Live Chat
Benchmark Report
2020

Comm100

Foreword

Brian Cantor
Principal Analyst & CCW Digital Director,
Customer Management Practice

When it comes to the customer experience, it is *not* the thought that counts.

Companies have spent the past decade touting their customer centricity (and investing accordingly), but only 12% of customers have seen meaningful improvements to the customer experience. Only 11% believe companies take their feedback seriously.

With higher expectations and more purchasing options, today's customers are too savvy and empowered to accept the promise of stronger engagement. They need to experience it.

But while there are no participation trophies for customer centricity, there are ample rewards for companies that deliver. When companies provide the all-too-elusive frictionless, personalized, predictive and proactive experience, they build lasting loyalty and advocacy. They also enjoy vast operational benefits.

This opportunity is particularly true within the digital realm. Companies with robust chat offerings are engaging customers in a convenient environment, reducing effort, eliminating the costly frustration of phone calls, leveraging digital-only options like collaborative co-browsing and gathering valuable customer intelligence. Customer satisfaction and profit are both rising.

What does it take to build this customer-centric chat experience? Powerful technology and attention to key strategic factors.

Leaders are ensuring their chat platforms are accessible across all channels and devices, armed with artificial intelligence, compliant with strict data standards, rich with engagement functionality, easy for agents to use and connected to key enterprise systems. They are also astutely designing their strategy, accounting for team size, wait times, chat duration, use of canned messages, ideal scenarios for chat bots, and opportunities for proactive chats.

Some of these factors hinge on the specific company, industry and customer base, but patterns are emerging among top performers. These standouts are delivering chat experiences that meet increasingly high quality standards without sacrificing the efficiency and convenience that are essential to digital engagement.

Citing data from millions of chats, Comm100's 2020 Live Chat Benchmark Report offers an illuminating look at these patterns. It shows clear correlations between operational decisions and favorable outcomes, essentially providing a blueprint for elevating the chat experience.

As an industry analyst hoping to spend 2020 celebrating results rather than lamenting missed opportunities, I am thrilled to share this actionable research.

Introduction

Kevin Gao
CEO , Comm100 Network Corporation

There's a classic management saying attributed to different people (I learned it was Peter Druker) that goes something like 'What gets measured gets managed'. The implication is that you can't make smart decisions about anything without first evaluating the underlying data.

When it comes to contact center performance, we all know this to be 100% true. The contact center is now a mature enough department in most organizations to generate plenty of data from which to derive insights and make decisions for improvement. When it comes to digital channels like live chat, it's even easier to set KPIs and measure against them because the digital nature of these channels means they come with metrics and reporting built right in.

Now in its 5th year, the Comm100 2020 Live Chat Benchmark Report reveals how you stack up against your peers, offering even more actionable insights into how well you're executing. We've scoured more than 56 million chats that passed through the Comm100 platform in 2019 to tease out the trends and benchmarks for different team sizes across 14 different industries.

Is your chat volume ahead or behind? Are your customers waiting too long before chatting? Are your agents rushing through their chats? How is your chatbot doing? Do customers rate you better or worse than your peers in terms of customer satisfaction?

There are answers to all these questions and more on the pages that follow. You'll not only be able to compare how you're doing against others in you space, but you'll also discover how to make use of live chat capabilities that you may have overlooked. Or ones that your current provider simply can't offer you at all.

As with previous years you'll also find valuable thoughts and takeaways from some of our customers and industry friends throughout this report. We are grateful to each of them for taking time to pour through the information and share their views.

In this space last year I suggested that AI has the potential to reinvent the agent experience as much as or maybe even more than the customer experience. Looking at the data in this report, it's clear that chatbots are rapidly gaining acceptance and performing exceptionally well, and I'm not surprised. The technology is serious, and here to stay. As for the agent experience? That's still being proven out, but I will say this: if you can help your chat agents find answers and solve customer problems more quickly, why wouldn't you?

I hope this report helps you better understand your use of live chat and pushes you to get even better. Let me know how that goes!

Customer Satisfaction

👍 **83.04%** with an average rating score of **4.2/5**

▽ Down **0.06%** from 2018

Shep Hyken,
Customer service and experience expert
www.Hyken.com

"*Customers are smarter than ever, as they understand what good – even great – customer service looks and feels like. They no longer compare you to a competitor, but to the best experience they have had with anyone. Brands that deliver an excellent service experience set the bar higher for everyone. Be it shorter hold times, higher levels of personalization or well executed AI fueled self-service solutions, the stats and facts in this report showcase the new standards. The big question is, 'Are you ready to step up and meet the newest standards in customer service?'*"

While customer expectations are as high as ever, unfortunately it seems that service quality is stagnating. The plateau in customer satisfaction from 2018 to 2019 should inspire action, not complacency, in 2020 as it is still behind the peak achieved in 2015. Since many factors influence customer satisfaction – wait time, resolution time, professionalism, accessibility, product/service issues, staff turnover, etc. – organizations should be conducting regular audits of the entire customer lifecycle to identify what's getting in the way of progress.

Annual Customer Satisfaction Rate, 2015 to 2019
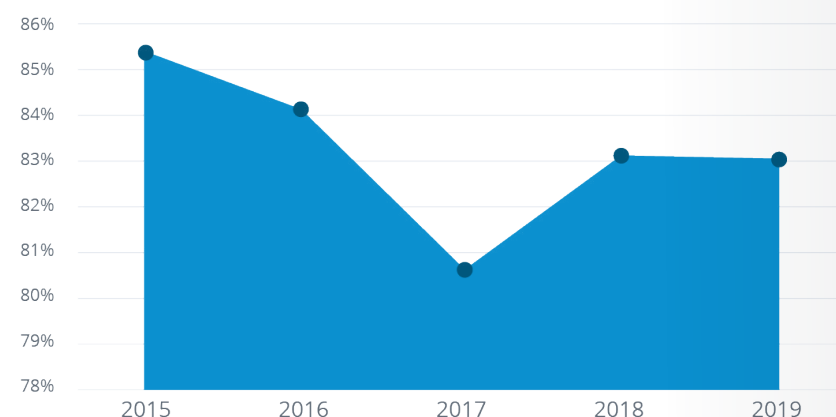
Live chat customer satisfaction is measured in two ways on the Comm100 platform: individual and average scores out of 5, and the percentage of responses with a score of 3 or higher, with 3 being the minimum for a somewhat satisfied customer.

