



# The Healthcare Service Provider's Guide to Live Chat and AI Chatbots

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# Introduction

Providing the best possible care is the ultimate goal of any healthcare provider. For services this personal and intimate, the overall 'customer experience' is more delicate – and perhaps more important – than in other, more commercial scenarios. So it's not surprising that **92% of healthcare consumers** said improving patient experience should be a top strategic priority for medical providers over the next year.

In today's decidedly digital era, healthcare organizations have generally been slower to adapt to changing consumer preferences than other industries. But that is shifting as more and more service providers recognize that digital transformation is the answer to improving consumer engagement – in terms of reach, personalization, *and* cost effectiveness.

The research in this report shows how technology like live chat and AI chatbots – tools that directly impact the healthcare consumer experience – play a crucial role in delivering better service and earning greater loyalty.

For instance, live chat's unique and HIPAA-compliant telemedicine capabilities help healthcare providers scale high-quality, personalized care regardless of time or geography<sup>1</sup>.

This is a life-changing benefit for those who prefer or need to receive care in the comfort of their own home compared to travelling to a clinic, especially for the elderly, chronically ill, or those living in rural areas. It also benefits those who simply have work, children, or other reasons that make it difficult or impossible to come onsite. Fully scalable for healthcare providers of any size, real-time chat can be the most direct link between a provider and a patient.

On the provider side, AI chatbots are an essential tool for lightening the workload of healthcare workers who always have something more complex to tend to than qualifying online visitors or answering simple or frequently asked questions. With chatbots easily covering these types of queries, your staff can spend more time providing quality care to those in urgent need.

Not sure where or how to get started? This e-book will explore the current state of consumer engagement technology in the healthcare industry, including live chat benchmarks and real use cases of how and when to use a chatbot. It will then cover how to get started and weave live chat and AI into your broader consumer engagement strategy.

<sup>1</sup> Not every live chat provider is HIPAA compliant. Be sure to ask for full details in order to protect your customers' electronic Protected Health Information (ePHI).

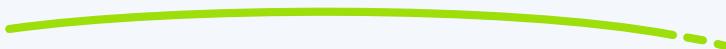


## The potential of telemedicine with live chat

From following up with patients post-surgery to less urgent issues such as an ear infection, from chronic condition management to mental health check-ins, telemedicine can improve the healthcare consumer experience through greater convenience and satisfaction. It can also generate cost savings and productivity gains for providers.

Recent [research](#) by Vidyo has found that remote and video-enabled care is becoming a critical cornerstone of healthcare delivery, with over 75% of providers operating or planning to launch telemedicine services in the year to come. That's a good thing because 90% of consumers surveyed said they wouldn't hesitate to leave a healthcare provider that isn't offering a satisfactory digital experience, and 88% of the respondents younger than 40 said they'll choose their next provider based on a strong online presence.

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Healthcare providers know that real-time digital communication is necessary for connecting with consumers, but implementation without a clear path to success can lead to unsatisfactory and unprofitable results. This is where live chat comes in. Thanks to its real-time engagement and audio/video capabilities, chat is the perfect platform for providers to roll out their telemedicine programs.

With chat's audio and video features, telemedicine is a convenient, accessible, and private solution for patients. Delivered right into their home – or wherever they are – this remote capability removes service barriers for patients without compromising on care quality. The phone alone won't cut it - having a solution that allows for voice, video, and text-based chats caters to a wider range of scenarios. For instance, video allows you to see physical symptoms, and text-based chats with auto-translation can help those with difficulty speaking your native language find resolutions faster and more easily than email.

With live chat as the cornerstone of a modernized consumer engagement strategy that encompasses messaging, voice, and video, healthcare providers can deliver support that's far more accessible, functional, and cost-effective without sacrificing security or privacy.



## Not just a consumer-led revolution

While changing consumer preferences are a major contributor to live chat's popularity, it's not the sole reason healthcare providers are going digital. Healthcare costs are constantly on the rise, and providers are struggling to meet the expected level of service with the ever-increasing costs of delivery.

Phone support is one of the most common services and support channels, but can also be very costly to providers – both in terms of toll charges and person-per-hour 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 team members to multitask and assist several customers at once. On average, with [proper training](#), most live chat agents can handle three or more chats simultaneously.

