



Sky-High Expectations – How to Improve Student Support in a Digitally-Demanding World

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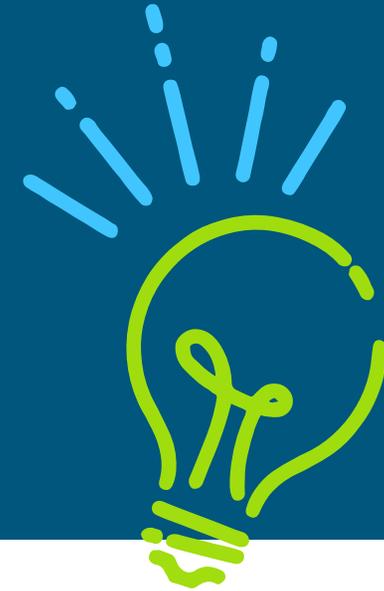
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INTRODUCTION

Student support expectations are at an all-time high, and many higher education institutions are struggling to keep up.



The rapid improvement in technology across industries and uses is providing students with an incredibly smooth and quick experience. From Amazon's same day delivery to UberEat's seamless takeaway offering, students have grown up surrounded by unheard levels of accessibility, instant gratification, and personalization. However, enjoying such impressive experiences with these brands has led students to expect it from every brand they interact with – including higher education.

Today's students expect schools to be accessible wherever and whenever they need support, on their terms.

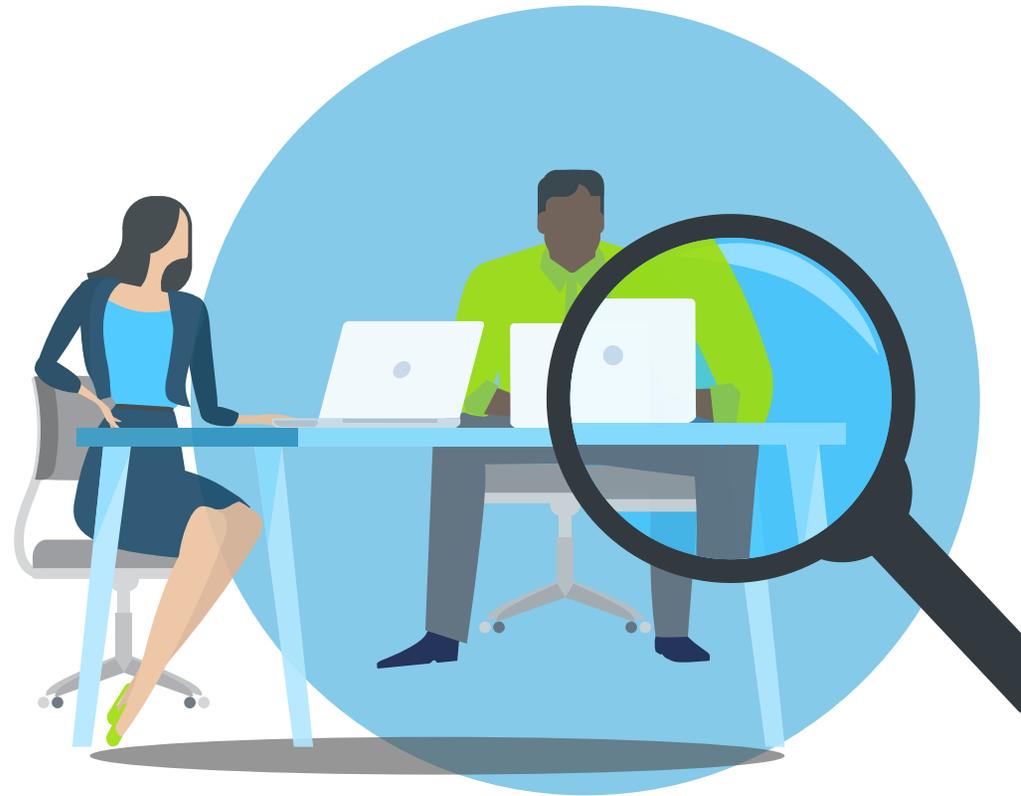
- 61% of Gen Zers 'expect companies to anticipate my needs'
- 77% of GenZers 'expect consistent interactions across departments' and,
- 63% of GenZers 'expect all company representatives to have the same information about me'.

