



Transforming the Client Experience with Chat and AI

A Guide for the Financial Services Sector

Contents

Introduction	3
Not just a client-led revolution	5
Live chat best practices	7
Taking the next step with AI	12
Live chat and chatbot vendor selection checklist	14
Personalization	15
Agent-centricity	15
Versatility	16
Conversation quality	16
Data security and privacy	17
There's more to come with digital client transformation	18



Introduction

Few facets of our lives have been left untouched by technology. The way we communicate, work, and manage our finances has changed dramatically even in the past five years, courtesy of mobile apps, virtual assistants, artificial intelligence (AI) and more.

In the financial services sector, the revolution has been led by clients looking to make the most of these innovations for better, faster, and more convenient experiences. In the area of support, **79% of clients now prefer service through online chat** and **59% of all chats involve a chatbot**.

This data indicates that the desire for convenience is driving this shift towards digital engagement. Channels like live chat and chatbots are easy to use, quick, and most importantly, convenient. Many clients prefer to use this technology rather than making time to visit a branch or calling in.

That's not to say traditional channels like phone are going away. Organizations need to consider how they can enhance and compliment the channels they already have

for those who prefer more traditional ways of banking but want more modern service and support – for example going to see a financial advisor in person but being able to book the meeting over chat instead of through phone.

While there are many exciting and intriguing possibilities about how technology for financial services will develop in the years ahead, businesses need to remain focused on providing support and service in channels that are safe, secure and in keeping with what their clients want.

Live chat and chatbots are giving financial institutions the chance to enhance the quality of service they offer clients with real-time support that's quick, easily accessible, convenient, and secure. They are vital components of a comprehensive, digital client experience strategy that will ensure your organization responds successfully to changing client expectations.

But how do financial institutions get started? Read on for a comprehensive guide to implementing live chat and chatbots as part of your total client experience strategy.



The move to digital

There are now a variety of tools available to clients to help them manage their finances in ways that suit them best: for example contactless credit cards, SMS alerts, and most importantly, online and mobile banking.

Before the introduction of automated teller machines (ATMs), many clients looking to check their balance had to wait for a statement delivered through the mail or ask a teller to write it on a piece of paper.

Now millions of clients are habitually choosing to log in to mobile banking or online banking to check their balance – with many doing so multiple times a day. In one of their latest reports, [Deloitte](#) found that 73% of clients prefer online banking while 59% used mobile banking apps in addition to using online banking through an internet browser.

The most notable finding of their research revealed that there were [no generational differences](#) in how frequently online or mobile banking was used; baby boomers and millennials were on par with how often they used the tool, despite popular rhetoric.

The use of online and mobile banking is just one way in which clients have access to more financial information than ever before. The shift in client expectations has led to a digital revolution for financial institutions. While more and more clients are managing their finances online, they are also demanding that their service providers keep up when it comes to service and support.



“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

Not just a client-led revolution

While changing client preferences is a major contributor to live chat's popularity, it's not the sole reason financial institutions are going digital. Organizations are also embracing live chat for its numerous business benefits, including high efficiency, increased productivity, and [enormous return-on-investment \(ROI\)](#).

Compare live chat to phone, one of the most common service and support channels. Phone support can be very costly, both in terms of toll charges and labor-per-call costs. On the other hand, [Forrester research](#) has shown that live chat is at least 17% - 30% cheaper than a phone call.

This is mainly because live chat enables your agents to assist several visitors at once. On average, with [proper training](#) most live chat agents can handle three or more chats simultaneously.

This live chat benefit, called [chat concurrency](#), translates into considerable savings in personnel costs, as it allows a few live chat agents to serve the same number of clients as a larger team of phone support employees.

As for ROI, even deflecting [just 5% of your call volume to chat will give you a cost savings of at least \\$50k per year](#) for a minimum ROI of 4,222%.



"Live chat is definitely a valuable channel for new business, especially for lending out of our operating area where we don't have branches. It's so simple to train your staff on live chat, they'll be up and running quickly. As for the business, there's no doubt that it will drive ROI."