This unique capability, called [chat concurrency](#), helps healthcare providers save on personnel costs as it requires fewer agents to serve the same number of clients by phone.

While low cost is one of the main reasons providers are embracing live chat, other business benefits include high efficiency, increased productivity, and positive

return-on-investment (ROI). For example, deflecting [just 5% of your call volume to chat will yield a cost savings of at least \\$50,000 per year](#) for an ROI of 4,222%.

**Live chat is 17-30% cheaper than a phone call.** – Forrester Research



As with any technology investment, no healthcare provider can overlook the importance of [security](#). Providers need to ensure they choose a secure chat platform that adheres to rigorous security standards including compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), ISO certification, SOC 2 compliance, and other features that align with their organization's unique security protocols.

The right chat vendor will make it possible for providers to confidently safeguard electronic Protected Health Information (ePHI) from unauthorized access or distribution while delivering quality, real-time personalized service and support.



## Live Chat Best Practices

Despite healthcare's utilitarian nature – people will always need quality care – patient expectations are rising based on their experiences in other sectors. Consumer experience is the new brand; tech-savvy consumers are far more likely to compare the service and support they get from a healthcare provider to the service and support they get elsewhere. Healthcare providers are no longer just competing with others in the healthcare industry, **they're being compared to every experience** that their customer has ever had – from paying a phone bill online to ordering food on a delivery app.

Pair those rising expectations with tighter budgets and outdated systems pushed to capacity, and you've got an industry sorely in need of digital disruption. The place to start? Live chat, because it's fast, direct, convenient, and cost-effective.

Live chat is a must for any healthcare provider. Those that aren't using it are already behind, while those that are can still step up their game.

The following live chat benchmarks - derived from usage data for Comm100 customers in 2018 - can help you see how your business stacks up. They're split into different

team sizes to provide a more personalized picture of current service standards by business size.

Use these benchmarks and the best practices that follow to help you shape your live chat strategy.

### Patient Satisfaction

Team size	Average Rating
1-10 agents	4.54
11-50 agents	4.34
>50 agents	4.39

The key to increasing live chat satisfaction is personalization. Healthcare providers need to see live chat as more than just a messaging channel; it's a platform for timely, direct, and genuine communication.

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



- Routing by geography (Region, country, city, etc.)
- Routing by language (English, French, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Deutsch, Spanish, etc.)
- Routing by interaction history (New visitor, returning visitor, VIP visitor, etc.)
- Routing by department (Cardiovascular, Otolaryngology, Physio, etc.)

Keep in mind none of these are mutually exclusive. Healthcare providers can personalize their conversations and address specific needs with all these parameters, or a combination of them all.

Sending consumers to the right department the first time and cutting out the need to manually enter numbers will result in a quicker, much more personalized experience.

### Wait Time

Team size	Average Wait Time
1-10 agents	53 seconds
11-50 agents	2 minutes 54 seconds
>50 agents	19 seconds

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

This is a metric where live chat could potentially have the most impact on your business, but only when done right. As discussed above, 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 take as many concurrent chats as they can handle.

The phrase to keep in mind here is "as many concurrent chats as they can handle". When starting off, we recommend a maximum of three concurrent chats until you have a sense of individual 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) rate 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

- There are other ways to help your agents, such as canned messages, knowledge bases, and artificial intelligence that reads incoming messages and gathers suggested responses from available resources

### Average Chats Per Month

Team size	Average number of chats per month
1-10 agents	538
11-50 agents	1,024
>50 agents	2,266

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 consumer experience strategy.

More often than not, when a healthcare provider deploys live chat the number of inquiries from other channels often does not go down. This is mainly because live chat taps into an audience that never would have picked up the phone

in the first place. Offering live chat as a channel provides access to a brand-new audience that providers were not able to reach before, creating opportunities for expansion and growth.

### Chats on Mobile

Team size	Mobile Chats
1-10 agents	67.85%
11-50 agents	31.02%
>50 agents	50.68%

With the rising popularity of on-the-go telemedicine applications like Babylon, mobile chat is a fundamental part of a successful consumer experience strategy and should not be ignored when deploying live chat.

