



The Zendesk Customer Experience Trends Report 2019



03

Trends overview

04

Our data

05

Raising the stakes

07

Omnichannel support

11

Building with an open platform

15

Proactive engagement

18

AI in customer support

22

Setting up your team for success

25

About this report

With the Zendesk Benchmark, our data index of 45,000 companies using Zendesk, we explored how top companies tackle customer support to identify what separates leaders from everyone else.

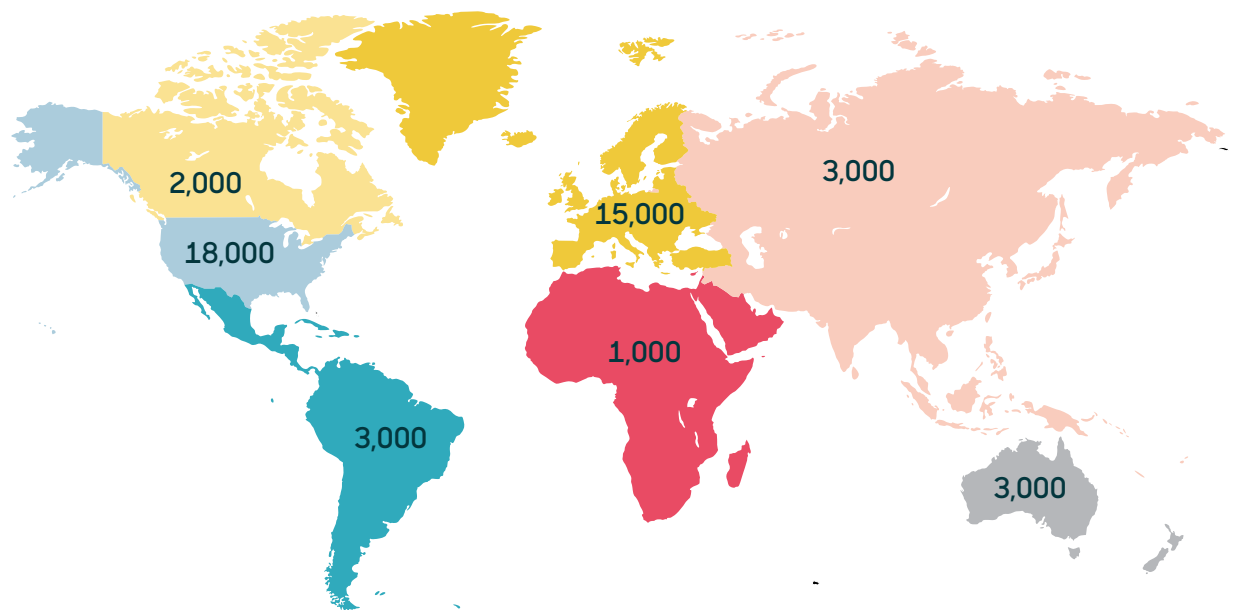
We also surveyed and interviewed customers, customer support agents, and customer support managers across the globe about their approaches to the customer experience, comparing their attitudes about the most important topics in customer support with the single best trove of data on how companies actually use their support solutions.

Our data

We're not just relying on what customer support professionals are saying they're doing—we're looking at what they're actually doing.

We analyzed how companies use their support solutions with the Zendesk Benchmark, our index of product usage data from 45,000 companies worldwide.

Benchmark data from 45,000 companies across the globe



Through surveys and focus groups, we also talked to:



1,850
Customers

Across 6 countries

Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany,
United Kingdom, United States



570
Customer support agents



170
Customer support managers

Your customers are comparing you to the best customer experience they've ever had—every time

New technology that allows companies to build relationships directly with consumers has raised the stakes for everyone: Customers are comparing all companies to the best of the best.

When we asked customers which industries provide the best customer service, Travel, Financial Services, and Retail ranked the highest. Companies in these industries are more likely to be among the leading innovators that have taken advantage of new digital tools to communicate directly with customers, simplify the purchasing experience, and leverage powerful data analytics to improve operations.

Customers are also more likely to have interacted with companies in these industries recently. Retail, Travel, and Financial Services are among the top five industries when it comes to fielding the most requests from customers using Zendesk.

Customers say consumer-facing companies lead the way when it comes to customer support.

Customers love

- Travel
- Financial Services
- Retail

Customers don't love:

- Government & Nonprofit
- Media & Telecommunications
- Healthcare

Top companies create a halo effect

Leading companies in consumer-facing industries have built their brands on customer service. Customers are comparing all companies to the very best.

Travel



Airbnb has created a new economy for the thousands of people who've opened and shared their homes, and by giving travelers new ways to travel.



Financial Services



LendingClub connects U.S. borrowers and investors through an online marketplace that offers ethical and easy ways to access credit.



Retail



One of the first direct-to-consumer subscription services, Dollar Shave Club offers affordable razors, sent straight to subscribers' doorsteps.



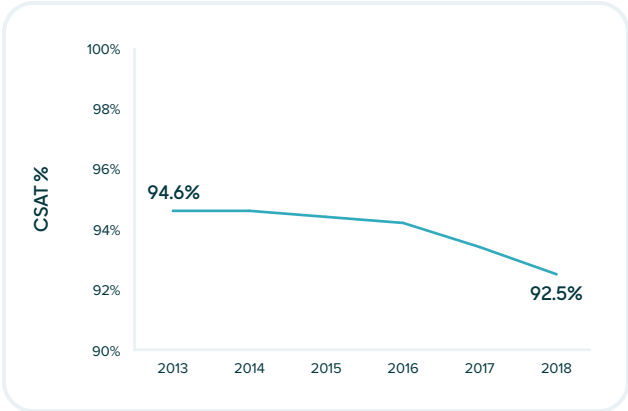
But this doesn't mean all companies serving customers directly are doing well. In fact, despite being home to a few shining examples that are top-of-mind for customers, most B2C companies are struggling.

Being a company serving customers directly has a more profound negative effect on a customer support team's metrics than almost anything else. Holding other factors constant, being a B2C company leads to a more than 5% dip in CSAT and a 2.6 hour increase in the average time it takes to reply to customers.

Less satisfied, more demanding

Customers aren't just comparing everyone to leading companies. They are also broadly less satisfied and more demanding when it comes to customer support interactions.

There's been a global dip in customer satisfaction across the companies we measured. Over the past five years, CSAT is down 2.1%, from 94.6% in 2013 to 92.5% in 2018. It's even decreased 0.9% in the past year.



This lines up with what we hear from customers. Half of customers say they're more demanding than they were a year ago. Agents, who are on the front lines of interacting with customers, are noticing this, too. 59% of agents agree that customers have higher expectations.

Customers have higher expectations than last year

46%
of customers said they have higher expectations

59%
of agents said customers have higher expectations

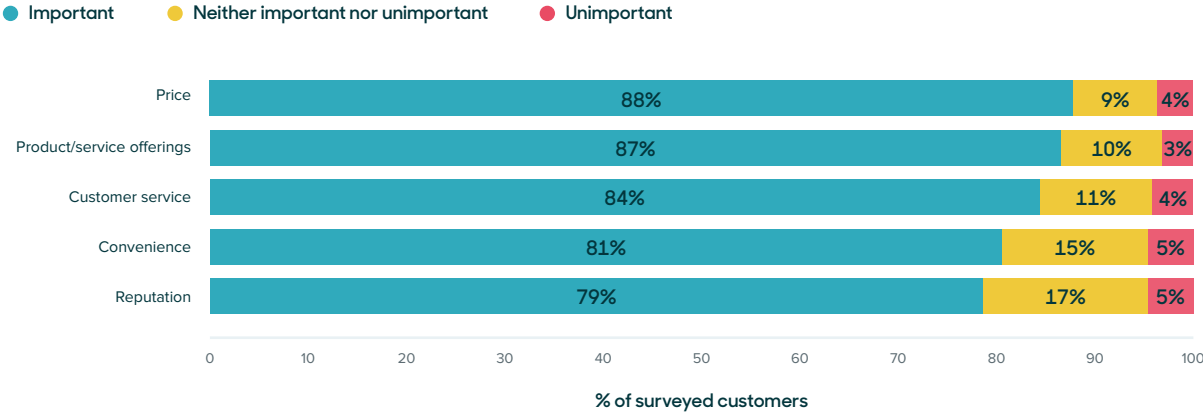
Customers care about customer service when considering which companies to give their business. 84% of customers say customer service is important when considering whether or not to buy from a company—outranking both convenience and reputation.

And companies are struggling to keep up with requests from customers. For those using Zendesk in the past five years, daily tickets have increased by 145%, outpacing growth in team size, which is up only 66%. Combine rising inquiries from customers with these higher expectations, and the decrease in customer satisfaction worldwide makes sense.

So what should companies do? Our data shows a clear benefit from investing proactively in support and using customer service to differentiate against the competition.

This report examines shifting attitudes toward customer service, identifying the top trends for 2019 and how support teams can best adapt to make the most of them.

When you're considering whether or not to buy from a company, how important are the following attributes?



