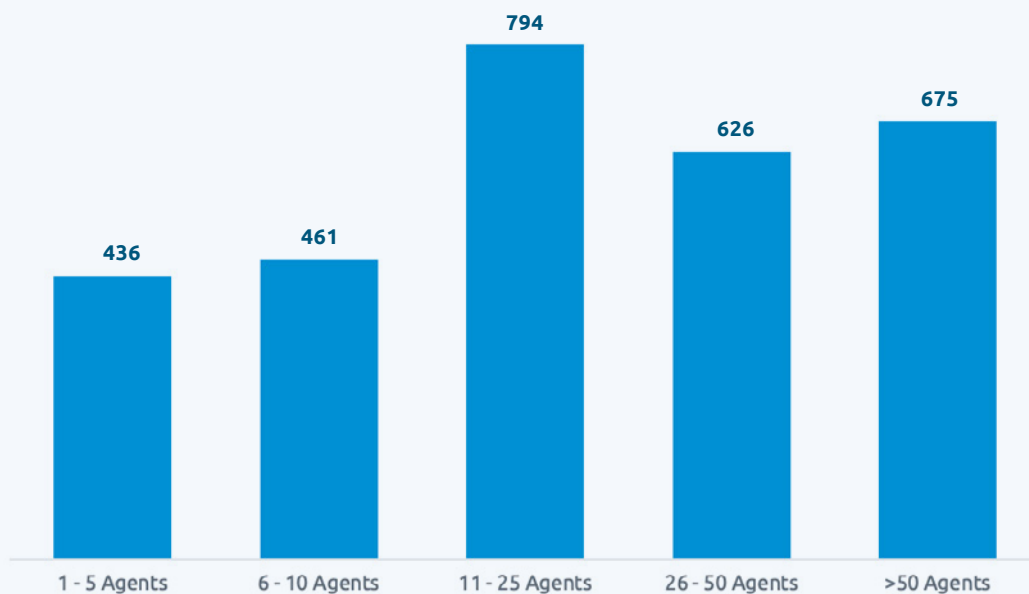
Chats Per Agent Per Month



This metric does not simply reflect agent capacity; it also serves to inform staffing decisions. For example, it's very likely that agents on smaller teams are handling phone calls or multi-tasking when on live chat. That may be a basic operational necessity for smaller organizations.

Regardless of size or industry, businesses need to strike a balance between serving customers more efficiently and ensuring agents aren't under- or over-worked.

Average Chats Per Agent Per Month by Team Size 2018



To keep chat volumes manageable for each agent, best practices include routing and queue management configuration and deflection to bots or a self-serve channel like a knowledge base, leaving the more complex requests for live agents to handle.

In contrast, teams looking to increase chat volume per agent should look to automatic and manual proactive invitations to reach out to visitors under defined conditions.

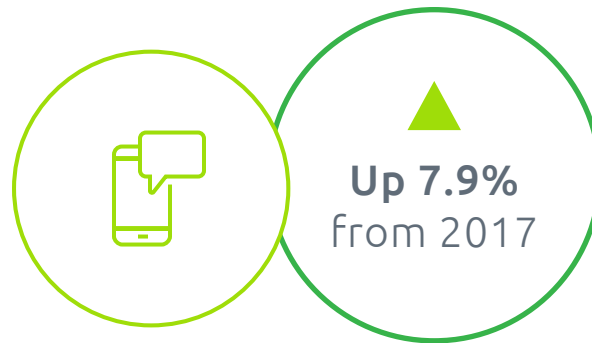


Chat volume per agent can be heavily influenced by how agents are deployed to serve customers throughout the day. For example, if live chat is offered on a 24/7 basis, then during peak times the agents will have a large number of chats taking place, whereas in non-peak times of the day chats per agent will be significantly lower. It is important to consider how best to align resources to peaks and troughs in customer demand during the day and week.