Customer Satisfaction Rate by Team Size

When segmented by team size, our findings show that CSAT grew about 0.5% – 1% in every team size except 6 – 10 agents where it slid by almost a full two points and negated the gains made by other segments. Organizations with this team size need to take an even closer look at their customer service operations to identify where the leaks are occurring.

The chart above also shows that organizations with 26 to 50 agents lagged behind their counterparts in 2020. This team size is sorely in need of disruption to handle the growing pains of scaling a customer service team.

Finally, it appears that teams with less than 50 agents can learn a thing or two from the practices and policies of teams with more than 50 agents – they're clearly doing something right when it comes to customer service, scoring 4 to 6 points higher than smaller teams. The most likely explanation here is an overall higher degree of sophistication in their customer service operations spanning technology, agent training, and management skills. There is clearly a pervasive dedication to Customer Experience here that is resulting in higher customer satisfaction scores.

Wait Time

⏳ **46 seconds**

▽ Down **2 seconds** from 2018

John R. Di Julius III,
Chief Revolution Officer,
The DiJulius Group

"*The lack of social skills in our society is the problem business leaders are trying to solve. The pendulum has swung over to high tech and low touch, resulting in a longing for a sense of community, belonging, and purpose. For anyone or any business hoping to thrive in the future, they will have to reinvent their business model and marry the digital and human experiences in the best way possible.*"

Average wait time decreased from 48 to 46 seconds in 2019 – optimistically reversing course from the 11-second increase seen in 2018. However, putting this score in context with customer satisfaction tells a more complete story.

Last year we noted that organizations that scored higher for customer satisfaction also had longer wait times, while those that had the lowest customer satisfaction score had shorter wait times. This still holds true for 2019 as organizations that score 90% or higher CSAT had an average wait time of 1 minute and 32 seconds, while organizations that scored lower than 90% had a wait time of 30 seconds.
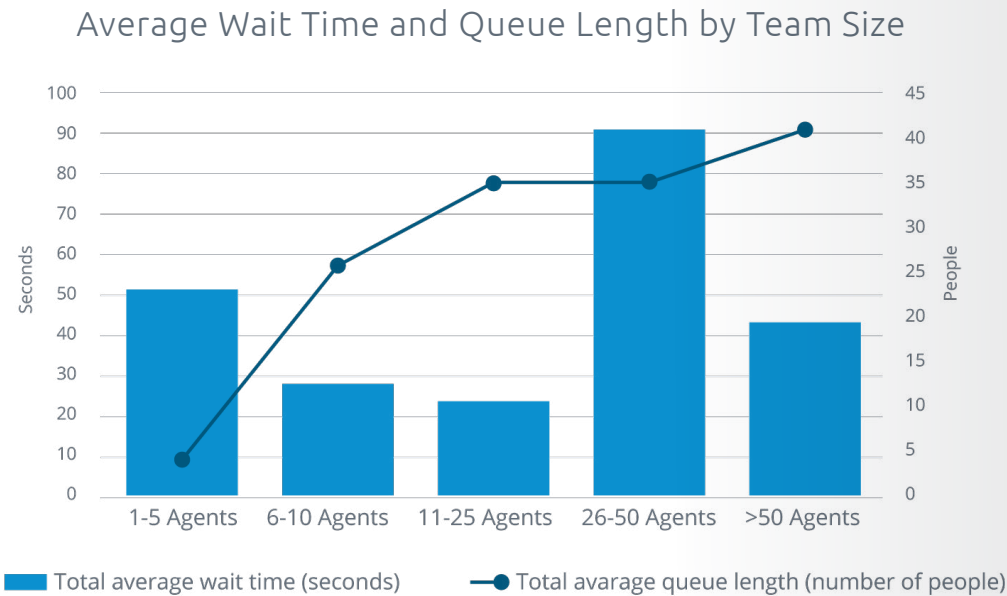
Wait time refers to how long a visitor has to wait for an agent to pick up their chat, while queue length is how many people are in line when all agents are busy.

When segmented by team size, our findings show that teams with 26 to 50 agents have the longest average wait time and second longest queue length, while teams with 11 - 25 agents have the shortest wait time with a similar queue length. Despite boasting shorter wait times, teams with more than 50 agents had a slightly higher queue length than teams with 26 to 50 agents -- most likely due to their higher overall chat volume.

When we blend this data with customer satisfaction data from the previous section, we see a direct correlation between wait time and CSAT, but not queue length. The lesson: People will wait in a fast-moving line. It's only when the line slows down that CSAT suffers. Kudos to 50+ agent teams for figuring out how to deliver great service. Their apparent secret?

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

Average Wait Time and Queue Length by Team Size

Legend: ■ Total average wait time (seconds) — ●— Total avarage queue length (number of people)

> Organizations that score 90% or higher CSAT had an average wait time of 1 minute and 32 seconds, while organizations that scored lower than 90% had a wait time of 30 seconds.

Chat Duration

🕐 **11 minutes, 55 seconds**   △ **2% longer** than 2018

Make sure your agents are spending enough time composing complete, thoughtful, and helpful responses. There's a world of difference between answering 'How do I order this product?' with 'Go to our website' vs offering a detailed explanation and a link to take the customer there."