Claire Crossan

Area Branch Controller,

The Cumberland Building Society

However, with any technology investment, no financial institution can overlook the importance of **security** concerns. Financial institutions need to ensure they choose a secure chat platform that offers rigorous security standards including PCI DSS compliance, credit card masking, ISO certification, and SOC II compliance, and other features that align with their own organization's security protocols.

The right chat vendor will make it possible to deliver quality service without compromising on security.



“In an environment of low consumer trust and concern over data breaches and identity theft, chat provides the ability to offer high standards of customer communication without compromising on security. Voice communication often isn’t an ideal channel through which to verify and communicate sensitive financial information – but taking advantage of the protections inherent in chat makes it great for modern financial customer communications.”



Kevin Gao
CEO,
Comm100 Network Corporation

Live chat best practices

Increasingly, many clients want service in different ways at different times – with the freedom to move between different devices and channels whether on the phone, online or in-branch.

Client experience is the new brand. The reality is that tech-savvy clients are far more likely to judge how easy getting service and support from their bank is by comparing it to other experiences like paying a phone bill online or ordering food on a delivery app.

With these services now setting the bar for customer experience, financial institutions are no longer just competing with others in the financial services industry, they're being compared to every experience that their client has ever had.

Live chat is a must for any financial institution. Those that aren't using it are already behind, while those that are can still step up their game. The following live chat benchmarks will help you see how you stack up, split into different team sizes to help paint a more accurate picture of current service standards.

Use these benchmarks and our best practices to help shape your live chat strategy.



“Members love the ease of being able to be anywhere and connect with us over chat instead of having to go into a branch or calling in. They really enjoy the convenience of live chat overall. We’ve received nothing but positive responses.”



Jasmina Duric

*Manager of E-Services and
Support Department,
Lake Michigan Credit Union*

Live Chat Client Satisfaction

Team Size	Average Rating
1-10 agents	4.17
11-50 agents	4.18
>50 agents	4.43

One of the keys to increasing live chat client satisfaction is personalization. Financial institutions need to see live chat as more than just a basic messaging channel.

With intelligent routing and segmentation features, you can easily match the client to the right department without the need for an IVR maze. When you're setting up segmentation and routing for your live chat instance, consider these factors:

1. Routing by geography (Region, country, city, etc.)
2. Routing by language (English, French, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Dutch, Spanish, etc.)
3. Routing by interaction history (New VS returning visitor)
4. Routing by department (Mortgages, credit cards, loans, troubleshooting, etc.)
5. Routing by customer status (VIP clients and high net worth accounts)

Keep in mind none of these are mutually exclusive. Financial institutions can personalize their conversations and address specific needs with all these parameters, or a combination of them all, set up in intent-based routing.

By sending clients to the right person the first time and cutting out the need to manually enter numbers, clients will get a much more personalized, automated experience.

Live Chat Wait Time

Banking and Financial Services	Average Wait Time
1-10 agents	40 seconds
11-50 agents	1 minute, 13 seconds
>50 agents	59 seconds

According to [CCW's latest Disruptive Technology Report](#), low wait times are one of the top signs of a great client experience.

This is a metric where live chat could potentially have the most impact on your business, but only when done right. Chat concurrency is a unique feature that phone simply does not have. While agents can only take phone calls one at a time, they can handle multiple chats concurrently.



That said, when starting off we recommend a limit of three concurrent chats until you have a sense of agent capacity. Trying to push your agents too far too fast may reduce wait times in the short term but could be detrimental to your first chat resolution (FCR) and client satisfaction scores in the long term.

After you understand your team’s capacity for concurrent chats, keep in mind these factors:

- Staff your agents well to be prepared for the peaks and valleys of chat volume. Phone call volume and website traffic are good ways to predict when more live chat agents will be needed.
- If your agents are overloaded with FAQs, consider adding a chatbot to free up your agents to handle more complex questions and cut wait times while keeping overhead low

Live Chat Average Chats Per Month

Team size	Average number of chats per month
1-10 agents	737
11-50 agents	8,316
>50 agents	12,077



“I don’t recommend that agents multitask across channels – expecting agents to handle, say, chats and emails at the same time usually leads to fragmented attention and reduced quality. But given the similar flow and style of communication used within chats, experienced agents may be able to take between five to seven chats at once, making the most of ‘down time’ in conversations and providing good customer service across multiple communications at a time.”