01 Customers already expect seamless, fully integrated omnichannel support

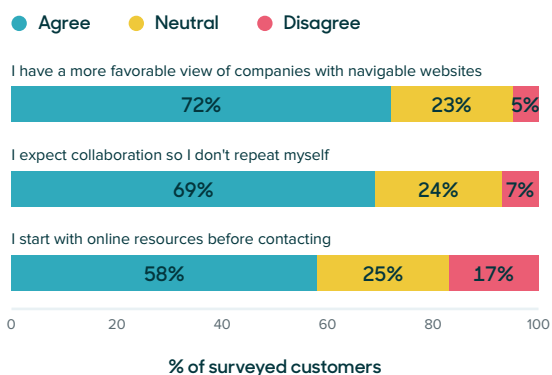
Omnichannel simplifies and integrates channels. Customers and support teams alike benefit.

- Customers want fast and efficient resolutions—and they don't want to repeat themselves.
- Conversations flow effortlessly across any channel they choose.
- Support teams enjoy a crystal-clear view of the customer.

Providing customer service across multiple channels has never been more popular.

Customers want to communicate with brands in the same ways in which they talk to friends and family. Research by Conduent indicates that the average customer uses five channels socially and two channels when engaging with brands.

But customers and support teams are reporting that companies haven't fully connected their channel offerings. Customers struggle to get swift resolution, and agents lack the full context.



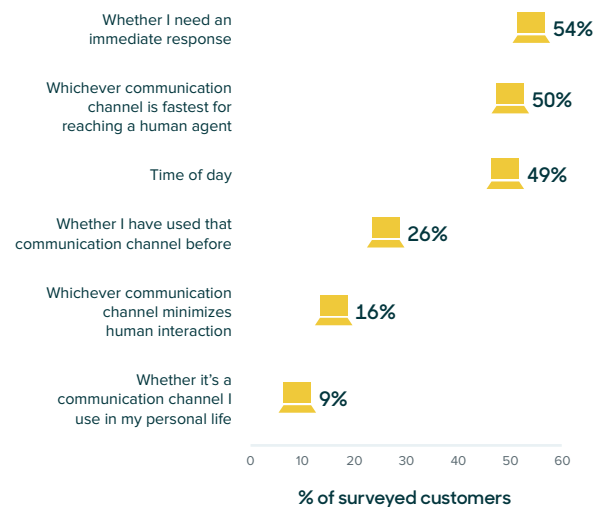
Customers most highly value companies with online resources that help them answer their own questions, as well as team collaboration so they don't repeat themselves over and over.

Customers ultimately use the channels that get them results. Only a quarter of respondents take into account if they have used a channel before, implying they're open to whichever yields answers most effectively. They're most likely to choose a channel based on whether they need an immediate response, the speed of reaching an agent, and the time of day.

More than 60% of customers told us they sometimes, often, or always use more than one channel to contact customer service.

Previous Zendesk research indicates that customers won't wait long before going to a different channel. We found that 85% of customers will use a different contact method if they don't get a response from their initial request, with 44% waiting less than an hour before doing so.

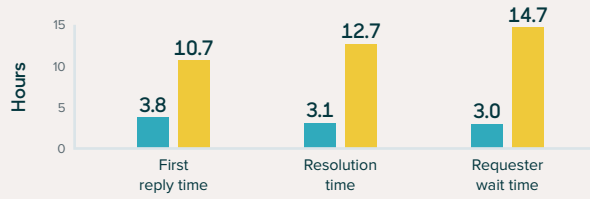
Which of the following factors influence which contact methods you use when contacting customer support?



The value of positivity

Regardless of channel used, interactions that win a positive CSAT rating are replied to 2.5 times faster, resolved 4 times faster, and keep customers waiting only 20% of the time.

● Good CSAT ● Bad CSAT

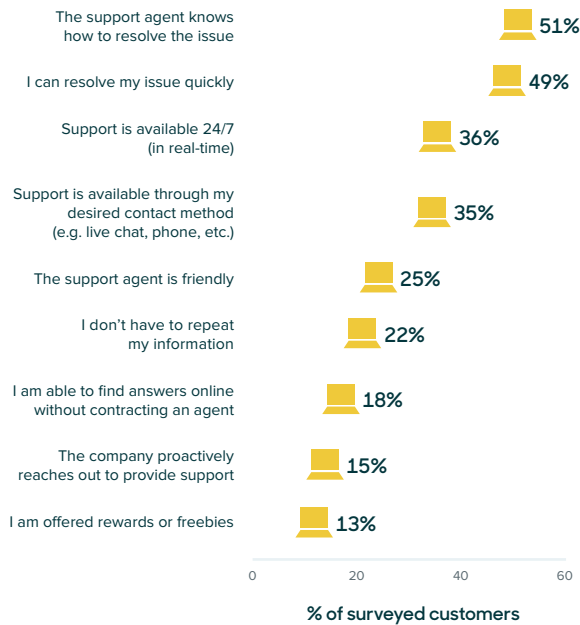


Wanted: Quick and effective resolutions

Most of all, customers value fast replies and agents with the know-how to tackle their issue. 24/7 availability is important for more than a third of respondents.

Agents understand customer priorities: They too think that for customers, efficient responses and quick resolution are the most important elements of a good experience. Nearly a third of agents said it's also important for a support agent to be friendly.

Which are the most important aspects of a good customer experience?

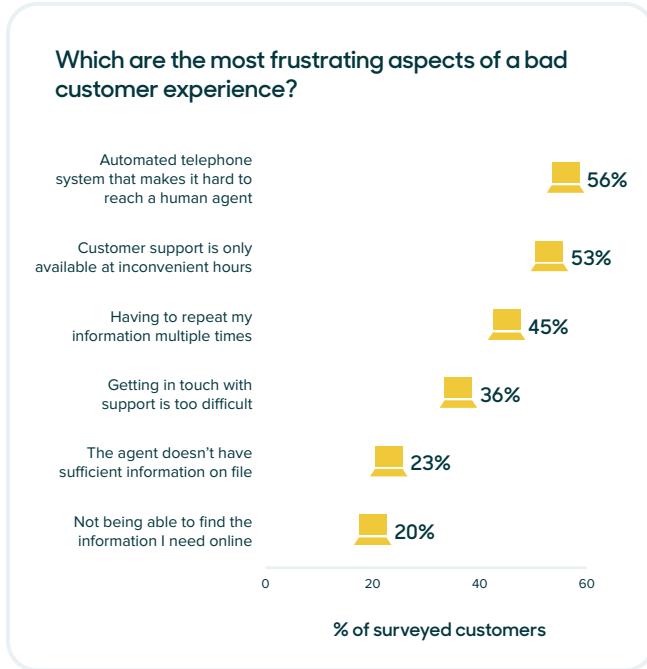


Which are the most important aspects of a good customer experience?

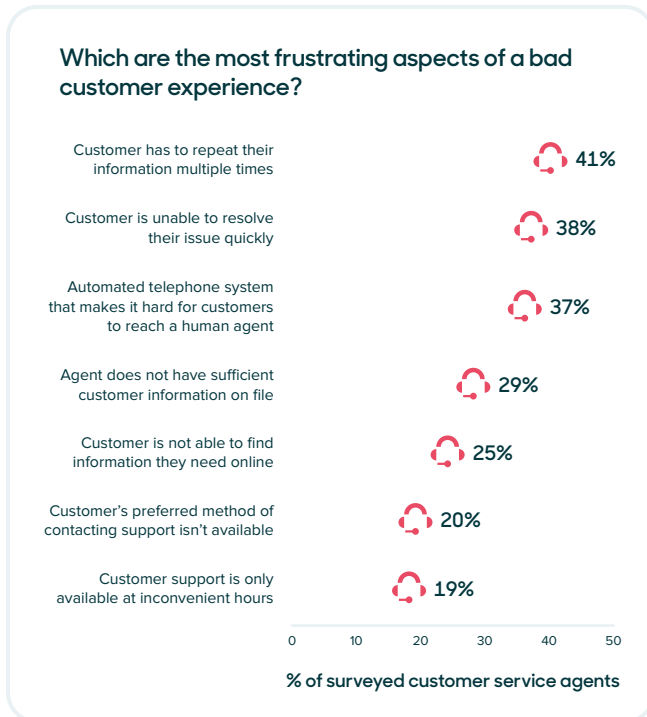


Poorly designed solutions drive bad experiences

For consumers, bad experiences stem from automated phone trees making it hard to reach an agent, support being offered at inconvenient hours, and agents lacking context on problems. Experiences over the phone make an impression—but not the good kind. People remember bad phone support more than they recall bad experiences in other channels.



Agents' views on the top factors driving bad experiences broadly match consumers' pain points.