With mobile, consumers can take control of their own health from the convenience of a smartphone, with access to round-the-clock healthcare support.

A few instances of when using mobile chat is more convenient than going to a clinic in person:



- Booking an appointment with a doctor
- Accessing doctor consultation notes and videos for quick reference and/or sharing
- Managing prescription details and preferred pharmacy for easy prescription pick up
- Requesting referrals for diagnostic tests or specialists when needed

When rolling out mobile chat, keep in mind that the chat button and window will behave differently on mobile versus desktop. Healthcare providers should take care to ensure all these elements are designed accordingly or they risk providing frustrating and negative experiences.



## Case Study: **+Viata**

**Industry:** Pharmaceutical Retail

**Website:** viata-shop.com

### The Challenge

Viata recognized that the key to success for an online pharmacy is in building customer trust and providing visitors with quality, real-time support. They needed a tool that could scale with their business as they grew and deliver exceptional, multi-language online customer service across Europe.

### The Solution

Thanks to live chat, Viata has greatly improved how they deliver customer care, earning the status of market leader in their industry. For them, chat helps make every interaction – from search to checkout – a great experience. For Viata's customers, quality customer service is only a click away.

### By the numbers

- Sales conversion rate of 20% from live chat
- Visitors that chat with agents are 3 times more likely to convert than those who don't
- Visitors that initiate the chat are 5 times more likely to convert



*“Our mission is to exceed the typical pharmacy experience. Live chat was a condition to start working towards that mission and be a better pharmacy than what customers are accustomed to. Our strategy is to have very personalized communication with our customers, so we set up our chat to enable customers to pick and choose who they want to talk anytime they visit our site. In our industry, context is important to building trust when talking about health-related concerns.”*



**Gianni De Gaspari**  
Co-founder, Viata

## Taking the next step with AI

Whether you're ready for an advanced AI chatbot, or looking to start with something simpler, there's a solution for everybody.

Chatbots offer a range of benefits to healthcare organizations, their customers, and their staff. 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 healthcare providers [those use cases are virtually endless](#). From locating the nearest service provider to gathering important information to aid in care assessment, chatbots can easily automate workflows and free up team members to focus on more important and complex tasks.

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 the right context.

Hook a chatbot up with AI, and now you're into a whole new level of consumer experience. AI (or specifically NLP) lets chatbots engage in far more natural conversations; they're far more accurate at understanding your patients' intentions, and as a result, can respond more effectively.

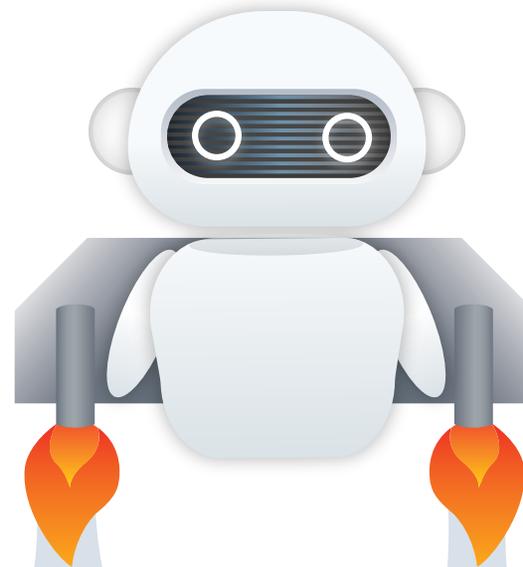
If you do want to dive into the world of chatbots but aren't sure where to start, here are just a handful of use cases to consider:

- **Gathering patient information:** Bots can pass off the who, what, where, when, and why to a staff member, helping them contextualize queries and reducing time spent on each chat.
- **Virtual triage:** Chatbots can help with initial consultations, allowing your customers to get quicker care and lightening the load on administrative staff.
- **Answering FAQs:** AI Chatbots can answer commonly asked questions like "What are the pharmacy's holiday hours?"; "Is Doctor X in today?"; and "I need to reschedule my appointment".



- **Shorter queues, faster responses:** Chatbots can handle a virtually unlimited amount of chats simultaneously, cutting down on response time. They can also deliver responses more quickly than staff members.
- **24/7 service:** Chatbots allow patients to access a provider 24/7 so they can get assistance on their schedule, not yours.