Kaye Chapman
Learning & Development Manager,
Comm100

Your standard for average chats per month can and will differ depending on your use case. If you're using live chat for pure FAQ deflection, your best bet is to add a chatbot to your client experience strategy.

However more often than not, when a financial institution deploys live chat, the number of inquiries from other channels do not go down. This is mainly because live chat taps into an audience that never would have picked up the phone to call for service or support in the first place.

Offering live chat as a channel opens up a brand-new audience that financial institutions were not able to reach before, creating opportunities for expansion and growth.

An example of a financial institution that has successfully used live chat to expand their reach is [The Cumberland Building Society](#). Thanks to live chat, The Cumberland has achieved a client satisfaction score of 4.7/5 (11.9% higher than the overall benchmark across all team sizes) and significantly increased their mortgage business by engaging with their clients through live chat. They've also collected valuable feedback thanks to live chat's built-in pre- and post-chat survey capabilities.



"62% of The Cumberland's chat users said they would not have picked up the phone to call if chat was not available. Think about how you and your staff communicate in business and personally. It's all about messaging and conversations. You need to get there."



Bob Matthews,
Customer Experience Manager,
The Cumberland Building Society

Live Chat on Mobile

Team size	Mobile Chats
1-10 agents	44.08%
11-50 agents	33.63%
>50 agents	75.40%

Millions of people log into mobile banking every single day, with [59% of clients](#) stating they prefer it over visiting a branch in person or calling in to check their balance. Mobile chat is a fundamental part of a successful client experience strategy and is a channel that should not be ignored when deploying live chat.

The chat experience will look completely different on mobile versus desktop. Financial institutions should take care to ensure all the design elements are optimized for mobile, or else they risk providing frustrating and negative experiences when users are trying to reach out for support.

Furthermore, financial institutions should also be as accessible or even more accessible through mobile chat as they are through live chat. This includes not only deploying live chat on their mobile website, but also in their mobile banking app as well.

[Lake Michigan Credit Union](#), for example, integrated live chat with their mobile app to provide members with native support. Their members love getting answers over mobile chat because it's easier and more convenient for them.



"We've received nothing but positive responses. Members love the ease of being able to be anywhere and connect with us over chat instead of having to go into a branch or calling in. They really enjoy the convenience of live chat overall."



*Jasmina Duric,
Manager of E-Services and
Support Department,
Lake Michigan Credit Union*

Taking the next step with AI

Whether you're above the industry average with live chat and looking for a more advanced AI chatbot, or just curious about integrating simple FAQ chatbots into your client experience strategy, there's an Intelligent Assistance (IA) solution for everybody.

IA offers a range of benefits to your financial institution, your clients, and your agents. They're always on, they're fast, and they don't ever get tired of answering the same question over and over again.

Chatbots can [accomplish tasks](#) without supervision, consistently and efficiently – and for financial institutions, [those use cases are endless](#). From paying a bill to checking a balance, making a loan payment, and even applying for credit cards, chatbots can easily automate workflows and free up your agents to focus on more important and complex queries.

To be clear, there is a [difference between chatbots and AI-powered chatbots](#). Chatbots that run on keywords and without the benefit of AI technology like [Natural Language Processing \(NLP\)](#) are a dime-a-dozen, easy to spin up, and acceptable in certain contexts.

Hook a chatbot up with NLP, and now you're into a whole new level of client experience. [NLP lets chatbots partake in far more natural conversations](#); they're far better at understanding your clients' intentions, and as a result, can respond more accurately.



If you're wondering where to start with chatbots, here are just a handful of use cases they can handle:

1. **FAQs:** Chatbots can handle questions like 'What are your branch hours?', 'Which credit card promotions are available?', and more, freeing up your agents to handle the more complex queries.
2. **Gathering client information:** Chatbots can pass off the who, what, where, when, and why to an agent, helping them contextualize queries and reducing time spent on each chat.
3. **Triage queries:** Thanks to chatbot's smart routing capabilities, client queries can be routed to the appropriate department or agent.
4. **Shorter queues, faster responses:** Chatbots can handle a virtually unlimited amount of chats simultaneously, cutting down on response time for clients. They can also deliver responses more quickly than human agents.
5. **24/7 service:** Chatbots provide an additional channel for clients to still get answers during off-hours when a human agent is not available.