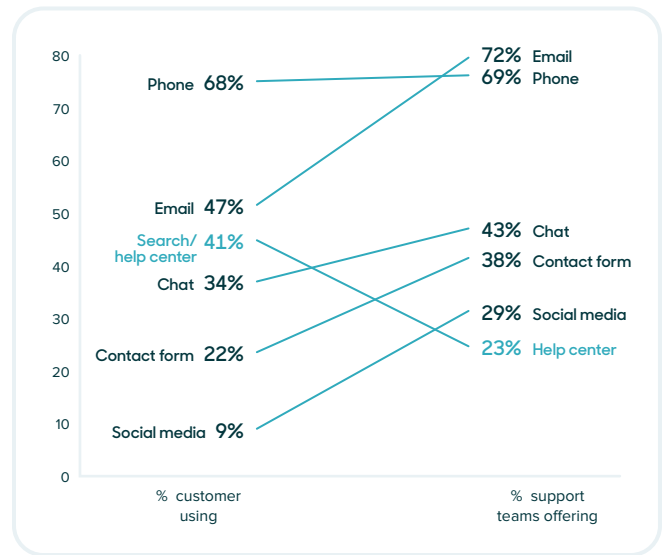


Channel preferences and the self-service gap

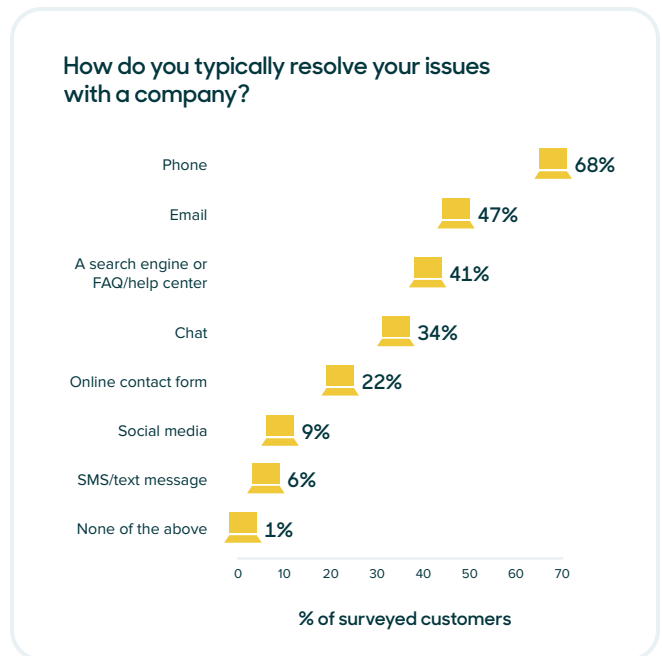
Phone and email remain the two most popular channels among consumers. These are also the most frequently offered by support teams, according to survey responses by customer support managers.

But there is one clear disparity between what customers want and what support teams are offering. Customers are almost twice as likely to use self-service as a company is to offer it: 40% of customers start with a search engine or help center when getting in touch with support, while only about 20% of teams are offering self-service.

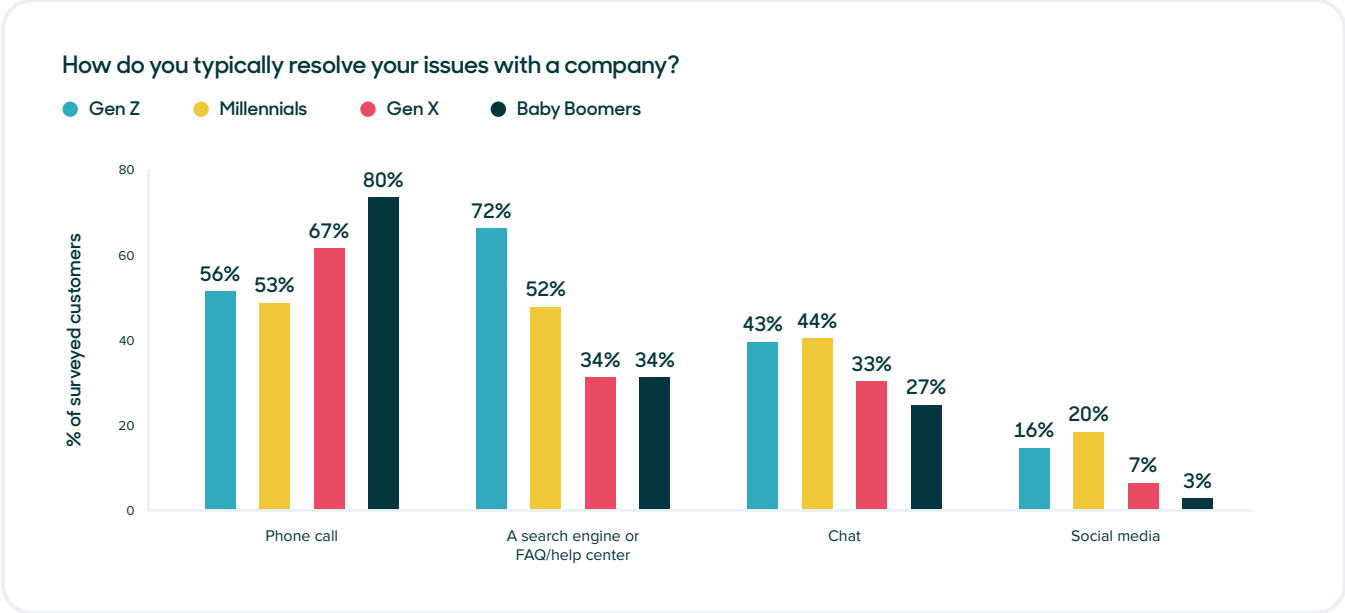
Email is also overrepresented as a channel, with half of customers preferring it and nearly three-quarters of teams offering it.



Phone and email are popular across age demographics. 68% of consumers say they have resolved an issue via phone, making it by far the most used channel.



Younger people are much more comfortable with self-service: Almost three-quarters of Gen Z respondents and more than half of millennials said they start with a search or a company’s help center. Younger people also tend to be more enthusiastic about contacting support over chat, social media, and text.



The case for omnichannel support

Among companies using Zendesk, chat, phone, and Facebook are the fastest-growing channels.

More high-performing support teams are using live channels in particular: High performers handle a third more of their tickets using live channels like chat and phone support. And live channels mean customers get responses that are faster by orders of magnitude. Replies over chat and phone happen in a matter of minutes, while responses to tickets created over email and webform take hours on average.

Taking a true omnichannel approach—integrating traditional support channels, self-service, chat, and phone support—gets results. This approach allows companies to take advantage of better-performing live channels and even improves the performance of standard channels like email and webform.

When we looked at support teams’ performance before and after adopting the Zendesk Suite, Zendesk’s out-of-the-box omnichannel solution, we found that two months after using the Suite, these companies’ customers spent nearly 10% less time waiting for an initial response and saw requests resolved 17% faster.

Companies using the Zendesk Suite

10%
faster replies to customers

17%
faster ticket resolution

02 Viewing support as an open platform powered by data frees companies to build better experiences

- The best technology platforms connect customer data from every business application to capture essential context.
- Being able to easily update your technology and agent workflows helps teams keep up.
- Embedding support natively into a site or mobile app allows answers without extra customer effort.

With customers demanding more and more from customer service, it's critical that companies have the flexibility to own and adapt the end-to-end customer experience. This includes the data platform a business is built on, the technology customers use, and the conversations with agents that this technology facilitates.

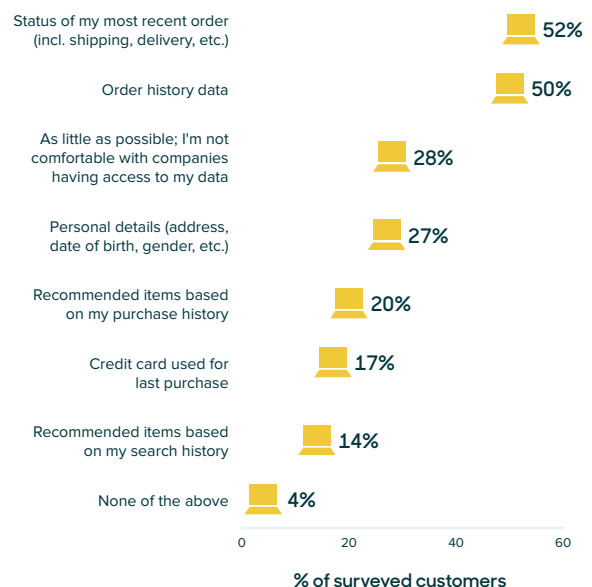
A support solution must be effortless for customers and agents, easy to change as expectations shift, flexible enough to mold to a business, and modern enough to build out with minimal overhead.