Shane Goldberg
Founder and Principal of CustCore Consulting

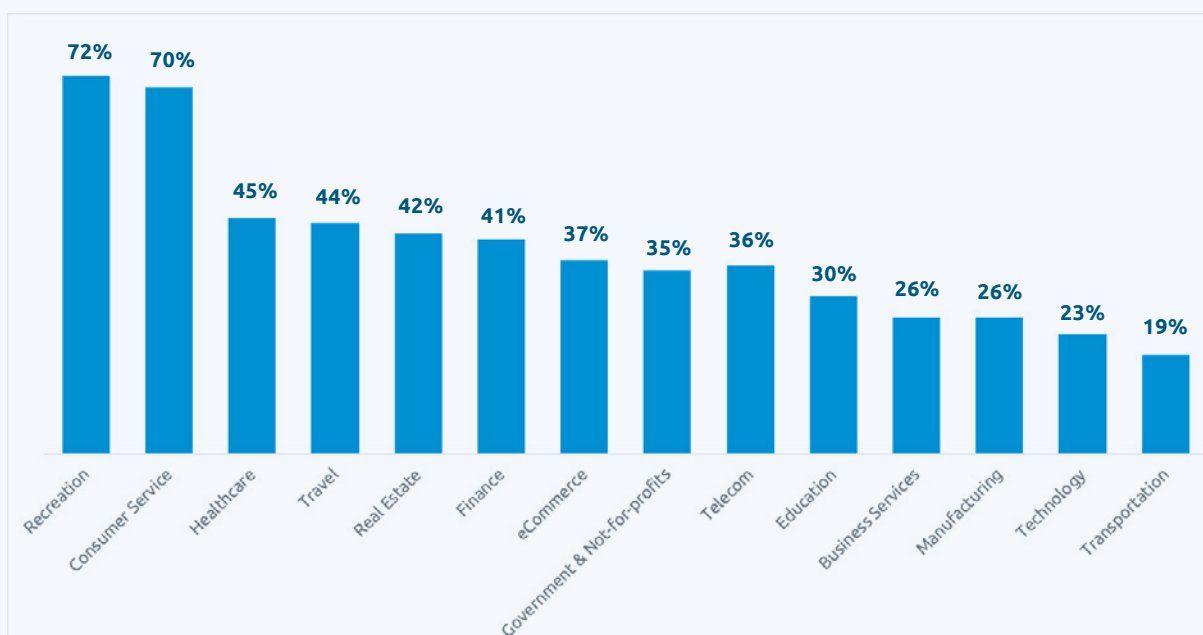
Mobile Chats



Demand for mobile chat is growing and shows no signs of slowing down. On average, 51.68% of chat queries – that’s over 23 million chats! – were sent from a mobile device in 2018, a sharp 7.9% increase from 2017.

Our data confirms the widely held belief that customers continue to shift from desktop to mobile as their primary online device. One of the most important factors to include in your live chat strategy is mobile chat optimization, especially if you’re in the Recreation or Consumer Services industry where mobile chat volume is highest.

Mobile Chat Usage by Industry, 2018



Regardless of industry, country, or size, nearly every organization in our data set had chats coming in from mobile devices. Out of our entire dataset, only 12 organizations did not offer mobile chat.

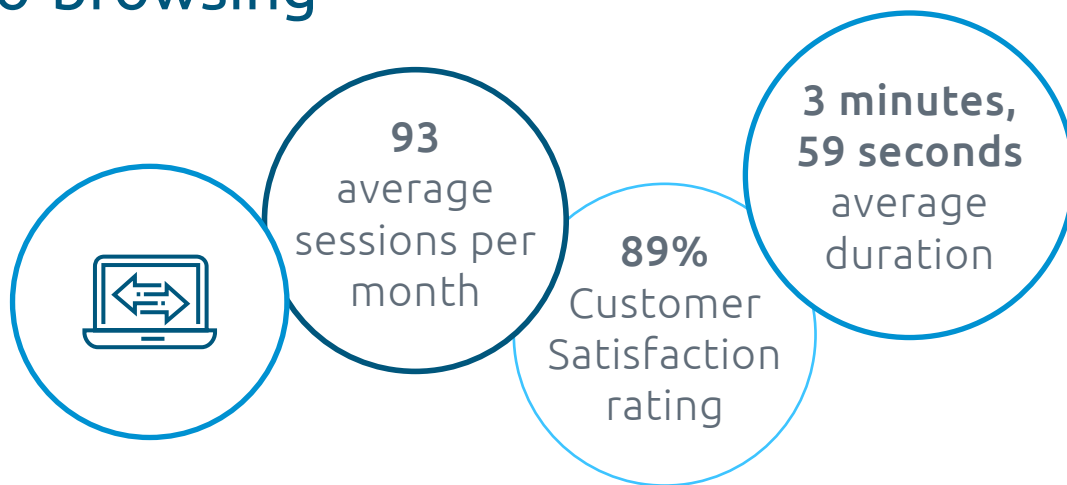


It is no surprise to me that the mobile chat data shows significant growth. With the ever-increasing need to be where your customers are, mobile chat provides the customer with wherever-needed assistance. With enhanced chat tools on the horizon, mobile chat is even showing promise to ease the burden of upstream obstacles like authentication due to the customer using a verified device. I suspect that Mobile Chat will continue to be leveraged and utilized by customers, showing growth for some years to come.