Jeff Toister,
Author of The Service Culture Handbook

While wait time decreased last year, the average length of a chat increased. This year shows a small 2% increase (compared to last year's drop of 4%) indicating that companies are stabilizing overall and closing in on the sweet spot between speed and quality service.

While balancing efficiency with quality may be a challenge, it is crucial to ensuring that companies aren't sacrificing quality for quantity. Just like wait time, our findings show that companies that achieved a 90% or higher customer satisfaction rating had a longer average chat duration of 11 minutes and 47 seconds, while organizations with lower scores had a chat duration of 8 minutes and 42 seconds. This points to a potentially negative impact of not spending enough time with customers to ensure satisfactory resolution.

Average chat duration by team size

(Bar chart: Y-axis labeled 0m0s, 2m24s, 4m48s, 7m12s, 9m36s, 12m00s, 14m24s. X-axis categories: 1-5 Agents, 6-10 Agents, 11-25 Agents, 26-50 Agents, >50 Agents)

This data combined with wait time metrics points to a significant issue with organizations prioritizing operational efficiency over customer needs. Companies need to strike the right balance between business and customer needs without sacrificing service quality.

A chat needs to be as long as it needs to be to resolve the customers' inquiry. The data shows that shorter chats have lower CSAT scores and longer chats have higher scores. This is not a surprise. Organizations need to empower their front-line staff to resolve the issues and not try to artificially reduce or control handle time."

Colin Taylor,
CEO & Chief Chaos Officer,
The Taylor Reach Group, Inc

Canned Message Utilization

59.56% of Comm100 customers use canned messages

Michael Housman,
Chief Data Science Officer,
Rapportboost.ai

> "*The recent drop in canned message utilization is interesting but not entirely surprising because brands often feel as though they face a trade-off between leveraging the efficiency of canned messages vs. the authenticity of allowing agents to type free form. However, we find that the best brands are able to avoid this trade-off by using machine learning and closed loop experimentation to continually improve their canned content so that it performs better than unscripted content.*"

With the demand for personalized interactions increasing, canned messaged adoption has decreased by 9 points compared to 2018, reversing the upward trend since 2015.

Our findings also show that the average canned message utilization rate per chat session has gone down across the board, with the exception of the 50+ agent bracket which actually saw a 0.48-point increase (driven perhaps by efficiency goals that often accompany larger teams).

On the one hand this trend is promising as it demonstrates organizations are getting more personalized with their communication – only breaking out canned messages as needed when chat volume gets too high. There is always a risk of canned messages sounding too 'robotic'

and impersonal if not scripted properly.

On the other hand, well-written canned messages can offer significant time savings. The best of both worlds is to use canned messages to get you 90% of the way through the response with the click of a button, then edit the message before hitting send to personalize the interaction.

While their greatest utility is to help answer frequently asked questions more quickly and ensure adhesion to tone and brand guidelines, organizations are recognizing when it is appropriate to use canned messages and when it is not.

Average canned messages per chat by team size
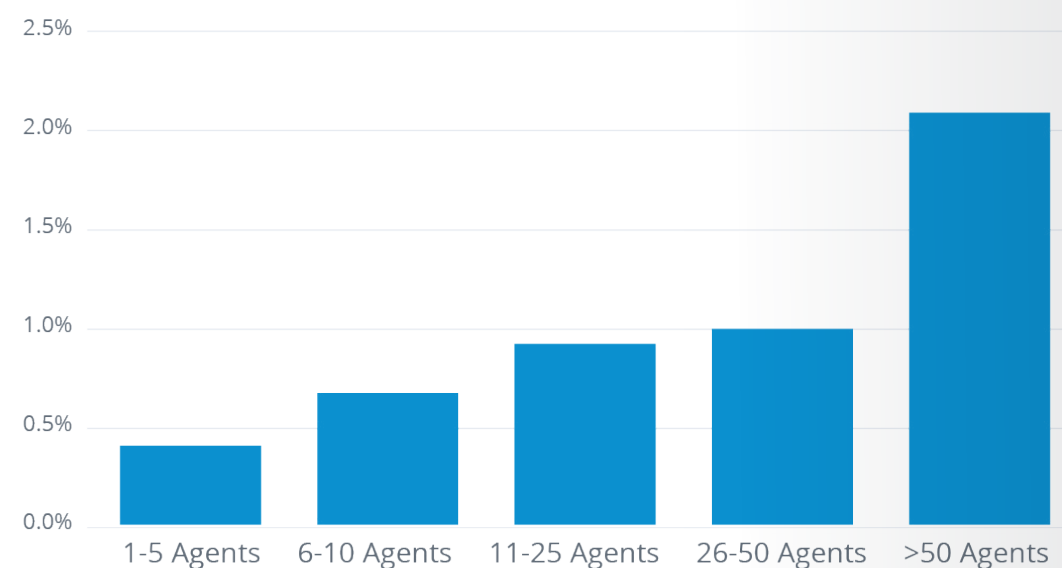
> The best of both worlds is to use canned messages to get you 90% of the way through the response with the click of a button, then edit the message before hitting send to personalize the interaction.

Proactive Chat Acceptance Rate

1.91% of all chats were initiated by agents

Consumer Services had the highest proactive chat acceptance rate in 2019.

Kaye Chapman,
Learning & Development Manager,
Comm100

"*As with canned messages, brands have to strike a delicate balance when it comes to proactive chat invitations. In this case, at issue are the opposing forces of eagerness and helpfulness. Being too proactive can come across as intrusive, but reaching out at just the right moment can save a customer from a frustrating experience.*"

Proactive chat invitations – when the agent invites the visitor to chat instead of the other way around – allow businesses to capture a customer's attention quickly before they move on.