Customers expect connected data

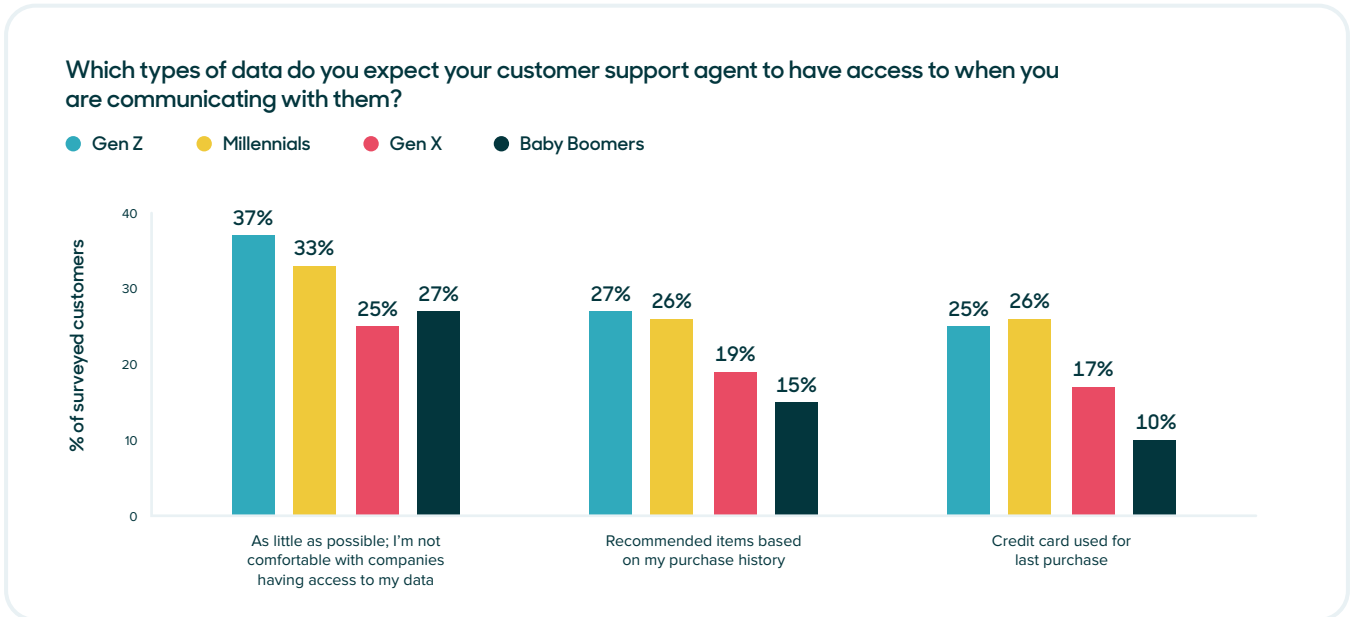
Nearly 70% of consumers expect support teams to collaborate so they don't repeat themselves. This means companies need to manage customer data across all aspects of the customer experience and ensure that a single record of the customer persists across channels, devices, and requests.

Across age groups, customers are most likely to care that companies keep track of data related to their order status and history to ensure their requests get resolved.

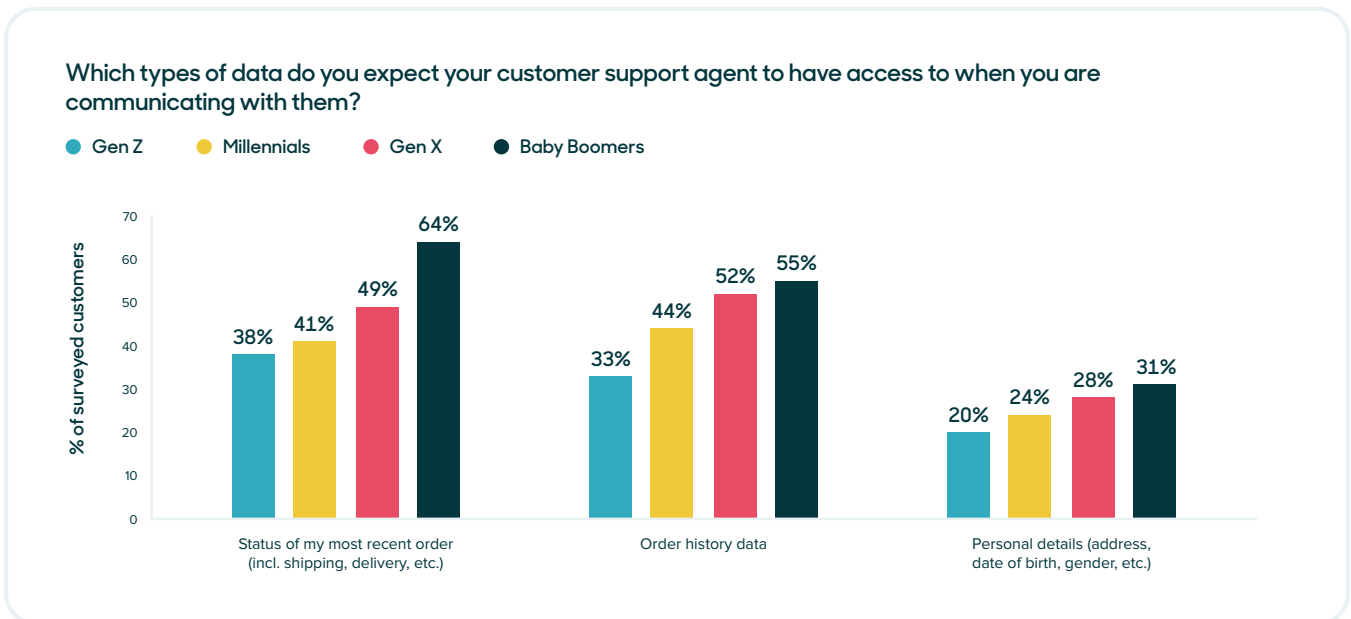
Which types of data do you expect your customer support agent to have access to when you are communicating with them?



Younger customers are more likely to want support teams to offer personalized recommendations and keep track of the credit card from their last purchase. Interestingly, Gen Z and millennials are also most wary of data misuse—nearly a third of each group wants companies to keep as little information on hand as possible.



Older generations are likely to care more about companies keeping track of their order history, order status, and personal details.



Leading teams view support as an open and flexible platform

High-performing support teams are more sophisticated when it comes to tracking and storing identifiers for customers—including emails, devices, and other demographic information—as complete customer records. Teams can then use this information to answer requests, engage proactively, and understand which customer segments have the most value.

The best teams push data in and out of their support software using APIs, apps, and integrations, so agents have the information they need, and customers don't have to repeat themselves.

Scaling with an API-first approach

APIs allow support teams to achieve scale, letting them manage a high volume of tickets, resolve requests faster, and ensure customers spend less time waiting. APIs let teams integrate with any other tools or services and quickly update customer records, create tickets, migrate ticket data, edit users in bulk, and search customer records to let agents find information.

Taking an API-first approach also means developers don't need to learn proprietary languages and frameworks and can instead use a single set of API endpoints for accessing customer data.

Companies using APIs resolve tickets 21% faster, and their customers spend 35% less time waiting for agents to respond, all while managing more than three times as many requests.

Companies using APIs

21%

faster resolution for customers

35%

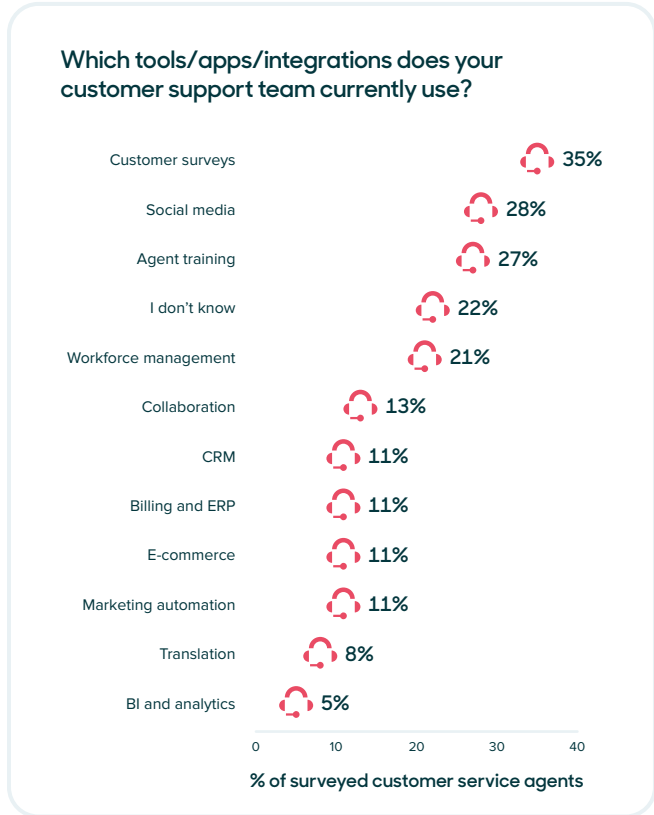
less time spent waiting for responses

Third-party apps and integrations mean a single view of data

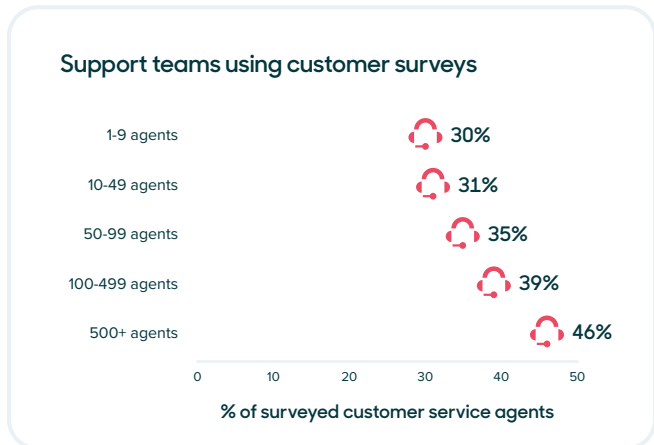
Pre-built apps and integrations give support teams visibility into customer data in other systems, enabling effective collaboration between agents and providing a consistent customer experience across platforms.