Becky Roemen
Senior CX Consultant

Co-browsing



In 2018, Comm100 released our co-browsing capability. Co-browsing allows the agent to instantly view and interact with a customer's web browser – when invited – so they can eliminate barriers to communication and troubleshoot issues more easily. Co-browsing can be used for sales and support, to demonstrate a feature or capability to a customer or to walk her through the solution to a complex technical issue.

Our customers had an average of 93 co-browsing sessions per month. Each co-browsing session averaged 3 minutes and 59 seconds. Given that it is easier to talk than to type, we can assume that chats involving co-browsing are likely shorter than chats without co-browsing. This would indicate that co-browsing can be a valuable time-saver for your agents. But that's not the only benefit: visitors also love this capability, rating co-browsing sessions an average of 89.3% - **more than six points higher than the average overall CSAT for 2018 (83.1%)**.

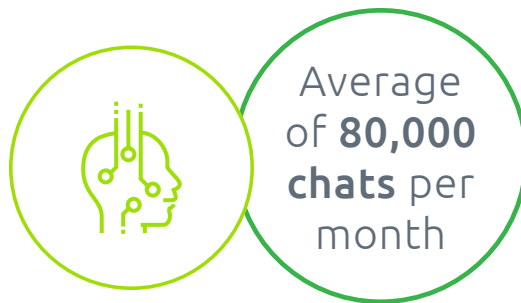


It's not surprising to see customer satisfaction for co-browsing sessions rate six points higher than the overall satisfaction average. Co-browsing really taps into chat's potential by letting reps see what the customer is seeing while messaging back-and-forth in real time. This feature is ideal for tech support, customer success teams, and any other situation where it's helpful to look at the same thing the customer is seeing on their computer.



Jeff Toister, Author
The Service Culture Handbook

AI-Powered Chat



While AI has been an increasingly noisy topic over the past few years in contact centers and customer service, 2018 appears to be the year where AI went from trend to reality.

Comm100 launched its first chatbot in 2017. Our data from that year showed that our **chatbot was able to handle 20% of its interactions from start to finish** without an agent.

In 2018, we upgraded our bot by adding Natural Language Processing (NLP) and machine learning capabilities, making it smarter, more conversational, and more powerful.

Adoption of our second-generation bot has been strong, with promising results. At 59% our bot is **involved in more than half of all chat interactions - handling 26.65% of total chats** from start to finish without the need for an agent, **a solid 6.65% increase** from last year.

Chatbots are now fielding **an average of 80,000 chats per month**. In one of our most successful use cases, an insurance company's chatbot **fields 80% of their total chat requests and has earned a satisfaction rating of 100%** from its customers.

In January 2019 we released our third-generation AI-powered chatbot, adding even more power, flexibility, and integration. As a result of this upgrade we expect to see the number of chats handled by bots to increase exponentially in 2019.