There are a lot of reasons for your agents to reach out proactively. For example, if a visitor is on a high-value page but they've been browsing for longer than normal, your agent could reach out to ask them if they have any questions specifically related to the content they're looking at. This could help increase conversions and reduce bounce rates. Similarly, if your agents identify a VIP customer on your site (based on their purchase history visible through CRM integration), they can extend a white glove offer of assistance that will be greatly appreciated.
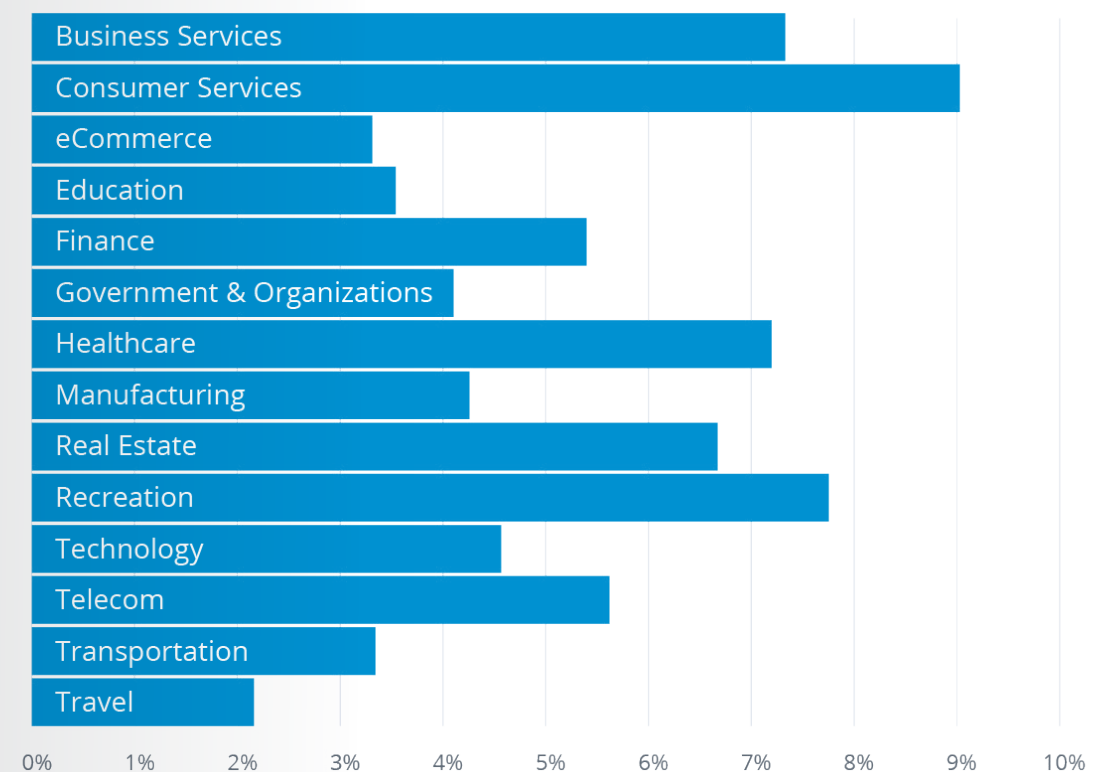
How many of all proactive chat invitations are accepted? There are notable variations between industries. Consumer Services currently leads the pack with a 1.27-point difference over Recreation, the second highest, with Business Services coming in a close third. The lowest acceptance rate is Travel at 2.18%.

Proactive chat acceptance rates provide strong clues about the success of your chat strategy and identify areas to optimize visitor engagement and conversion. 2019 data shows that 1.91% of all completed chats came from invitations. It might not sound like much, but that's over 1 million chats!

Proactive chat can deliver a significantly higher ROI than passively waiting for visitors to seek you out, but only when done correctly. Companies can automate proactive chat invitations, but should take the time to structure them properly to align with the visitor's situation and engage them at exactly the right time – the page they're on, how long they've been on your site, the value of their shopping cart, etc.

Most important of all, organizations need to be cognizant of the user experience – if a visitor doesn't accept an invitation the first one or two times, it's likely smart to stop trying and to ensure that automated invitations are kept to within reasonable limits.

2019 Proactive Chat Acceptance by industry

| Industry	Acceptance
Business Services	7.2%
Consumer Services	9.0%
eCommerce	2.9%
Education	3.4%
Finance	5.2%
Government & Organizations	2.2%
Healthcare	7.1%
Manufacturing	4.2%
Real Estate	6.6%
Recreation	7.7%
Technology	4.5%
Telecom	5.6%
Transportation	3.2%
Travel	2.1%

Chat Volume by Month

Chats peak at the end of the year and bottom out during the summer.

While individual businesses in different industries will see their own peaks and valleys in monthly chat volume, we've noticed some standard seasonal fluctuations.

Our findings show a predictable pattern year over year, dipping during the summer months and peaking at the end of the year. This trend remains unchanged from the last four years, beginning from our first benchmark report in 2015 to today.