Most companies in our sample rely on apps and integrations, with 89% of companies using at least one. High performers use a third more on average.

Customer surveys, social media, and agent training are the three most popular, according to agents. Collecting customer feedback is a clear opportunity for support teams, with two-thirds not even relying on customer surveys like CSAT to inform their work.



Smaller support teams are most at risk when it comes to flying blind without customer feedback. We found that only a third of SMBs have tools in place to collect customer feedback, compared to nearly half of enterprise companies.



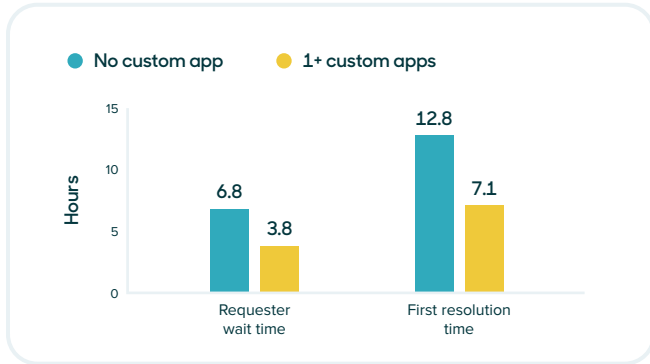
Custom apps put data to use for agents

Sometimes pre-built apps and integrations aren't enough. Support teams need to put customer data to use to give agents context, improve agent workflows, and get insights from analytics.

This can be done by creating custom apps that extend a support solution's functionality to give agents more information.

For example, if an IT team that maintains employee computers wants to include details about each machine in the support tickets that employees submit, they can. This team could define a new computer object type and then create an object for individual computers to store details about each one.

Companies using custom apps resolve customer requests 44% faster, all while managing 5.5 times the volume of requests. High performers are 25% more likely to use custom apps.

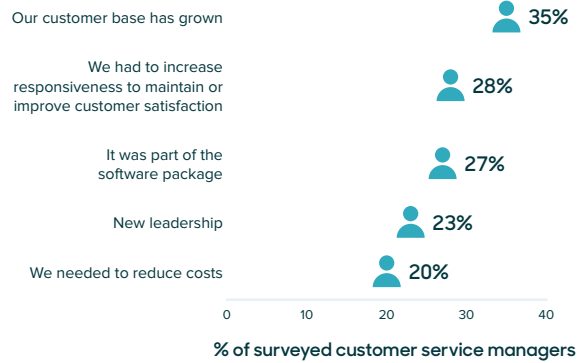


The best support teams lean on customer data

In addition to better managing customer requests and giving agents the full context, an open CRM platform powered by customer data gives support teams the power to easily add new channels and embed support natively wherever customers want to get in touch.

79% of customer support managers told us they are adding at least one new channel in the coming year, pointing to a growing customer base and the need to increase responsiveness as their leading reasons. The top channels managers think they're launching are email and chat/messaging, with 23% and 20% planning on launching those respectively.

What was the primary motivation for your team to add a new channel?



B2C companies are leading the way in providing seamless support, embedding support channels like self-service, email ticketing, and chat natively into websites, smart devices, and mobile apps so it's easier for customers to reach out. High-performing support teams are also more likely to embed support natively.

High performers do more to embed support natively

24%

more likely to use the Web Widget

16%

more likely to use the Mobile SDK

Use of Zendesk's [Web Widget](#), which lets support teams serve up self-service content, a contact form, live chat, or a callback request on the web, is driven by consumer-facing companies. B2C companies make up 53% of companies using the Web Widget.

The same is true for Zendesk's Mobile SDK, which allows companies to put support into their customer-facing mobile apps. Companies in the Entertainment and Gaming, Travel, Marketing, and Financial Services industries are leading the way when it comes to embedding support in their mobile apps. Two of the top four—Travel and Financial Services—were ranked as the industries with the best customer experience by customers.

03 Customers want proactive engagement, but companies aren't there yet

When you identify ways to enhance the customer experience, without the customer asking for it or even knowing that it's possible, that's proactive engagement.

It can take many forms:

- Sending a chat to a customer with an update about their recent order
- Texting a customer about a new deal
- Reaching out before a customer has an issue with your product

Your customers expect you to give them the information they want, whether it's related to the status of their order or a discount. They won't always get in touch when they have a problem. Not with you, anyway. This is where proactive engagement comes in.

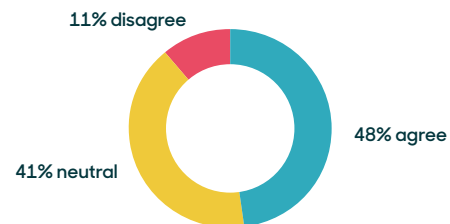
The 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer found that only 48% of the U.S. general population trusts businesses, falling from 58% last year, part of a decade-long downward trend. It's crucial for companies to master proactivity over reactivity: sending helpful messages to customers. Never spam.

But not all customers appreciate the same communication. Our data shows a clear split in terms of how accepting people are of different types of proactive outreach. What's more, agents report that most proactive engagement still happens manually.

On one hand, customers welcome messages with a clear transactional benefit, including discounts, issues with an order, and delivery updates. However, they are more wary of true proactive customer support designed to anticipate their questions or reduce a support team's workload, indicating that the bar is higher for this kind of messaging.

The door is (mostly) open to proactive engagement

I have more favorable view of companies with proactive support.



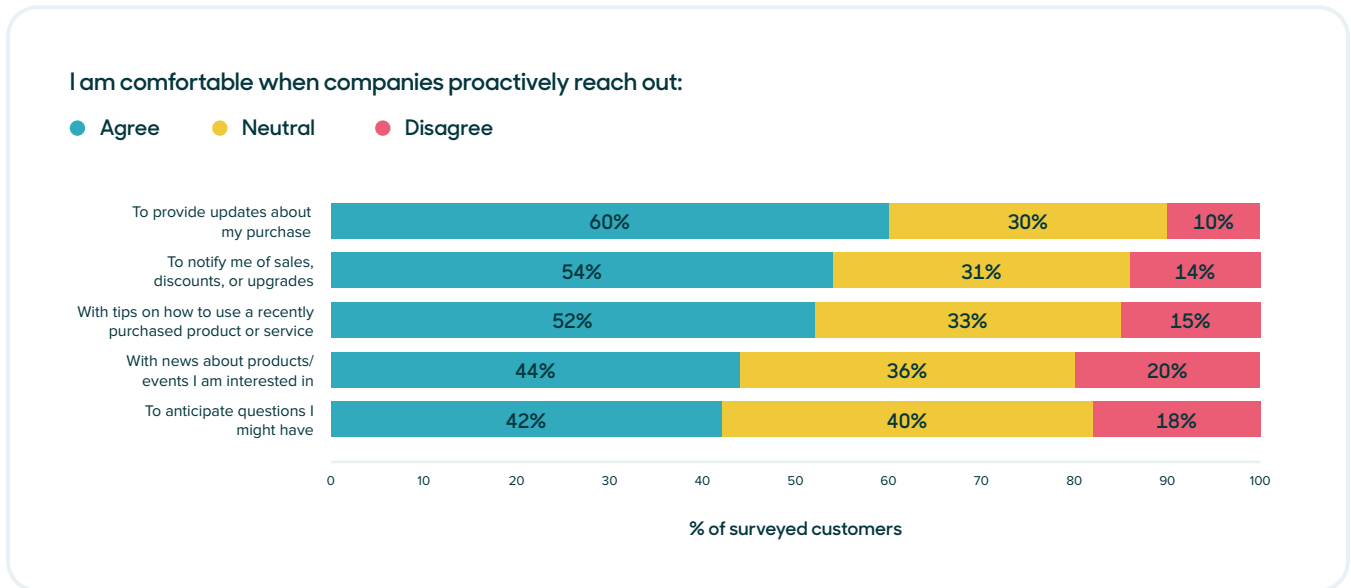
Nearly 90% of customers say they either look more favorably on companies that reach out proactively or are neutral about it.

This is supported by industry research. A study by inContact found that customers were generally positive about proactive engagement, with 87% saying they are happy to be contacted proactively by companies regarding customer service issues.

Nearly 80% of customers agree or are neutral about hearing from companies about their orders, company news, sales, answers to questions, and product usage tips.

It's no surprise that customers want to know what your company can do for them. They're most interested in order updates and bargains.