To provide students with this level of support, schools

must begin by making live chat and chatbots central to their student support offering. Once confident with this, omnichannel engagement is the next crucial step, increasing their digital communication channel offering, and connecting each channel together within the agent console for efficient, fast, and personalized support.

The pandemic has awoken higher education institutions to the absolute necessity of digitalization. If they were transitioning slowly towards digitalization, they know they need to speed up.

Communication and engagement play a key role in the



Whether you are offering only email and phone support, have implemented live chat, or are ahead of the curve and are beginning to introduce multiple support channels, **this guide will help you to understand:**

1. Why schools must adopt digital support channels to improve student support
2. How schools can use live chat and chatbots to meet sky-high student expectations
3. How digital omnichannel support takes it up a level

Read on to find out how you can meet your students' support expectations with the right technology, knowledge, and guidance.



CHAPTER 1

Digital Student Support – The Why



Digital Student Support – The Why

achievements, satisfaction, and most markedly, drop-out rates, of students in higher education. This is of special concern in North America with college dropout rates [averaging 40% for undergraduate students](#), and up to 50% for public universities. This has a severe impact on an institution's bottom line. A [study by Stanford](#) revealed a student who leaves before graduating can cost an institution up to \$40,000.

According to an Academic Impression's survey, only 6 higher education professionals from 79 colleges and universities graded their institution's student-centric service with an 'A'.

By providing students with the digital channels that they want to connect on, when they want to, institutions increase the opportunity for engagement at every stage of the student lifecycle - enrolment, engagement, and retention.

If this wasn't enough, digital transformation can also

drive down costs. On average, live chat costs one third less than phone support. Not only can schools provide the 21st century digital support that today's students expect, but they can save money while doing it.

This chapter will take you through the key reasons why offering digital support channels is essential, looking at it from the perspective of the student and how they want to connect with universities and colleges.

Across every demographic, the consumer move



Live chat
costs 1/3 less
than phone
support on
average.

CHAPTER 1

What Students Want

- 1 Accessible support
- 2 Fast support
- 3 All-day, everyday support
- 4 Personalized and helpful support



What Students Want

1 Accessible support



away from phone and towards digital communication, and for younger people, this digital preference runs even deeper. [52% of Millennials](#) say they feel anxious about taking a phone call, and 60% of Gen Z say they ‘hate calling people’.

This preference away from phone and towards digital communication boils down to three key attributes, the first of which is the desire for accessible support. Phone is a notoriously inaccessible channel, forcing callers to be passed between agents as they try to find the suitable agent who can help them with their query.

In stark contrast, today’s students are digital-first, and digital-obsessed. According to a [survey by Pew Research](#)



[Center](#), 45% of Millennials say they are online “almost constantly.” That’s almost double the percentage who answered the same [three years ago](#). As a result, digital channels like social media are highly accessible and convenient for students to use, not least because of the length of time they spend on these platforms and their familiarity using them.

Although today’s students are digital-first, this doesn’t just mean that they want to connect via digital channels. It also means that they want they do reach out, they don’t think about what digital channel they are using. They simply want to use the digital channel that is most convenient to them at that moment in time.

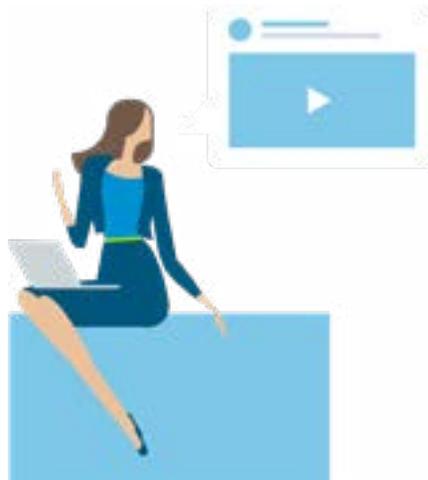
Today’s students have grown up surrounded by

What Students Want

1 Accessible support

To cater to this mindset and achieve high levels of engagement, institutions must provide a range of digital channels, connected together through a digital omnichannel platform so that students can:

1. Connect through their digital choice
2. Be confident that their query will be understood and resolved.



“The biggest challenge is getting the student over the threshold to ask for help. It is hard to admit they need help. You don’t want unnecessary barriers in the way when they do ask for help.”