Average chats by month, January to November 2019
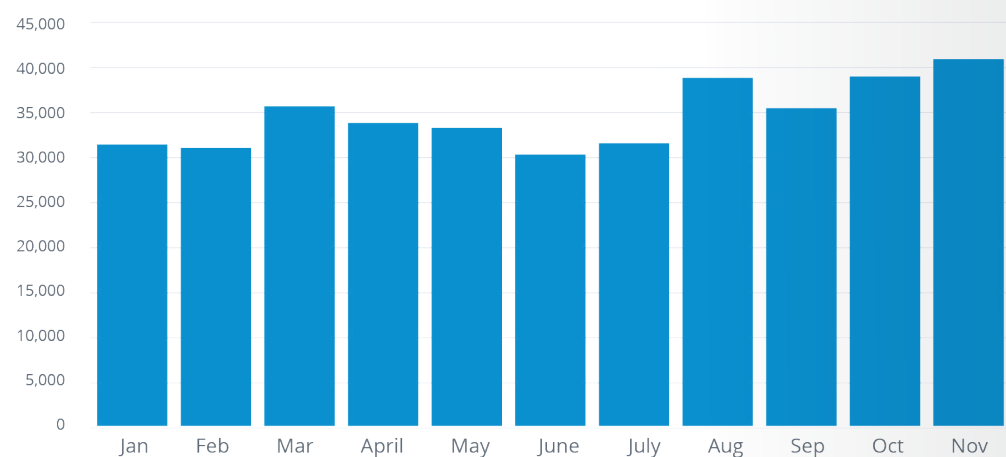
"
Organizations with strong brands and a sense of community have tapped into the Relationship Economy. This is where the primary currency is the emotional connections made between customers, employees, and others such that customers cannot live without the brand, which makes price irrelevant. To dominate the Relationship Economy, brands must use technology to perform basic tasks that provide convenience for customers and enable employees to focus on what is most important: building relationships that result in higher customer loyalty, retention, satisfaction, and lifetime value. To support this, it should become a part of brand strategy to build a culture that creates emotional connections with employees and incorporate relationships building training for new and existing employees."

John R. Di Julius III,
Chief Revolution Officer,
The DiJulius Group

Average Chats Per Month

Solid growth over 2018 for teams with 50 or fewer agents

Average Chats per month by team size

1,373 1 - 5 Agents

6,427 6 - 10 Agents

17,140 11 - 25 Agents

25,005 26 - 50 Agents

38,075 >50 Agents

According to our findings there is a direct positive correlation between team size and average chats per month. This is not surprising as the larger the organization the more chats and the more agents it is likely to have.

However, agent workload fluctuates for teams of all sizes. Organizations need to keep in mind the delicate balance of supply, demand, and even seasonality when making staffing and scheduling decisions. The ideal number of agents will depend on your use of chatbots and agent-facing AI tools like Agent Assist, your unique ebb and flow of business, and your own KPIs.

Average chats per month for January to November 2019 by team size
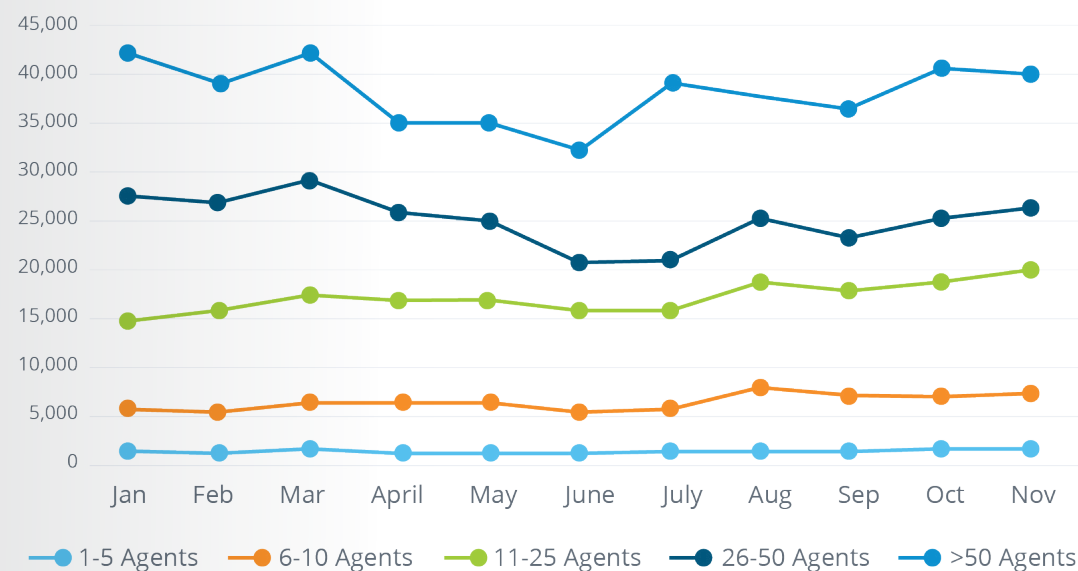
1-5 Agents   6-10 Agents   11-25 Agents   26-50 Agents   >50 Agents

Chats Per Agent Per Month

Teams with 11 to 25 agents overworked?

Lots of capacity for 50+ agent teams

> **Teams of 11-25 agents have to watch for agent burnout. They're handling the largest volume of monthly chats per agent, and while customer satisfaction didn't suffer in 2019, the long-term sustainability of this high-capacity approach is questionable for both agents and customers."**

Kaye Chapman,
Learning & Development Manager,
Comm100

Chats Per Agent Per Month By Team Size

862
1 - 5 Agents

1,293
6 - 10 Agents

2,137
11 - 25 Agents

1,471
26 - 50 Agents

597
>50 Agents

2019 saw a significant increase in per-agent chat volume across every band of team size, with the exception of the 50+ agent band.

Looking back at other benchmark data in this report we see that teams of 11 to 25 agents have the shortest chat duration (9m:44s), which explains why the average chat volume per agent per month of 2,137 is so high. There doesn't appear to be a high price paid for volume. Only teams of 50 or more agents enjoy a higher customer satisfaction score, which according to this data seems to result from having far fewer chats per agent per month.

So much for the theory that larger teams at larger organizations are just customer service 'mills', and that high agent volume is bad for business. The tipping point of 26 to 50 agents is where CSAT takes a hit even as monthly agent capacity starts to decline.