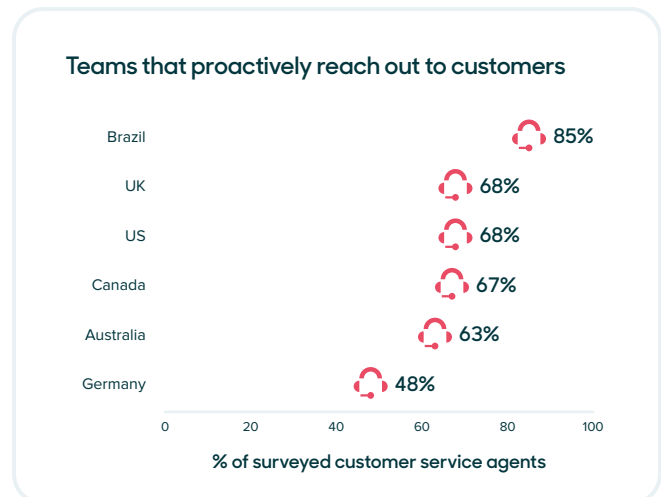
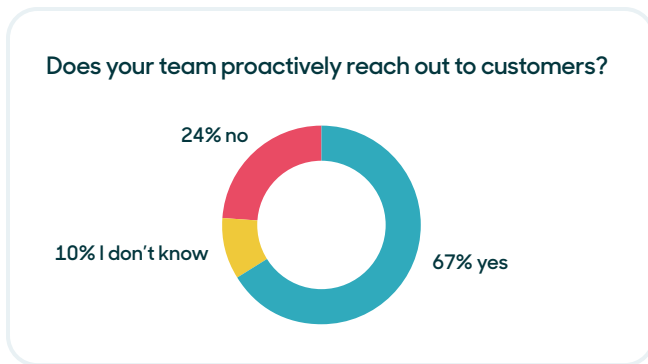
They are less enthusiastic about companies anticipating their questions, possibly due to bad experiences where they've been contacted in a way that was creepy, irrelevant, or misaligned with the problem they faced.



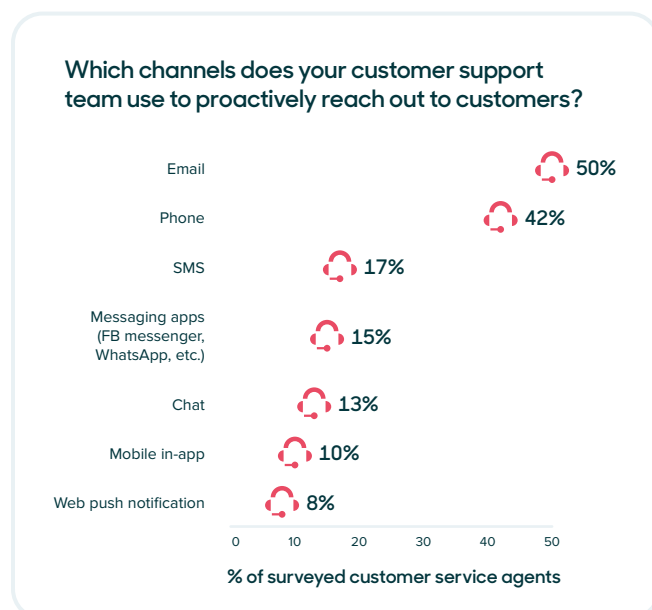
Less DIY, more automation

The good news: More than two-thirds of agents said they proactively reach out to customers, implying that most companies already understand the importance of engaging proactively to get customers the information they need.

Brazil leads the way in providing proactive engagement, with 85% of Brazilian agents saying they are doing it. Brazilian support teams are most likely to engage proactively, and half of Brazilian respondents say they use messaging apps to contact customers.



Agents report they're most likely to engage proactively with customers over email and phone. This is consistent across support team sizes, structures, industries, and target audiences.



While these channels work well for one-to-one interactions to resolve individual customer issues, it's unlikely they're being used in a systematic way to preempt customer problems. And connecting proactively with customers via one-off interactions poses a new challenge for support teams, as busy agents face the burden of having to support customers in a new way.

In particular, the low adoption of channels that can be easily used programmatically—including push notifications, in-app messages, and chat—represents an opportunity for support teams.

Lower costs and free up your agents

Support teams are mainly engaging proactively as part of sales and marketing efforts. They're doing this by offering deals or discounts to current customers and helping prospective customers learn more about products through newsletters and promotions.

But proactive engagement designed to help with customer support—like communication to reduce customer effort, prevent customers from having issues with a product, or help reduce

tickets—is still an emerging practice. Only 13% of customer support teams that engage proactively are doing so to anticipate customer issues or reduce tickets.



Given customers' comparative wariness toward being contacted to anticipate questions, companies face a higher standard for this kind of communication. That means this outreach needs to be based on robust data on customers' preferences and behaviors.

One example of where this works well: An agent could reach out to address players' frustration when a popular video game crashes. In fact, Entertainment and Gaming, alongside Social Media and Software, are the industries where companies are most likely to reach out proactively, according to agents. This makes sense—these industries are likely to be more data-savvy.

Companies in the Media and Telecommunications, Marketing and Advertising, and Government and Nonprofit industries are least likely to engage proactively. Companies in two out of three of these industries—Media and Telecommunications and Government and Nonprofit—were cited by customers as providing the worst support. Not offering proactive support could be symptomatic of a lack of customer focus or a lack of data on the part of companies in these industries.

So what should companies do when it comes to proactive engagement? We recommend adopting a programmatic solution that automates proactive engagement, preventing costly manual outreach and freeing agents to handle more complicated requests.

04 For the best support teams, AI is already driving great customer experiences

- AI is widely expected to have a big impact on customer support.
- Gartner estimates that by 2020 a quarter of customer service interactions will involve some form of AI technology.
- AI can help agents with automated actions, predictive analytics, chatbots, and virtual assistants. It can tackle repeat requests, freeing up human agents to handle more complicated inquiries.

Customer service may be thought of as the most relevant practical application of AI for businesses, but it's still a ways off from being fully harnessed by support teams.

The majority of customers say they prefer a human agent. In most countries where we surveyed consumers, no more than a third say they've interacted with a support bot, and among those who have, around 80% say they later interacted with a human agent.

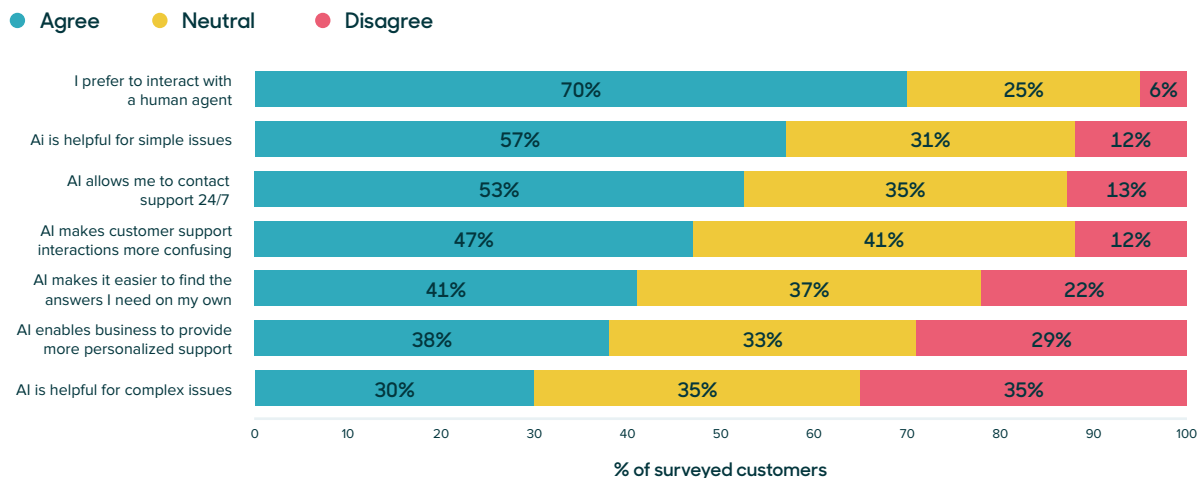
Most agents say their support teams aren't yet using AI to handle customer requests.

These responses likely indicate a disconnect between awareness of AI and the extent to which it has become ever-present in our daily lives. Support teams that have adopted bots and other AI features are already benefiting: High-performing support teams using Zendesk are twice as likely to leverage AI.

Customers see AI as an emerging technology

Consumers aren't sold on the benefits of AI. Nearly three-quarters of customers say they prefer to interact with a human agent. Still, about half tend to agree on some core benefits of AI: It's helpful for simple issues and for allowing support teams to provide around-the-clock service.

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements related to AI and its impact on customer support.



Younger generations, Gen Z and millennials, are generally more optimistic about the benefits of AI in customer service. Half or more of these younger customers agree that AI will create more personalized support.

These same respondents, however, are also more likely to agree that AI makes support more confusing—possibly indicating a higher level of awareness both of bots in customer service and the fact that companies often lack a strategic approach when using them.

More skeptical, baby boomers are less likely to view AI as something that is helpful for simple or complex issues, capable of making support available 24/7, makes it easier to find answers, or makes support more personalized. They generally prefer human agents.

Across countries, nearly two-thirds of customers either don't think they've interacted with a customer support bot in the past six months or don't know, indicating low consumer awareness of AI in customer service. Brazilian customers are the exception, with nearly 60% responding that they have engaged with a support bot recently.