— Cindy Barnes, Director of Advising and Retention, West Texas A&M University in [Academic Impressions](#)

What Students Want

2 Fast support

The speed at which students can ask a question and get a fast answer is key to the popularity of support via social media. Students have grown up in a digital world that has created a desire for instant gratification, and this has seeped into customer support. The speed, and sometimes, real-time nature of social media caters to this behavioral expectation. In fact, 71% of 16-24-year-olds believe that customer experience can be drastically improved by quick responses.

The need for speed is driving students away from phone (and even email in some cases), and towards the instancy of live chat and social media.

An integrated knowledge base also helps produce quick responses and resolutions. Connected within the console, an agent can quickly search for the information they need, and pass it on to the student, allowing them to provide faster and more accurate support.

To speed up response times even further, AI-powered virtual assistants are invaluable. By monitoring live chat conversations in real-time, these AI tools automatically find and provide answers for the agent to send to the student. This reduces (or even eliminates) the time spent looking for information, as well as typing out the answer.

71%

of 16-24-year-olds believe that customer experience can be drastically improved by quick responses.

What Students Want

3 All-day, everyday support



technology, so it should be no surprise that they prefer the accessibility and speed that digital channels provide. However, if they don't receive this level of support, this experience can quickly sour. After all, [58% of Millennials](#) expect to be able to connect with a company whenever they want to. This is why AI chatbots should be every educational institution's best friend.

By setting up an AI chatbot – both within live chat and social platforms – a large portion of frontline customer care can be automated so every student can be listened to and engaged with immediately – even when support volumes are at their peak. With [Comm100 AI Chatbot](#), you can create one bot and implement it across live and social media, including Facebook, Facebook Messenger, and Twitter. More importantly than all the above, chatbots are 24/7 so students can receive support whenever they need, even when your team is offline.

What Students Want

3 All-day, everyday support

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 common, easy to spin up, and can work well in the right context. However, chatbots that are powered by AI take the student experience up a level.

Students are most open to chatbots than any other demographics. Gen Z and Millennials are most likely to have used AI in customer service, and are most likely to agree that chatbots make it easier and quicker for their issues to get resolved.

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

- 1 **24/7 service:** Chatbots provide an additional channel for students to still get answers during off-hours so they can get assistance on their schedule, not yours.
- 2 **FAQs:** Chatbots can handle common questions to free up your agents to handle the more complex or sensitive queries.
- 3 **Gathering student 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 question.
- 4 **Shorter queues, faster responses:** Chatbots can handle an unlimited amount of chats simultaneously. They can also deliver responses more quickly than human agents.



What Students Want

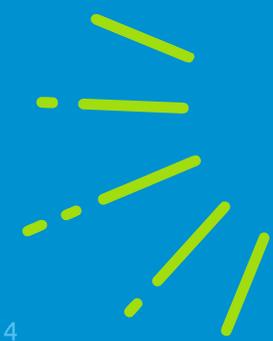
4 Personalized & helpful support

We know students want fast and accessible support – but this all they expect. While quick response and resolution is vital, the support must also answer their query. With a digital omnichannel platform, institutions can provide exactly this with personalized and helpful support.

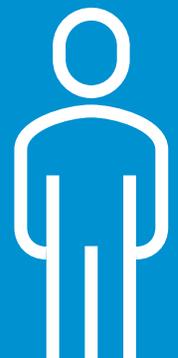
Omnichannel platforms connect every digital channel together within one console, bringing together historical conversations across every channel, as well as individual information such as course history,

date of birth, and any other valuable individual information. With this information at hand, agents can immediately build a clear image of the student and their full lifecycle, empowering them to better understand the student and provide more helpful and personalized support. (Read more on digital omnichannel in Chapter 3)

Audio and video chat is a great tool within Comm100 Live Chat to bring extra personalization to student interactions. (More on this in Chapter 2.)



Digital omnichannel support empowers higher education institutions to treat every student as an individual.



CHAPTER 2

Live Chat & Chatbots – Reaching Students' Sky-High Support Expectations



CHAPTER 2

How to Boost Student Engagement

- 1 Audio and video chat
- 2 Proactive chat invitations
- 3 Route to specific agent
- 4 In-app chat



Live Chat & Chatbots – How to Boost Student Engagement

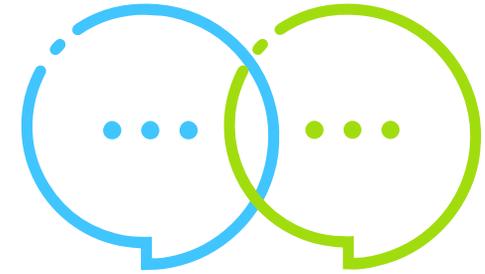
The popularity of live chat and chatbots helps higher educational institutions support students by meeting them where and how they want, as we have previously discussed. In this chapter, we will explore the many tools and features within live chat and chatbots that can empower agents to take this support and engagement even further.