Average chats per agent by team size
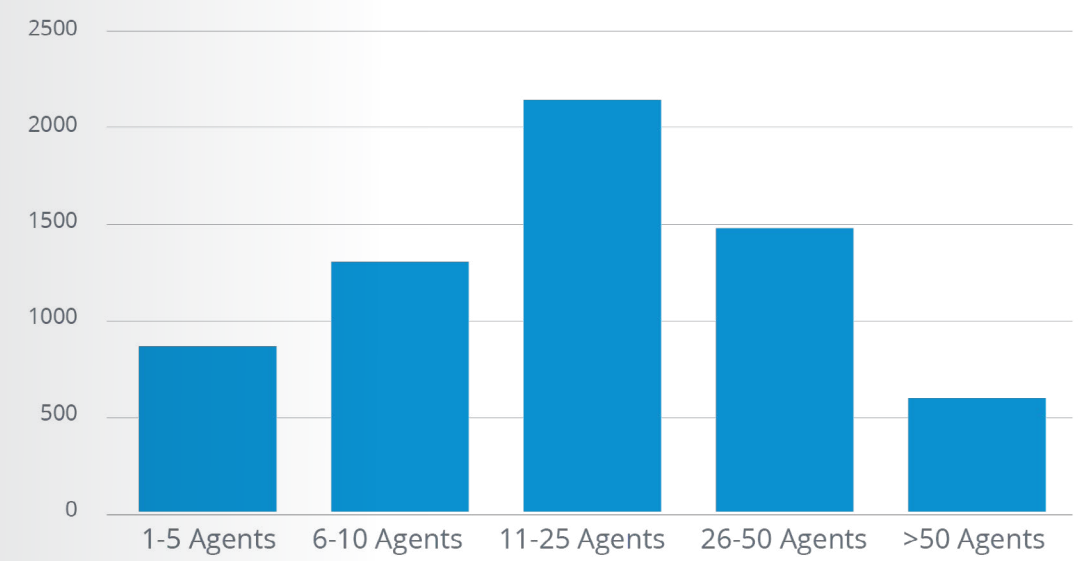
To keep chat volumes manageable for each agent, best practices include maximizing agent efficiency by prioritizing chat requests through effective routing and deploying AI-powered tools such as Comm100's Agent Assist to give agents quicker access to answers found in knowledge base articles, canned messages, and chatbot responses.

Mobile Chats

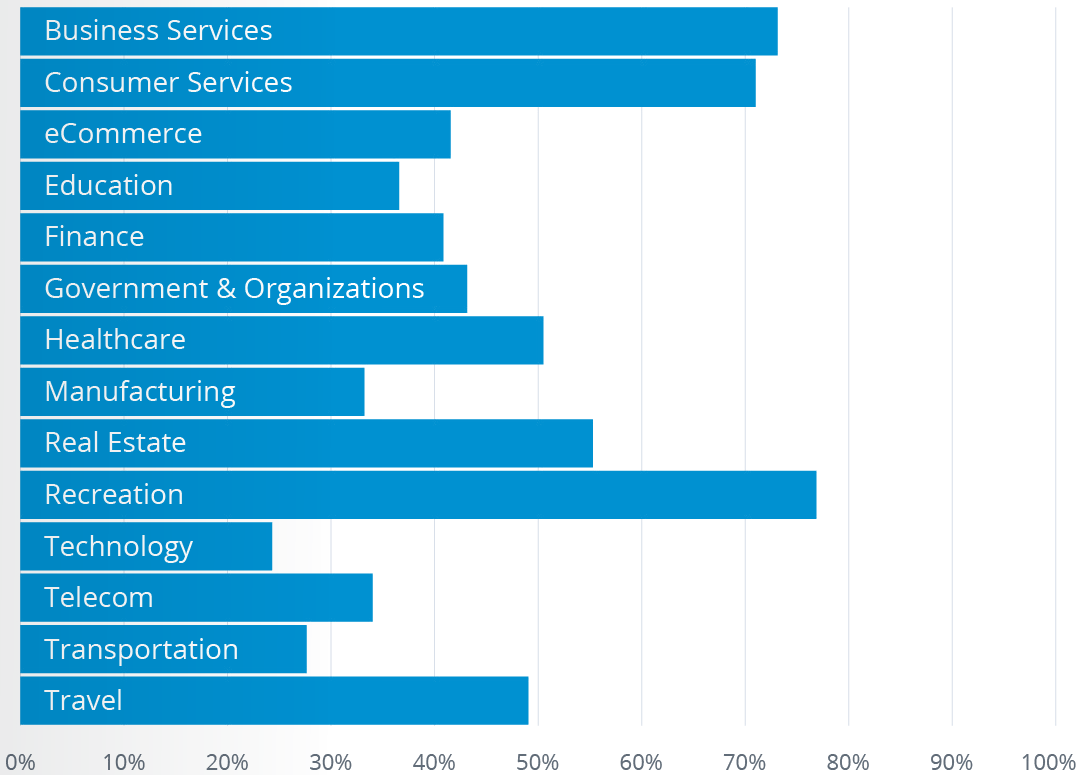**74.5%** of all 2019 chats were on mobile devices

Up 82% from 2018

Amazing and encouraging to see nearly universal adoption of mobile chat in the data. Working in the entertainment space, it's wild to see how quickly people reach for their phones when they need help of nearly any kind. Let's not forget, however, it's not just about having the mobile channel... It's about creating a consistently great experience on this and all lines of support. Don't just offer mobile support out of competitive pressure but ultimately force a channel switch. Guide customers to be best resolution path for the type of issue they are having, and offer the type of mobile chat that will facilitate a quick and frictionless experience!"

Nate Brown,
Co-founder, CX Accelerator

Chats on mobile devices continue to experience torrid growth. On average, 74.5% of this year's chats – that's over 42 million – were sent from a mobile browser or app, more than nearly 23 points higher than 2018 and 30 points higher than 2017.

This data provides more evidence that customers continue to move from desktop to mobile as their primary online device. Mobile chat optimization is non-negotiable for all businesses – especially those in B2C sectors including Recreation or Consumer Services. It's not entirely surprising to see that heavier B2B sectors have lower volumes of mobile chat.

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 0.54% of organizations did not offer mobile chat.