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

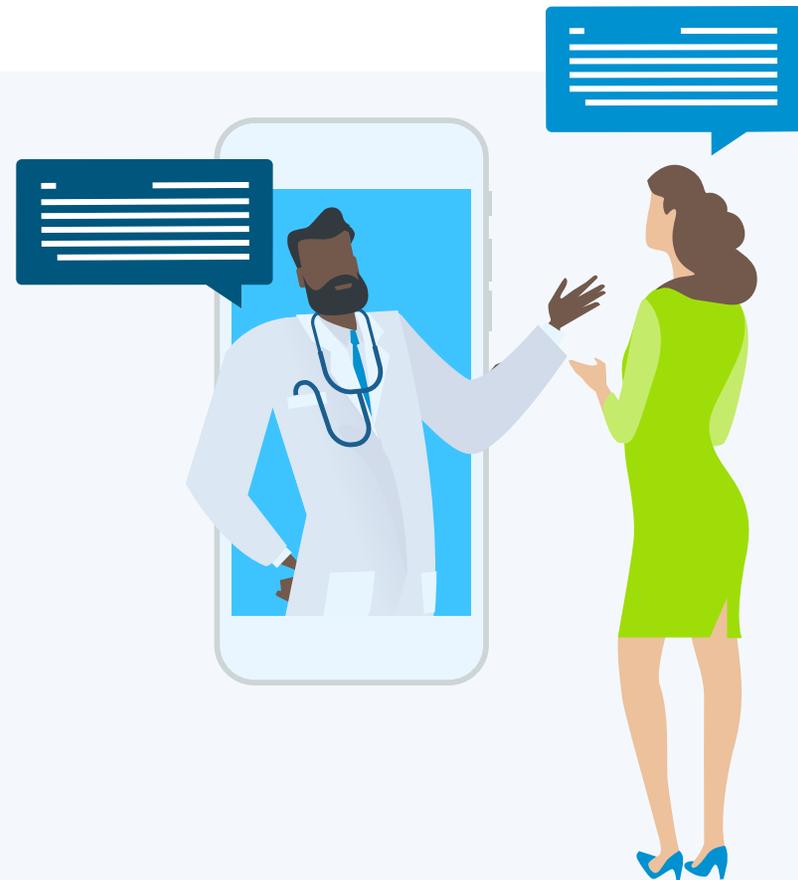


# Live chat and chatbot vendor selection checklist

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 the right vendor for you.

- 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 consumers in different regions or languages, or other 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 questions to the right department the first time, without triage or transfers?
- Can integrations and APIs be used to connect to other systems, making deep personalization automatic?

### Bottom line

Quality live chat and chatbot platforms will allow healthcare providers to create personalized messages to a patient based on their geography, interaction history, patient file and more. Personalization is crucial for providers to build stronger relationships with their customers.

### Questions to ask about

## Agent-centricity

- Would the capabilities offered through the live chat/chatbot 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?
- Does the platform integrate with a knowledge base to allow for internal knowledge acquisition and learning?

### Bottom line

Your agents are your primary end-users, so any live chat or chatbot platform 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 eliminate unnecessary friction](#)?
- Can it help to provide better quality service and support?
- Does it 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 every single one of your target metrics for customer care and flexible enough to adapt to any technology stack through customization options.

## Questions to ask about **Conversation quality**

- Does this platform help your customers 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 telemedicine capabilities?
- Does the platform provide the ability to make and track performance improvements?

### **Bottom line**

Quality conversations build stronger relationships, but they shouldn't occur at the expense of efficiency. Organizations need to make sure the platform they select is able to support a digital engagement program that provides quality interactions through personalized, interactive experiences that fuel greater customer satisfaction.



### Questions to ask about

## Data security and privacy

- Is the platform [HIPAA compliant](#)?
- Is there a complete logging and monitoring system that operates as a safeguard against unauthorized access?
- Does this platform offer on-premise installation if even tighter security is needed?
- Has a comprehensive list of all places where ePHI resides or passes through been compiled and accounted for in policies and procedures?
- Are the vendor's server farms compliant with state-of-the-art security measures such as SSAE 16, CSAE 3416, and ISAE 3402 standards?