Live Chat

In the previous chapter, we spoke about the popularity of live chat with students and how it allows them to connect how they want – digitally. In this section, we will take you through live chat features that agents can use to increase the level, quality, and personalization of engagement with students.

Live Chat & Chatbots – How to Boost Student Engagement



1 Audio and Video Chat

Developing relationships with students is crucial to the quality of support that follows. While live chat does this brilliantly, there's another tool educational institutions can use to take this personalized customer service up a level – [video chat](#).

Video chat brings students face-to-face with agents and helps them to connect on a more personal level. This is all the more helpful in the age of COVID as many universities and colleges remain closed. [Dawson College](#) faced this problem in the fall of 2020 and used Comm100 video chat as their solution.

In 2020, Covid-19 restrictions rendered Dawson College's traditional open house event impossible. As an essential part of its enrollment strategy, administrators feared that without the event there would be a significant drop in enrollment.

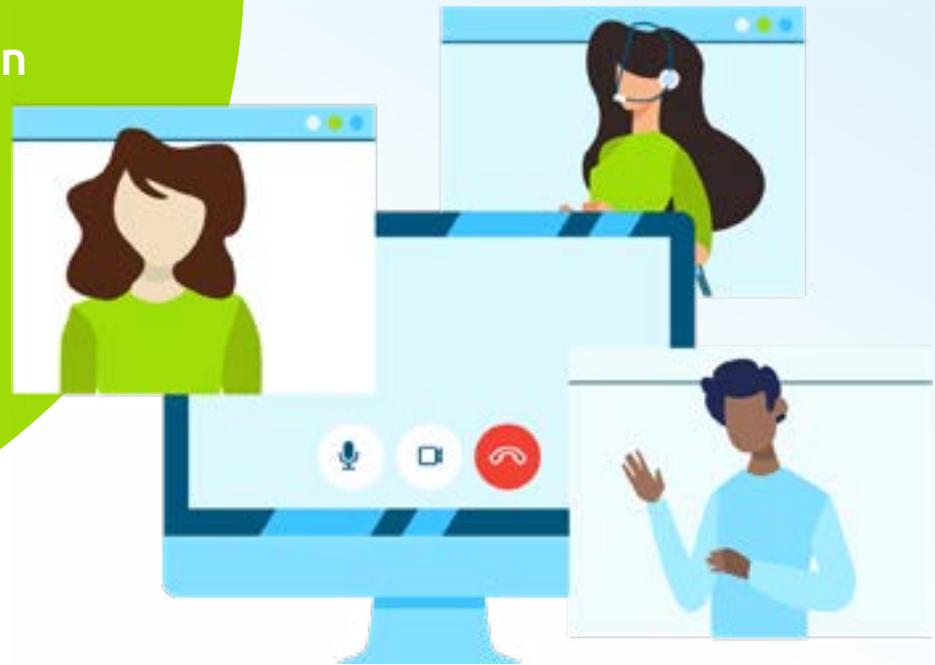
In a moment of ingenuity, Dawson College came up with the idea of holding a virtual open house event through live chat, supported by video chat. The virtual open house took place over several days and saw almost 1000 students from 17 countries speak with hundreds of department reps. Video chat allowed department reps to develop a more personal connection with the students and begin building relationships that are always so important to the success of an open house event.



“Speaking with the students over video meant our college representatives had the chance to connect with the students on a more personal level, as if they were face-to-face. This is so important to developing relationships with the students and allowed us to recreate the experience of our typical, in-person open house events.”

Derek Gaucher
Coordinator of IT Solutions at
Dawson College

Click here to
read the
full story!



Live Chat & Chatbots – How to Boost Student Engagement

2 Proactive chat invitations

Sometimes students just need a little encouragement to reach out and ask a question. With [proactive chat invitations](#), you can do exactly this by initiating the conversation; manually or automatically.

To manually send a chat invitation, an agent simply finds the student within the dashboard and clicks to send them a message. To help the agent identify these students, tags can be attached to their individual profiles. Comm100's platform can also alert agents to their presence in real-time so the agent can reach out to them before they leave.