If you're still on the fence about the digitization of our society, you shouldn't need any more evidence than these mobile chat statistics. We are deeply attached to our smart phones and that's not likely to change - at least not until the digital implant becomes cost-effective. From a customer service perspective, if you're not on board yet, what are you waiting for?"

Kevin Gao,
CEO , Comm100

Average mobile chats by industry

Business Services
Consumer Services
eCommerce
Education
Finance
Government & Organizations
Healthcare
Manufacturing
Real Estate
Recreation
Technology
Telecom
Transportation
Travel

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Co-browsing

Average of **194 sessions** per month

88.65% Customer Satisfaction rating

3 minutes 56 seconds average duration

Colin Taylor,
CEO & Chief Chaos Officer,
The Taylor Reach Group, Inc

"Co-browsing delivers shorter chat time and higher CSAT scores both of which speak to a higher resolution rate. Customers love it when you help them to get to success! If you aren't employing co-browsing where it can assist your clients, you may be missing a big opportunity."

Comm100 introduced co-browsing capabilities in early 2018, and adoption has grown exponentially with a 108% increase in average sessions over last year.

Co-browsing allows the agent to instantly view and interact with a customer's web browser so they can more easily troubleshoot issues in real-time. This feature can be across any industry for any use case – from sales to support – either for walking through a demo with a customer or visually showing the solution to a complex technical issue.

Our customers had an average of 194 co-browsing sessions per month. Each co-browsing session averaged 3 minutes and 56 seconds, or one third of the average chat duration of 11 minutes and 55 seconds.

Combined with other metrics, we can see that customers also love co-browsing, rating their sessions an average of 88.65% - 5.61 points (or nearly 7%) higher than the overall 2019 CSAT of 83.04%.

For organizations looking to increase efficiency without sacrificing quality – or in fact increasing it –co-browsing is a must. It's a win-win for both organizations and their customers.

Jeff Epstein,
VP Marketing
Comm100

"Co-browsing can reduce chat times while simultaneously providing your customers with a more genuine and personalized service experience. Strong CSAT scores are all the proof you need that this capability pays strong dividends."

Co-browsing allows the agent to instantly view and interact with a customer's web browser so they can more easily troubleshoot issues in real-time.

AI-Powered Chat

260% increase in end-to-end chatbot resolution

Sabih Ahmed,
Product Lead, Virtual Assistant,
Rogers Communications

" *With a growing consumer trend favoring text channels over voice for service & support interactions, the enterprise adoption of automated conversational interfaces (i.e. chatbot) will become a must-have in 2020. And while organizations could previously adopt and manage IVR technologies over a span of decades, the rapid developments in enterprise AI applications coupled with declining acquisition costs should encourage faster adoption.*"

While AI adoption has been steadily increasing over the past few years for contact centers and customer service teams alike, 2019 appears to be the year when AI really took flight.

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 our second-generation chatbots equipped with Natural Language Processing (NLP) were able to handle 26.65% of total chats from start to finish – a modest improvement as both bots and their 'masters' got better at what they do.

In 2019 we released our third-generation AI-powered chatbot, adding even more power, flexibility, and integration capabilities. We confidently predicted that bot-only chats would grow at an even faster rate. We weren't wrong.

Our data for 2019 shows that chatbots handled 68.9% of their chats from start to finish, earning an average satisfaction rate of 87.58%. While this success rate is an astonishing improvement over 2018, what's even more interesting is that this satisfaction rate is 1.78 points higher than the satisfaction rates of 85.8% for chats that get transferred to human agents.

It's not surprising to see that unresolved bot chats that get transferred to a human agent score lower; the customer didn't get the answer they needed from the bot and required human intervention for final resolution. One could have easily expected to see a spread of more than 2 points separating these two scenarios given the frustration that would result from being transferred to a human agent after not resolving the problem. The close scores mean that even in these situations the bots are getting pretty close to delivering the right answers on their own without causing much frustration to the customer. The human agents might be 'putting the puck in the net' but the chatbot gets credit for the assist.

All this is to say that organizations are finally witnessing AI turning from concept to reality. Chatbots are able to converse intelligently with customers and resolve their queries with ease in increasingly more cases. Our data validates AI as a powerful tool from which every organization can benefit.

" *Expectations around chatbots have changed within the credit union and even the general banking industry. There's this assumption that members want to only speak to human agents when this could not be further from the truth. Members want fast and easy service on their terms - and there are so many big financial institutions that are seeing increased customer satisfaction with the help of chatbots. They're seeing great results and raising the bar on chatbots in the financial services space as a whole. Other industries need to take note and step up.*"

Matt Kinney,
CEO, Atando Technologies

Team Size Breakdown

The table below reveals 2019 aggregate chat data by team size as an important basis for comparison.

Team Size	Average CSAT	Wait time	Chats per month	Chats per agent per month	Chat Duration
1-5 agents	82.72%	51s	1,373	862	12m 31s
6-10 agents	83.17%	28s	6,427	1293	10m 20s
11-25 agents	84.02%	23s	17,140	2,137	9m 44s
26-50 agents	81.84%	92s	25,005	1,471	12m 32s
>50 agents	87.95%	44s	38,075	597	10m 54s
Overall	83.04%	46s	7,647	1,059	11m 55s

> *Our Comm100 AI chatbot has helped us automate answers to our customers' most common questions, as well as some of our most common workflows. This significant time-savings has enabled our agents to better address more complicated queries. I'm looking forward to seeing what further efficiencies we can drive with our bot in 2020!"*