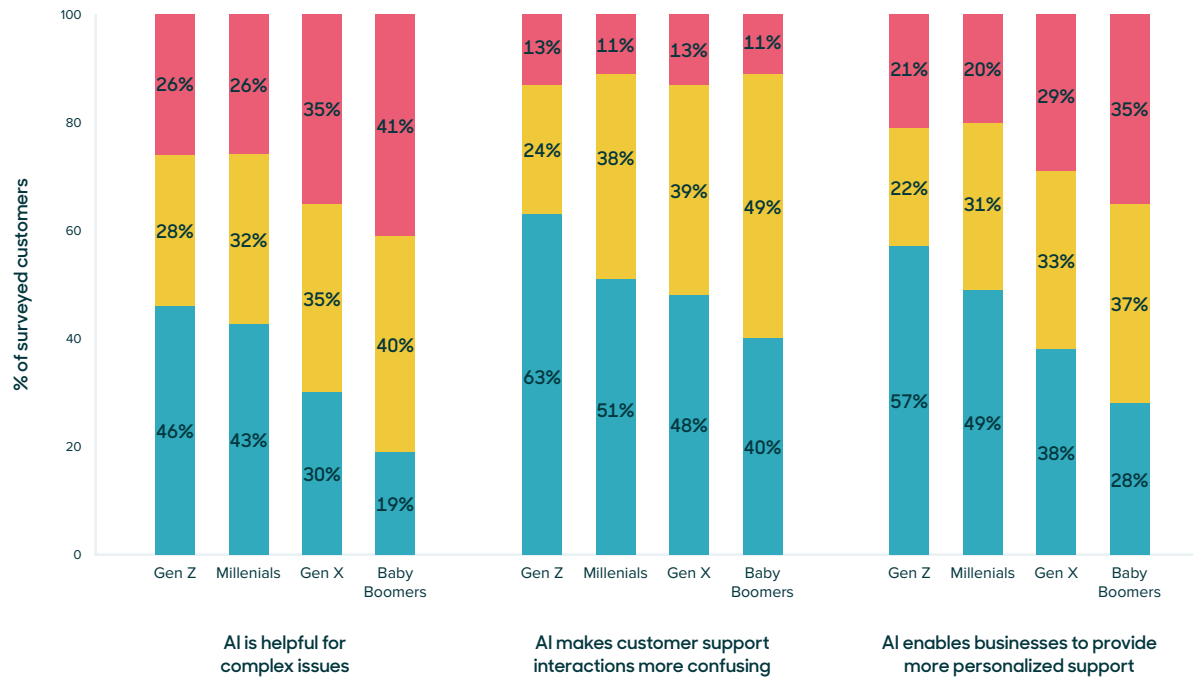
60%

of Brazilian customers have recently interacted with a bot

The idea that AI has replaced humans continues to be a myth. More than 80% of customers who said they'd interacted with a support bot said they interacted with a human afterward.

Please select your level of agreement with the following statements related to AI and its impact on customer support.

● Agree ● Neutral ● Disagree



Larger teams are AI laggards

With the exception of Brazil, no more than a quarter of teams are using AI, according to agents.

Full-time and all-outsourced teams are most likely to use AI, with nearly a third of both categories leveraging AI tools or features. This is surely connected to the fact that these teams face the most pressure to optimize operations and cut costs by leaning on bots to handle repetitive requests.

Small to midsize support teams are also more likely to be using AI, and between a quarter and a third use bots. Those teams are able to be more nimble in adopting new technology, which is more difficult to do at the enterprise level.

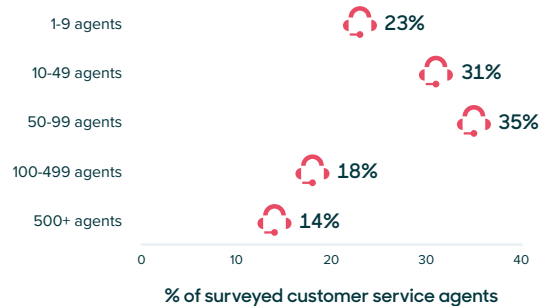
85%

of large support teams aren't using AI

Survey findings indicate that larger support teams face the biggest opportunity to start leveraging AI, since almost 85% of larger teams aren't using it. This matches data from companies using Zendesk, which shows that only 5.3% of enterprise support teams are using AI, compared to 7.6% of midsize teams and 5% of small businesses.

Unsurprisingly, companies founded after 1998 are much more likely to use bots. 38% of those companies are using AI, compared to 16% of companies founded before 1998, according to agent survey results.

In your day-to-day work, are you using any AI tools or features to provide customer support?



Companies started in the past 20 years are more than twice as likely to use AI

38%

of companies founded after 1998 use AI

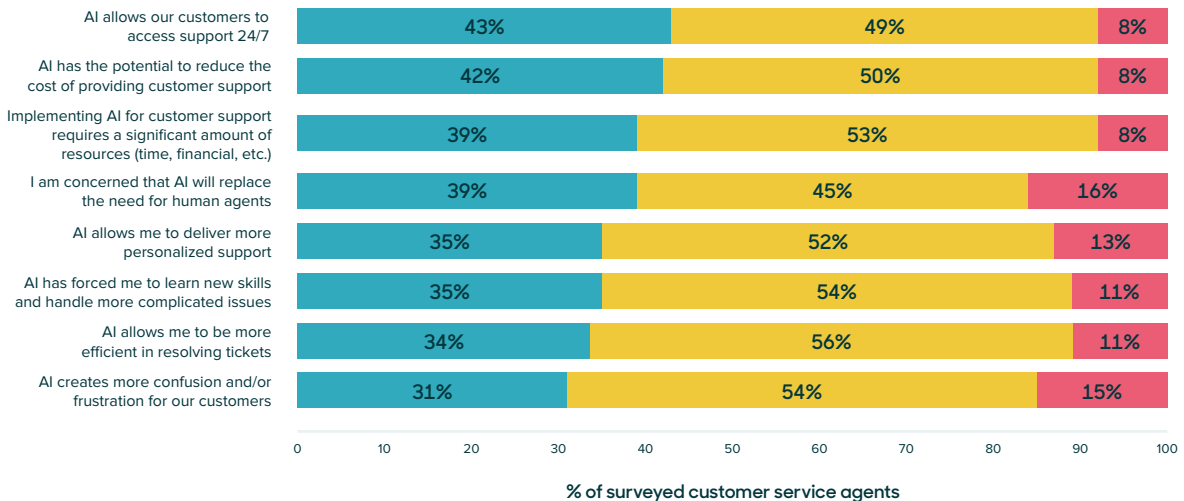
16%

of companies founded before 1998 use AI

Agents have some awareness of AI's key benefits. When asked about its impact, agents think mostly that AI will allow them to implement 24/7 service and that it has the potential to reduce costs. But they're also aware of drawbacks: About 40% also agree that it takes significant time and resources to implement and that AI might replace human agents.

Please rate your level of agreement to the following statements as it relates to AI's impact on your day-to-day.

● Agree ● Neutral ● Disagree



AI is shaping our lives

Support-team use and awareness among consumers may both still be limited, but AI is already helping companies meet consumer needs more efficiently. Getting a ride, shopping online, and dating are all being shaped by AI.

Data-savvy industries are more likely to use AI. When it comes to companies using Zendesk, more than 10% of eligible companies in the Entertainment and Gaming, Web Applications, Web Hosting, and Social Media industries are taking advantage of AI.

Industries most likely to use AI

1. Entertainment and Gaming (11.4%)
2. Web Applications (11.1%)
3. Web Hosting (10.8%)
4. Social Media (10.4%)

Industries least likely to use AI

1. Energy (1%)
2. IT and Consulting (2.5%)
3. Professional and Business Support Services (3.5%)
4. Government and Nonprofit (3.7%)

On Zendesk, more than one million tickets have already been solved using AI tools and features that lean on self-service to cut down on organizational costs, give customers accurate, always-on responses, and free up agents to handle more complicated requests.

Tickets handled by Zendesk's Answer Bot, which uses machine learning to help answer questions, are typically resolved within two minutes.

The AI opportunity*

20%

of agents' time is spent looking up information on customer issues

68%

of agents feel more satisfied when helping customers with complex issues

**From a 2018 TechValidate survey of companies using Zendesk*

AI is here

1.1M

Answer Bot resolutions

225k

agent hours saved

2,800

years given back to customers

AI use also corresponds to a higher-performing support team. High performers are twice as likely to lean on AI features, with 8.7% of high performers using Zendesk's AI features compared to 4.8% of other companies.

And with AI, support teams can make machines and humans work together, a win-win for agents and customers. Support teams using Zendesk's AI features see a clear overall efficiency boost—they resolve tickets 21% faster and see a Self-Service Ratio that is two times higher, while handling about six times the volume of requests compared to their peers.

05 The right culture, process, and tools are critical ingredients for success

- Your support team’s culture should be supportive and grounded in helping each other out.
- Investing in workflow and collaboration across teams is essential.
- The best teams are focused on metrics. You need a full view of customers and agents.

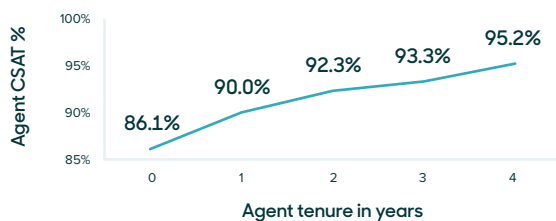
Enabling the right software for your customer support team is a must—and so is empowering the people who support your customers. This means giving managers and agents the right structure and tools.