For [automatic chat invitations](#), you don't need to monitor and spot students. Instead, you can automatically trigger chat messages to be sent when they land on your site, providing a welcome message, letting them know about latest news, or just letting them know that you're there for any of their questions.



Adding proactive live chat to your site can also instill a sense of confidence in your students as it reveals an active commitment to communication between the institution and its students.

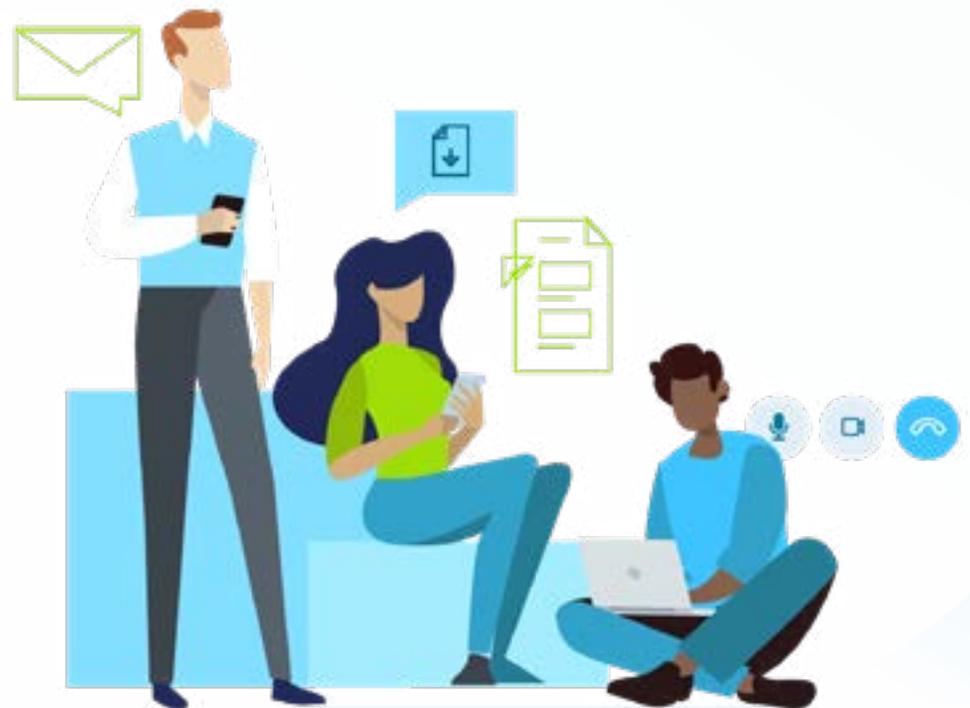


Live Chat & Chatbots – How to Boost Student Engagement

3 Route to specific agent

We've spoken about agents initiating chats, but what if the student does?

By setting up [routing rules](#) and [assigning a statuses](#), students can be directly routed to your chosen team, department, or even agent to make sure that they get the support they need.