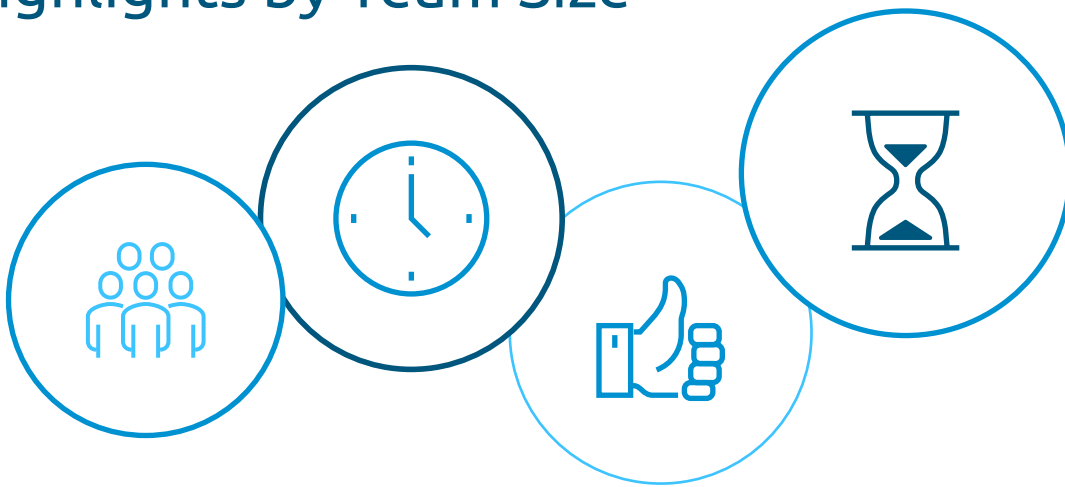


My eyes went straight to this section because AI truly is at the forefront of the minds of so many customer service professionals. While there is fear that bots are going to eliminate customer service jobs, we also know that many customers don't want to contact customer service at all. They'd much rather self-solve. I'd venture a guess that of those 26.65% of chats that the bot was able to handle from start to finish, the customer satisfaction on those chats was through the roof. Given the nature of machine learning, I completely agree with the prediction that bot effectiveness will continue to increase in 2019.



Jeremy Watkin
Director of CX, FCR

Highlights by Team Size

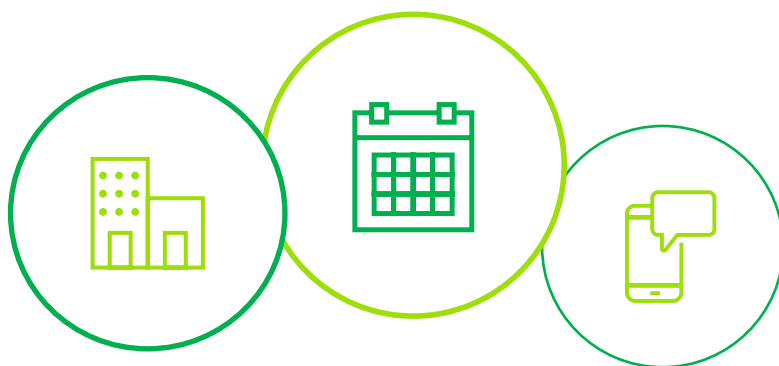


Before we wrap up, let's take a look at some of the main live chat metrics broken down by team size.

Team Size	Average CSAT	Wait time	Chats per month	Chats per agent per month	Chat Duration
1-5 agents	82.7%	51s	1,186	436	12m16s
6-10 agents	84.2%	40s	4,550	461	10m46s
11-25 agents	82.9%	36s	14,901	794	10m07s
26-50 agents	82.7%	83s	22,985	626	13m41s
>50 agents	85.7%	35s	51,375	675	13m09s

While it will be insightful to compare your organization's results to these, keep in mind that these numbers are only part of the story. Time- and volume-based metrics will only take you so far in setting proper goals for your team. There is no direct correlation between length of chat and satisfaction rate, as is revealed above – larger teams may have longer chats but they are still able to achieve higher satisfaction scores.

Highlights by Industry



Our 2018 report includes data from 14 different industries, with Real Estate being new to the mix. Here is a comparison of the main live chat metrics broken down per industry, showing year-over-year percentage changes.

Industry	Satisfaction Rate	Wait time (seconds)	Chats per month	Chat Duration (min:sec)	Chat on mobile
Business Services	84.07% + 6.75%	146 + 156.14%	1,080 - 0.46%	19:45 + 8.22%	27.33% + 5.05%
Consumer Products and Services	86.30% + 4.60%	27 + 50.00%	491 + 6.74%	10:01 - 27.64%	69.75% + 35.92%
eCommerce	85.32% - 0.11%	99 + 70.69%	983 - 42.98%	14:33 - 6.23%	37.07% + 6.51%
Education	89.68% + 0.65%	60 - 10.45%	1,045 - 72.55%	14:29 - 7.94%	30.28% + 6.23%
Banking & Finance	80.71% - 4.23%	56 + 60.00%	2,419 - 10.67%	13:39 + 0.61%	42.66% + 8.30%
Government & Not-For-Profit	92.40% + 7.21%	31 - 11.43%	547 - 49.54%	13:58 - 10.67%	38.37% + 5.27%
Healthcare	92.91% - 0.11%	57 + 78.13%	466 + 11.22%	11:10 - 5.50%	44.70% + 6.75%
Manufacturing	89.88% - 6.02%	45 + 73.08%	154 - 55.75%	18:21 + 23.99%	25.86% + 10.72%
Real Estate	N/A	34	14	21:04	42.08%
Recreation	81.17% + 1.88%	15 - 34.78%	6,113 - 27.57%	8:01 - 10.26%	72.24% + 5.32%