Your agents are the face of your brand. Must-haves include a supportive work environment, tools that foster collaboration, and a metrics-driven understanding of how customers are engaging with your organization.

Agents want a supportive work environment

The pressure is on for support teams. 90% of customer support managers we surveyed predict the volume of requests their team handles will grow in the coming year. And 80% of managers predict that the size of their team will increase, making hiring and retaining the right people to meet increasing demand from customers more important than ever.

CSAT by agent tenure



Zendesk data shows that an agent’s CSAT rating is closely tied to their tenure; agents who have been around longer are rated higher by customers. Over the first four years of an agent’s tenure, each additional year of retention averages to a 2.3% boost in CSAT rating across interactions with customers.

How can teams retain agents and keep them engaged? Agents say that a supportive work environment is the most important aspect of helping them perform. Factors that affect an agent’s work environment include a team’s culture, processes that make collaboration easier, and the tools that agents use.

Which of the following do you feel are most important to do your job well?



Training and best-of-breed tools are cited as important by about a third of agents. As teams increase in size, training becomes more important to agents, implying that enterprise companies should be especially focused on ensuring agents receive proper training.

Training is also more common among larger organizations. Companies with 100+ agents are twice as likely as smaller companies to use some kind of agent training tool.

Bigger companies are twice as likely to offer training

21%

of teams with 1–99 agents use training tools

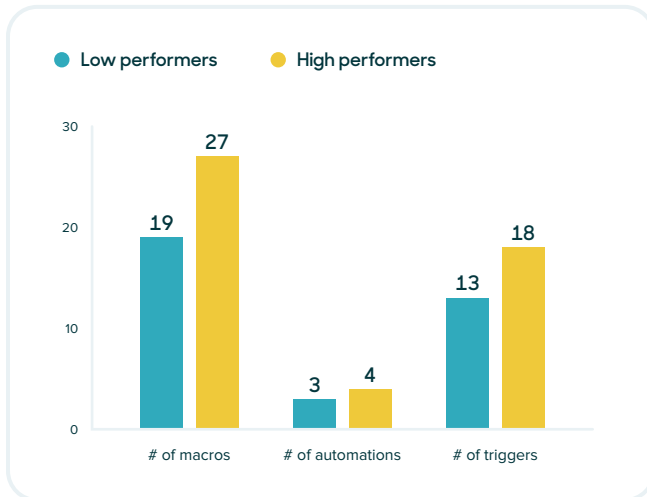
42%

of teams with 100+ agents use training tools

Build in collaboration and automation

Enabling the right workflows across teams is essential to get customer requests solved effectively. 60% of agents said they're collaborating across Customer Service, Sales, and Marketing teams to get customer requests resolved.

High performers are more likely to lean on automations and advanced features to handle requests efficiently, meaning more triggers, more automations, and more macros. Triggers remind agents of important workflow steps, and macros optimize workflows by automating responses that can be answered with a single, standard reply.

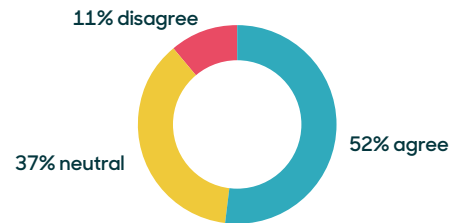


Put data to work

High-performing support teams are better at tracking key metrics to understand customers' issues and make updates to improve operations.

Only about half of agents agree they have adequate tools for measuring and reporting on the metrics that are most important to their support team, and almost 40% are neutral.

My immediate team has adequate tools for measuring and reporting success.



An even lower share of companies using Zendesk are actually relying on analytics: Only 40% of companies using Zendesk have enabled analytics to track performance.

Companies that are truly investing in analytics are reaping the benefits. High performers are more than twice as likely to be using Zendesk Explore, which provides analytics for businesses to measure and improve the entire customer experience.

When we looked at companies that are most sophisticated in their use of Explore compared to everyone else, we found that top companies are 44% faster to respond to customers and spend 60% less time keeping customers waiting, all while handling more than six times the volume of tickets.

Companies using Zendesk Explore perform better

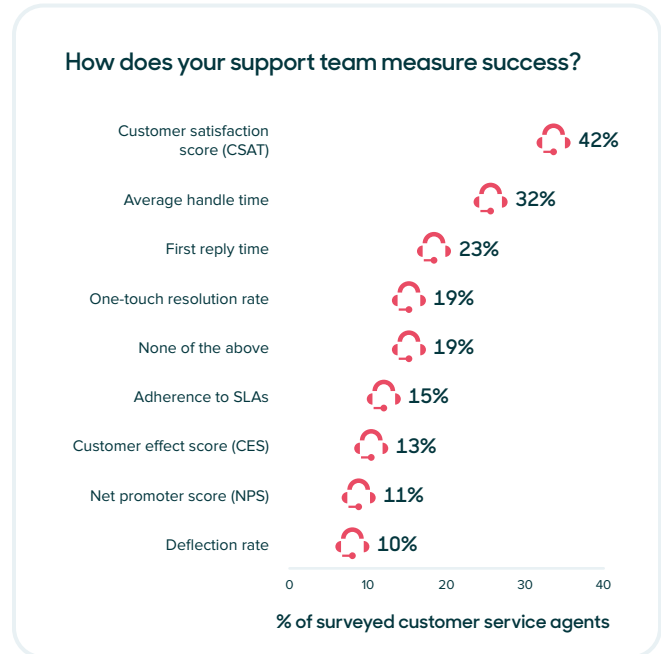
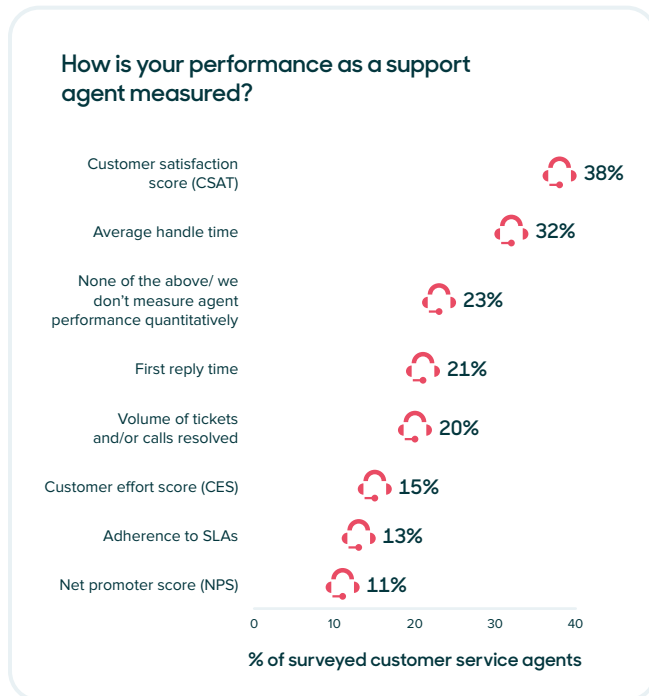


We also asked agents which metrics they are evaluated by. The top ones: CSAT, Average Handle Time, First Reply Time, and the volume of tickets and calls.

CSAT is the most used metric across company sizes, according to survey results. And it is not surprising to see Average Handle Time as the second most popular metric, since nearly 70% of surveyed companies offer phone support.

Support teams overall are evaluated on similar metrics as individual agents: CSAT, Average Handle Time, and First Reply Time. A surprise: Only 10% of teams track success through deflection rates, though self-service is becoming an integral part of customer support, especially in larger organizations. Our findings also show that Customer Effort Score (CES), which asks customers to report on the ease of their experience, is still an emerging metric.

More surprising: About 20% of support teams and agents either don't report on the most common metrics or aren't measuring success quantitatively at all. This represents a huge opportunity for these teams to understand their performance and how they can improve.



About this report

This report combines data from the Zendesk Benchmark, our index of product usage data from 45,000 companies using Zendesk, with the results of surveys and focus groups gauging the attitudes of customer service managers, customer service agents, and customers from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Performance methodology

Among companies using Zendesk that have opted into the Zendesk Benchmark, high and low performers were defined based on performance across the following key metrics:

- **Customer satisfaction (CSAT):** Helps teams understand how customers have rated support.
- **First Reply Time:** The time it takes to reply to a customer.
- **Resolution Time:** The time it takes for a request to be resolved.
- **Self-Service Ratio:** Compares self-service content views to a team's total ticket volume.

A company was identified as a high performer if its performance fell above the median value for at least three out of four key metrics. All other accounts are low performers, resulting in a split of roughly 25% high performers and 75% low performers.

Regression analysis

We used elastic net regression to isolate the effects of individual products or features and firmographics on First Reply Time and CSAT for customer support teams. The resulting weights for each variable were used to determine the effect of product usage or firmographic profile on team performance.

Survey methodology

Survey results from customers were weighted on a country-level basis to adjust for differences between the survey samples and the distribution of the country's general population across age, employment, and gender.

Follow the data

[Learn more](#) about the top trends in customer support and understand how your team stacks up.