One of the most important best practices for you to keep in mind is that a chatbot should never be a replacement for your agents. While **59% of all chats** now involve a chatbot, **86% of clients agree** that there should always be an 'escalate to agent' option present when talking to a chatbot.



"With both companies and customers preferring self-service, and chatbot NLP improving by leaps and bounds each year, it's the perfect time to start building an intelligent assistance solution. Having an AI agent that is flexible, scalable, and deployable on many channels is an investment which is sure to pay dividends in the coming years."



Cale Shapera
Chatbot Architect, Comm100

Live chat and chatbot vendor selection checklist

Before you invest in any new technology, you need to have well-defined goals and expectations. Live chat and AI chatbots are no different. While there are many vendors out there that offer live chat or chatbot services, we recommend that you select a vendor that does both for easier implementation, training, and execution.

Here are 5 factors you need to consider when evaluating vendors.

- 1 Personalization**
- 2 Agent-centricity**
- 3 Versatility**
- 4 Conversation quality**
- 5 Data security and privacy**



Questions to ask about

Personalization

- What depth of personalization options are offered?
- What segmentation capabilities are available for clients in different regions or languages, or of different demographics?
- What kind of data is provided out of the box and does it provide the right insights to create more personalized experiences?
- Is there intent-based routing available to automatically direct inbound queries to the right department the first time, without triage or transfers?
- Can integrations and APIs be used to connect the platform to other systems, making deep personalisation automatic?

Bottom line

Quality platforms will allow your financial institution to engage personally with a client based on their geography, interaction history, account status and more. **Personalization** is crucial for financial institutions to build stronger relationships with their clients.

Questions to ask about

Agent-centricity

- Would the capabilities offered through this platform make your agents more productive and efficient?
- Is the interface user-friendly and intuitive for agents to pick up quickly?
- How long will it take to train new agents on?
- Does it integrate with knowledge bases to allow for internal knowledge acquisition and learning?

Bottom line

Your agents will use the platform every day, so it must enhance their ability to do great work without needing lengthy training or workarounds. **98% of organizations** state the agent experience (AX) is a key part of any successful client experience strategy, so any good platform needs to appeal as much to the agents as the clients.



Questions to ask about

Versatility

- Does this platform make issue resolution smoother and easier than the status quo?
- Does it provide efficiencies that [reduce wait times and unnecessary friction](#)?
- Can this help to provide better quality service and support to your clients?
- Does this platform perform well across different devices, operating systems, or browsers?
- How well does the platform integrate into your current technology stack?

Bottom line

The [right platform](#) should be versatile enough to contribute to each of your financial institution's target metrics and flexible enough to adapt to any technology stack through integration and configuration options.

Questions to ask about

Conversation quality

- Does this platform help your clients get service that's fast, friendly and accurate?
- Will this platform improve conversation quality while ensuring there are no trade-offs in terms of time spent?
- Does this platform offer rich media features that can speed up time to resolution (e.g. image or document sharing)?
- Does the platform provide the ability to make and track KPI improvements?

Bottom line

Quality conversations build stronger relationships, but that shouldn't be at the expense of efficiency. Organizations need to make sure they're taking full advantage of a [platform's more advanced capabilities](#) like file sharing, co-browsing, and more, to provide quality interactions through tactical, interactive experiences that fuel greater client satisfaction.



Questions to ask about

Data security and privacy

- Does this platform meet my industry's security and compliance standards (e.g. PCI)?
- How is data stored and processed (if in the cloud)?
- Does this platform offer on-premise installation if tighter security is needed?
- What security measures are available on the agent side (password protection, SSO)?
- What type of encryption tools are used at rest and during data transmission?

Bottom line

Safeguarding client data will always be non-negotiable for financial institutions. Good platforms should have multiple layers of data protection and compliance with data standards like [ISO 27001](#), [GDPR](#), [PCI](#), and more.