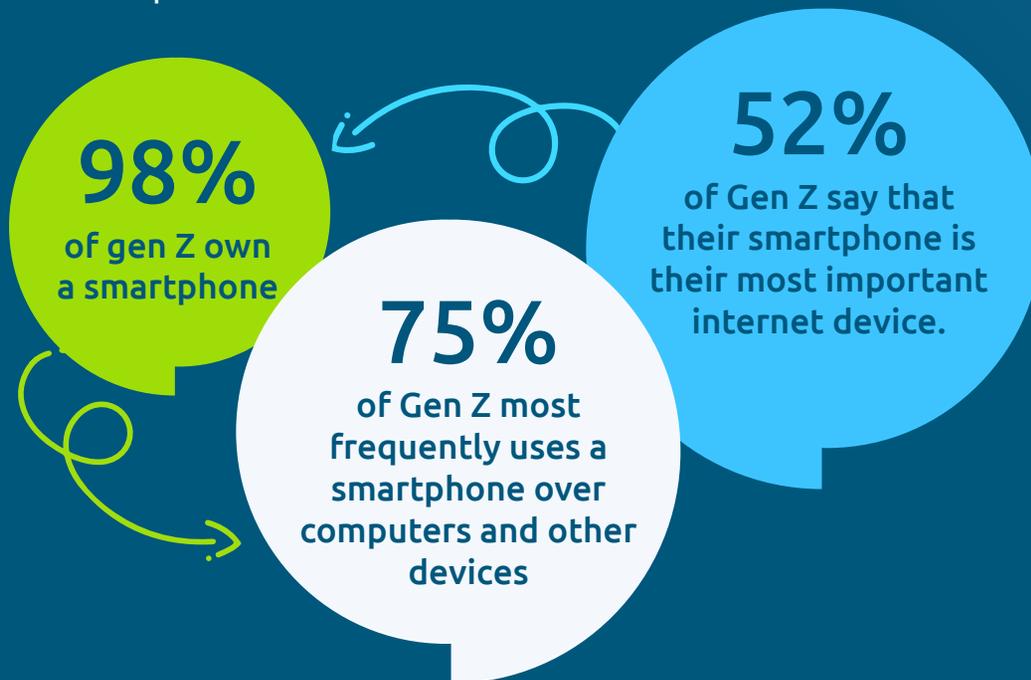


Live Chat & Chatbots – How to Boost Student Engagement

4 In-app chat

For many higher education institutions, mobile apps are a central focus point for increasing student engagement. In 2020, 43% of live chats in the education sector were made on mobile, and this is only set to increase as students are the highest users of mobile phone.

To support this strategy, you can integrate live chat into the mobile app, allowing students to contact customer support teams inside the app instead of going to the website to search for the chat button.



Adding in-app chat to mobile apps is easy thanks to developer-friendly SDKs (software development kits).

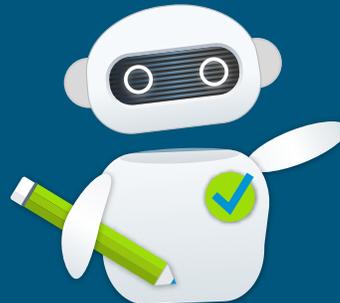
With the creation of mobile-friendly live chat, students can reach out on the go — anytime, anywhere.

CHAPTER 2

Live Chat & Chatbots – How to Boost Student Engagement

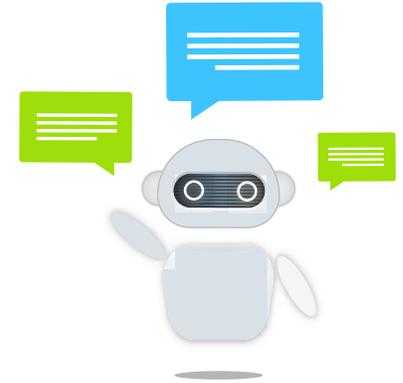
Live chat support is the best channel to connect with students, but few higher educational institutions can afford to provide this support 24/7. So what can you do to be there for those students, night owls, and weekend academics who want to connect with you out of your typical customer service hours? After all, [58% of Millennials expect](#) to be able to connect with a company whenever they want to.

A chatbot is the perfect answer to this expectation.



When your team is offline, a chatbot can step in to answer the students' questions, as well as accomplish tasks for them – all without any human supervision, 24/7.

Live Chat & Chatbots – How to Boost Student Engagement



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 common, easy to spin up, and can work well in the right context. However, chatbots that are powered by AI take the student experience up a level.

[AI chatbots](#) can engage in far more natural conversations; they're far more accurate at understanding your students' intentions, and as a result, can respond more effectively. If you're wondering where to start with chatbots, here are just a handful of use cases they can handle:

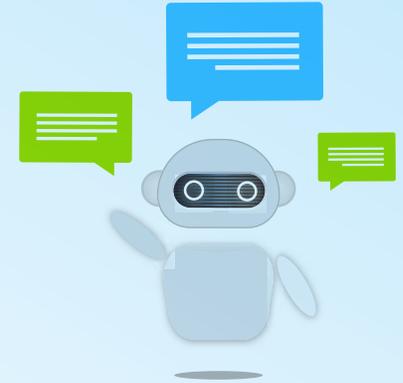
1 24/7 service:

Chatbots provide an additional channel for students to still get answers during off-hours so they can get assistance on their schedule, not yours.

2 FAQs:

Chatbots can handle common questions to free up your agents to handle the more complex or sensitive queries.

Live Chat & Chatbots – How to Boost Student Engagement



3 Gathering student 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 question.

4 Shorter queues, faster responses:

Chatbots can handle an unlimited amount of chats simultaneously. They can also deliver responses more quickly than human agents.