Richard Branson,
Chief Information Officer,
More Telecom

Industry Breakdown

Our 2019 report includes data from 14 different industries. 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	89.47% + 5.40%	84 - 42.46%	1,202 + 11.29%	22:44 + 15.11%	33.53% + 5.20%
Consumer Products and Services	86.2 8% - 0.02%	36 + 33.33%	1,053 + 114.46%	9:15 - 7.65%	71.32% + 1.57%
eCommerce	86.06% + 0.74%	113 + 14.14%	1922 - 95.52%	15:20 + 5.38%	42.24% + 5.17%
Education	88.69% - 0.99%	33 - 45.00%	6,376 + 510.14%	13:05 - 9.66%	37.50% + 7.22%
Banking & Finance	84.46% + 3.75%	44 - 21.42%	2,787 + 15.21%	18:51 + 38.01%	41.52% - 1.14%
Government & Not-For-Profit	88.64% - 3.76%	56 + 80.64%	1,382 + 152.65%	11:29 - 17.75%	43.72% + 5.35%
Healthcare	86.26% - 6.65%	93 + 63.15%	1,338 + 187.12%	11:40 + 4.48%	50.71% + 6.01%
Manufacturing	87.71% - 2.17%	63 + 40.00%	344 + 123.38%	21:05 + 14.89%	29.06% + 3.20%
Real Estate	98.56% N/A	17 - 50.00%	832 + 5842.86	6:44 - 68.03%	55.26% + 13.18%
Recreation	80.39% - 0.78%	21 + 40.00%	13,587 + 122.26%	8:00 - 0.21%	77.45% + 5.21%
Technology	90.13% + 8.17%	96 + 60.00%	2,352 + 11.63%	18:11 + 17.69%	24.35% + 0.38%
Telecommunications	79.79% - 1.29%	38 - 20.83%	623 - 56.94%	13:43 + 7.21%	34.53% - 1.21%
Transportation	90.86% - 2.20%	27 - 37.21%	426 - 39.75%	13:58 + 12.48%	27.85% + 4.68%
Travel	75.88% - 6.54%	46 - 28.12%	624 - 84.07%	12:55 - 21.64%	49.26% + 5.73%

Key
Take-aways

Efficient staffing is key to a successful live chat strategy

Our data shows that teams with over 50 agents have the highest satisfaction rate and the fewest chats per agent, while teams with 26 to 50 agents have a customer satisfaction score more than 6 points lower, more than twice the wait time, and more than double the number of chats per agent. This latter group also has the longest chat duration. Clearly, these organizations have the most work to do toward improving customer satisfaction and managing agent capacity. Some effective methods to consider include reducing the number of chats their agents handle by deflecting more to chatbots or introducing agent-facing AI solutions like Agent Assist to help agents find information more quickly. These tools will help reduce chat duration and drive higher customer satisfaction.

While teams of 1 to 5 agents also have a lower satisfaction score, these organizations often have their agents handle multiple channels at once. When teams grow beyond 10 agents, they started to segment agents by channel. No matter the chat volume or team size, our data shows that finding the right ratio of agents to chats and staffing accordingly is invaluable for a successful live chat strategy.

Don't sacrifice quality for quantity

It may be tempting to look at teams of 11 to 25 agents and draw the conclusion that high per-agent chat volume and the shorter wait times and chat durations that come with it are good for the customer experience – after all this band has the second highest benchmark CSAT score. But caution is in order here, as an 84% CSAT score is not the pinnacle of achievement it may seem. As we know from experience, higher agent productivity does not necessarily yield higher customer satisfaction on its own. There are always other factors in play. We would urge everyone reading this report to never sacrifice quality for quantity.

Looking Forward

56 million chats - and that doesn't include December - tell a significant story for each of the industries and team sizes covered in this report. When reduced to simple averages, sometimes the story offers surprises – higher CSAT for teams with fewer than 26 agents but longer wait times – and sometimes it doesn't – the largest teams produce metrics that reflect a more sophisticated customer service operation.

But there are certain parts of the 2019 story that speak the loudest:

- Canned messages are a double-edged sword: what you gain in speed you may lose in personalization. Organizations must strike a fine balance between pre-packaging responses and ensuring that their customers still feel loved

- Chatbots are not only getting more popular, they're also getting better at handling conversations from start to finish. This is a combination of two critical factors: improvements in the way chatbots understand natural human language, and deployment scopes and integrations that set them up for success in the first place

The contrast between these two conclusions is interesting. On the one hand the data points to decreased answer automation via declining use of canned messages, yet on the other hand chatbots are getting more and more work done. How do we explain this paradoxical reality?

I think it's quite simple. When a customer knows it's chatting with a chatbot, it expects and accepts a higher degree of standardized responses. However when chatting with a human agent, the same customer expects more originality, and the experience will feel less genuine if they sense too much standardization.

So for 2020, organizations have to double down on their effort to meet seemingly divergent yet actually fully rational customer expectations: automate away with chatbots in the right circumstances and make sure they can get things done, but ensure human interactions stay genuine. Do that, and customers will reward you with greater loyalty.

Finally, a prediction (you read it here first): as your customers get more and more comfortable chatting and co-browsing, they'll start to engage with you on other channels including SMS and social media. Are you ready?

Data and Methodology

Comm100 researchers gathered live chat data for this report from January 1st, 2019 to November 30th, 2019. GDPR and other data protection regulations were strictly enforced by our Information Security Management team during data collection – no personally identifiable data was downloaded for analysis.

The sample size includes 56,784,708 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.

These criteria are in alignment with past Live Chat Benchmark Reports from 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 to allow for an accurate year-over-year comparison.
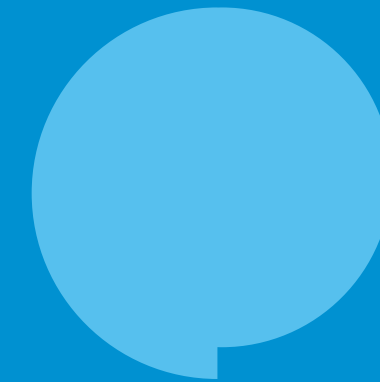
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Let's chat

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.

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