Industry	Satisfaction Rate	Wait time (seconds)	Chats per month	Chat Duration (min:sec)	Chat on mobile
Technology	81.96% + 11.10%	60 - 20.00%	2,107 + 282.40%	15:27 - 17.53%	23.97% + 6.61%
Telecommunications	81.08% - 7.79%	48 + 77.78%	1,447 + 59.71%	12:57 - 23.90%	35.74% + 4.02%
Transportation	93.16% + 3.88%	43 + 121.05%	707 - 25.03%	12:25 - 20.48%	23.17% - 0.16%
Travel	82.42% + 7.26%	64 + 36.17%	339 - 13.30%	16:29 + 10.01%	43.53% + 6.93%



Allowing our members to choose the way they want to communicate with us has always been important. Live chat provides another great channel, and it helps us connect to a segment of our members who may not pick up the phone. More and more members are using this technology, and we've received very positive feedback on their experiences.



Mark Koppedryer
SVP Retail, Veridian Credit Union



In this day and age, you really have to set yourself apart from your competition. One of the ways we here at Stata achieve that is through our above and beyond customer service. Every company, regardless of industry or size, should be going above and beyond – it's simply the type of service that customers now expect everywhere. Our customer satisfaction score currently sits at 97% but we're still always looking for ways to go "overboard" on service excellence. For us, live chat is a competitive differentiator.



Collin McNiel
Director of Account Management, StataCorp

Key Take-aways

Mobile matters

In 2018, mobile chats increased by 7.9% and now account for more than half of all chats for the first time since we began publishing benchmark data. The number of chats originating from a mobile device increased across almost all industries, with the exception of Transportation. The shift to mobile chat follows the global shift to mobile in general. Customers want to connect with you in real-time, when and where they need it, and mobile chat fits the bill. Based on our data, mobile chat continues to be an important part of a good live chat strategy, regardless of company size or industry.

Smart staffing and proper system configuration are key to a successful live chat strategy

Our data reveals that teams with over 50 agents earn the highest satisfaction rate and boast the shortest wait time, while teams with 11 to 50 agents have longer wait times and a customer satisfaction score of about 3 points less. But wait time on its own does not dictate customer satisfaction, as we would expect. That is more complicated.

The smallest teams are in a predictable situation: short on staff, likely struggling to attract top talent, and often requiring employees to play multiple roles alongside customer support. Their systems and processes are typically less mature, which is fine as long as their customer base stays small. The largest teams in contrast are on the opposite side of all these challenges – they can pay more, they can create more tightly defined roles, and have more mature systems and processes that let them handle higher volumes with ease.



Our agents loved it when we added live chat to our service model. They found it so easy to build personal rapport, and so much more scalable than phone and email. It helped that we put energy into training – like any technology, you get out what you put in. We were able to make live chat a core part of our culture because we worked on getting buy-in across the board, from management and the CSR team.



Holly Langenfelder,
Customer Service, National Accounts Dixon Valve

Don't sacrifice quality for quantity

It's the middle pack where things start to get interesting – more customers and larger teams introduce the need for better planning and management, and more sophisticated processes and systems. These are classic growing pains, and the pains are real as evidenced by increases in chat volume and declines in customer satisfaction. It seems Comm100 customers in this band first try to shorten chat length to increase capacity and cut down on wait times, but the effect on customers isn't positive. So a new strategy is required, one that combines tools like chatbots, routing and queue management, co-browsing, and perhaps revisiting agent training.

No matter the chat volume or team size, our data shows that finding the right ratio of agents to chats by staffing wisely and deploying the right live chat capabilities are invaluable for a successful live chat strategy.

There are many factors that contribute to CSAT. Organizations need to strike a balance between competing requirements to make sure they are doing right by their customers at an acceptable cost.