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 customers](#) agree that there should always be an ‘escalate to agent’ option present when talking to a chatbot.

CHAPTER 3

Digital Omnichannel – The Glue to Flawless Student Support



CHAPTER 3

Digital Omnichannel – The Pinnacle of Digital Transformation

So far we've explored how instrumental digital channels are for student support, highlighting how you can use key channels like live chat and chatbots to bolster the quality efficiency of this engagement. However, the journey doesn't stop here. Offering a variety of digital channels is vital, but to take your student support up a level, each channel must be connected.

With this in place, student support can become truly:

- Personalized
- Helpful
- Streamlined and,
- Cost-effective

And you can do all this with digital omnichannel support.



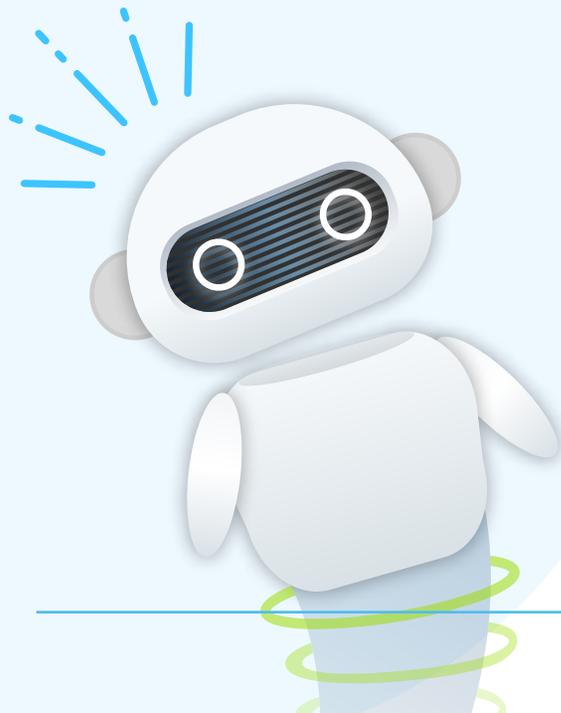
CHAPTER 3

Digital Omnichannel – The Pinnacle of Digital Transformation

Digital omnichannel platforms weave together every digital channel - live chat, social media, email, ticketing, and SMS - integrating them and their data into a single console.

This means, for example, that a live chat transcript with a student from three weeks ago is easily accessible to an agent providing email support to that same student today.

- It means that agents can move between live chat, email, social media, and SMS support with little more than a click.
- It means that agents, team leads, and managers can collaborate in real-time.
- It means saying goodbye to operational silos and hello to a flawless digital journey where students and agents experience fluid conversations across channels.
- It means routing between channels, agents, and even departments becomes effortless.



CHAPTER 3

Digital Omnichannel – The Pinnacle of Digital Transformation

Digital omnichannel is not about making sure you're on the latest channel. Instead, omnichannel represents a big-picture shift in how higher education works and what customers want in today's digital-first world. At its core, digital omnichannel is about how seamless experiences, not channels, are changing the entire student support experience, from the front desk to the backend.

A digital omnichannel solution is not a CRM or a phone system. It is not focused on one digital channel. Instead, digital omnichannel offers one holistic student view through data, reporting, and insights across digital channels. The result: improved student support and engagement, and greater agent efficiency tied together by a unified experience no matter the channel.

Digital omnichannel stitches together every avenue of support to create a cohesive student experience throughout the lifecycle.



Making the Digital Shift

While making a shift across to digital omnichannel may seem overwhelming, it's important to remember that a digital shift in any area takes time. It is a journey that you build upon, step by step - understanding customer intents, building a foundation of information, adding new channels and introducing automation – until your team becomes digital student experience experts.

Rome wasn't built in a day, and nor is an excellent student support system.

At Comm100, we specialize in leading higher education institutions through this journey. We work with the likes of McMaster University, San Jose University, Open University, Dawson College, Thompson Rivers University, and many more to help their team and institution become experts in digital student support.



With data centers located in Canada, the US, and Europe, and audited compliance including ISO 27001, SOC 2 Type 2, GDPR, CCPA, and more; only Comm100 can meet your complete security and compliance requirements.

Whatever stage you are at, we can help you get there with a proven platform and method. We combine world-class technology with expert guidance – all at a cost far below what you're used to seeing with phone-based solutions.



Meet your student support expectations with **Comm100**

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

[Learn More](#)