### Bottom line

Safeguarding ePHI is non-negotiable. A good digital consumer engagement platform should have HIPAA-specific policies and procedures, and the vendor should demonstrate specific HIPAA awareness and security training to ensure they have appropriate security measures in place.



*When evaluating chatbot vendors, it's important to decide if you're looking for a service or a tool. While there are vendors that 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 a digital consumer experience

Delivering great customer service is a challenge in every industry. When it comes to healthcare, accessibility, privacy, and personalization raise the bar even higher.

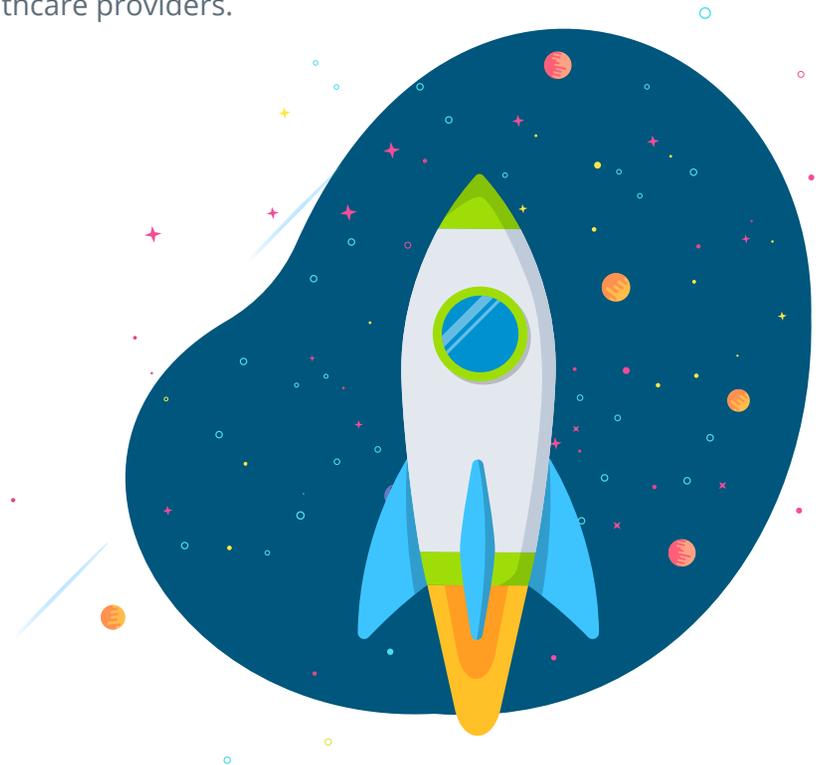
Live chat and chatbots don't stop there; AI is already deeply impacting the agent experience, leading to the [rise of the super-agent](#). These developments will continue to influence how healthcare providers reach and engage their customers – and organizations need to shape up or risk falling behind.

While consumer preferences are largely the reason for this massive shift in behaviour, the benefits for healthcare providers, no matter the size, are undeniable. Live chat and chatbots are helping healthcare providers deliver service and support that are more convenient, more helpful, and tailored to each individual consumer's needs and how they prefer to communicate today. The result: improved execution and greater loyalty.

Developing an implementation plan is just the start. Healthcare providers need to keep these benchmarks and strategies for improvement presented in this report in mind as they grow and scale their digital consumer experience strategy. Of course, protecting ePHI will also remain

paramount.

The most successful healthcare providers are those that provide the best care experiences, not just those who are the best at curing illness. With the ability to create real-time, personalized interactions whenever and wherever consumers want, live chat and chatbots can create the experiences they demand while meeting the evolving business requirements of healthcare providers.

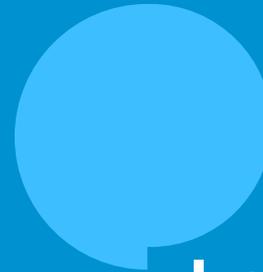


You've got to see this



Learn how Viata uses Comm100 Live Chat to disrupt the online pharmacy industry with old-fashioned customer service - delivered digitally!

[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](#)