Together, statistics like wait time, chat volume and length, and satisfaction score paint an interesting picture of contact center maturity, showing the pains that come with nurturing a contact center into a mature operation that balances quality and productivity. How can contact centers cushion themselves through growth to achieve positive customer outcomes? Enable your agents through effective training and quality processes and take advantage of tech and automation solutions to ensure that you're giving your agents maximum ability to be productive and efficient.



Kaye Chapman, Learning & Development Manager, Comm100

Looking Forward

Seek balance between agent productivity and customer delight

Our findings show that after a three-year slump, organizations are upping their customer experience game to meet sky-high customer expectations. Meaningful, personalized interactions are taking precedent, signalled by the downward trend of canned message use.

There is still room for improvement given chat's accessibility, flexibility, and personalized service model. Co-browsing has proven to take the load off of agents while still being a popular tool with customers, evidenced by short sessions and high customer satisfaction.

Optimize your customer experience strategy to take full advantage of all of live chat's capabilities. You'll deliver better service to your customers and equip your agents with the tools they need to offer above and beyond experiences without breaking the bank.

Mobile means more channels

More and more customers are making the shift to mobile and while organizations may think channel and device, customers don't. They need to step up their customer experience game and create seamless, consistent, omnichannel experiences that support all the channels powered by mobile. Similarly, organizations need to optimize their mobile chat experience for a truly successful live chat strategy, or risk compromising service for over half of their customers.

Comm100 rolled out SMS support in early 2019, and we're planning to add support for more channels throughout the year. Based on the growth of mobile in general we expect to see quick and consistent adoption. Come back next year to see if that happens!

AI and humans working better together

While some prognosticators may be claiming that 2019 will be the "year of bot backlash", we here at Comm100 predict otherwise. Bots' reputation to date stems mainly from poor design and lack of intelligent escalation to human agents, not because the technology doesn't work or because consumers don't want to use them. To the contrary – there are lots of statistics that point to the growing acceptance of bots by consumers, such as this one: 78% percent of

consumers are comfortable with a human being not being involved when interacting with a company under a variety of circumstances (Interactions study, December 2018). Or this one: 58% percent of respondents said they would use AI if it helps them save time by taking over some tasks (Gartner Consumer AI Perceptions Study, 2018).

All things being equal, bots still need humans behind them for the sake of the customer. When done right they can actually enhance the human agent experience by fielding boring, repetitive questions and leaving the agent to handle the more complex queries.

Organizations need to strike a balance between bots and humans by properly defining bot scope and clearly communicating its capabilities to their customers. Scoping bots correctly and implementing an escalation process that provides a positive customer experience will help organizations avoid the “backlash” while maximizing chatbot ROI, a win-win for everybody.



Bots simply hold too much promise to be ignored. But like any technology, they're not magic bullets, and you get out what you put in. Focus your bot on a specific use case, train it with the knowledge you already have, and keep watch over it. Above all else, make it easy for your customers to be transferred – proactively or reactively depending on the situation – to a human agent.



Jeff Epstein
VP Product Marketing and Communications, Comm100



In the same way that bots need humans behind them, we believe that humans need artificial intelligence behind them as well. We've found that human agents can engage customers more effectively when they've been coached by algorithms trained on large volumes of chats and when they're offered up real-time recommendations about what to say and when. The agents improve their performance and the artificial intelligence gets smarter with each interaction so it's a win-win.



Michael Housman, Chief Data Science Officer,
RapportBoost.AI

Data and Methodology

Comm100 researchers gathered live chat data for this report from January 1st, 2018 to December 31st, 2018.

The sample size includes 45,763,525 chat interactions from organizations all over the world representing 14 industries using live chat for customer service, support, sales, and marketing. Only customers with established, ongoing live chat accounts were included. Trial and free accounts were excluded from our analysis.

In 2018 Comm100 also saw a 50% growth in new accounts. The growth enabled us to pull more granular data and look at the numbers by team size. As continuous growth occurred throughout the year, averages were calculated to exclude months before an organization was fully ramped up with Comm100.

These criteria are in alignment with past Live Chat Benchmark Reports from 2016, 2017, and 2018 to allow for an accurate year-over-year comparison. This year due to GDPR changes, we've changed our data collection and analyses processes to align with these new security policies and requirements.



Let's chat

Comm100 is a leading global provider of omnichannel customer experience solutions with a mission to make online service and support delivery more genuine, more personalized, and more productive through meaningful conversations. Let us show you how.

[Learn more](#)