When evaluating chatbot vendors, it's important to decide if you're looking for a service or a tool. While there are vendors which can build a chatbot for you, ideally you want one who can advise on best practices, while enabling your team to build the chatbot along with other self-service resources. That's the way to achieve the best ROI over time.



Cale Shapera

Chatbot Architect, Comm100

There's more to come with digital client transformation

We've seen how millions of clients are turning to web and mobile banking because these technologies offer greater flexibility, choice, and personalization. Live chat and chatbots are natural compliments to the way your customers want to engage.

The benefits don't end here; AI is already making its way into the agent experience, leading to the [rise of the super-agent](#). These developments will continue to influence how financial institutions reach and engage their clients, and those that aren't there yet are at risk of falling further behind.

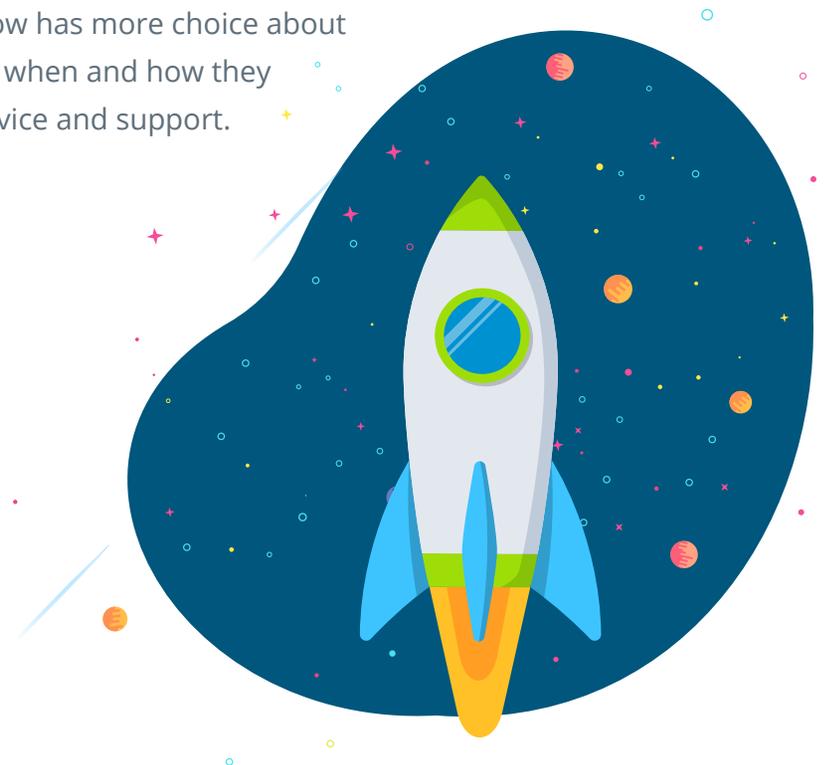
While client preferences are largely the reason for this massive shift in behaviour, the benefits for financial institutions, no matter the size, are undeniable. Even so, the importance of the client relationship should remain at the forefront of service delivery.

Live chat and chatbots are helping financial institutions provide services to clients that are more convenient, helpful and tailored to their client's needs and how they prefer to communicate today.

Developing a plan for implementation is only just the start.

Financial institutions need to keep these benchmarks and strategies for improvement in mind as they grow and scale their client experience strategy – ensuring they choose the platform(s) with the capabilities that best satisfy their business requirements. Of course, the security of clients' confidential data remains paramount in that decision.

Live chat and AI chatbots are opening a world of possibilities for the financial services industry. The real winner, however, is the client, who now has more choice about where, when and how they get service and support.

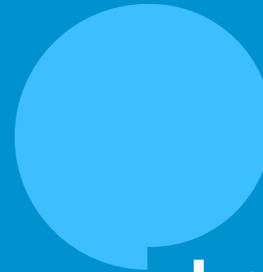


You've got to see this



Learn how Lake Michigan Credit Union scales member engagement and delivers excellent mobile support with Comm100 Live Chat

[View case study >](#)



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](#)



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