



### THE CHATTER ON CHAT

Chat adoption rates rose from **38%** in 2009 to **58%** in 2014 (8.8% CAGR).

Chat volumes are projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of **24%** from 2014 to 2018.

**53%** of customers would prefer to use online chat before calling a company for support.

Chat has become the leading contact source within the online environment, with **42%** of customers using chat versus email (**23%**) or other social media forum (**16%**).

**62%** of customers expect live chat to be available on mobile devices; if available, **82%** would use it.

### THE BENEFITS OF CHAT

**34%** greater annual improvement in customer satisfaction rate.

**2.4x** greater annual increase in cross-sell and up-sell revenue.

**20%** greater annual improvement in customer contact abandonment rate.

**9.3x** greater annual improvement in agent utilization rate.

**2.6x** greater annual improvement in customer care costs.

Sources: Forrester, Contact Babel, Harris Research, J.D. Power, Moxie Software, Aberdeen Group

# PART II: BEST PRACTICES IN CHAT CUSTOMER CARE

So, what’s the secret to delivering exceptional live chat support? [Signs.com is leading the way](#), and their stellar work earned them the recognition of the ICMI Global Contact Center Awards for Best Chat Support in 2017.

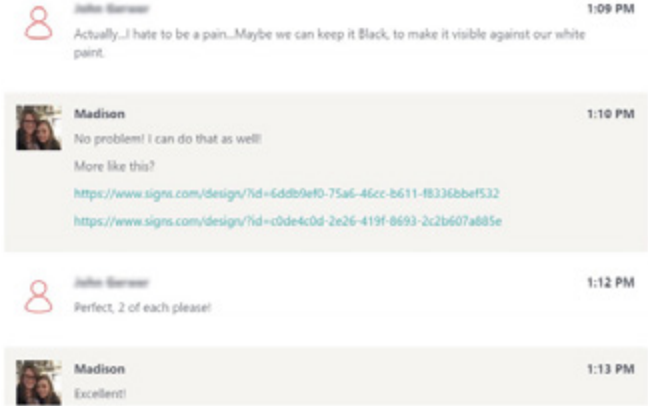
How do they do it? There are many keys to their success, but three best practices stand out above the rest: customer-centric design, collaborating with departments outside the contact center, and using metrics to support ongoing improvement.

### Customer-Centric Chat: Giving Customers Peace of Mind

To make any new channel implementation successful, you have to start with a clear goal and purpose in mind. For Signs.com, that mission was simple: make the purchase process less stressful for customers.

**“** Because we offer a custom product, no matter how informative our site is, our customers still have questions that are unique to their custom graphics. For peace of mind, customers like to quickly speak to a professional with questions or concerns before they make the purchase. We found that chat is the best channel to accomplish this. Because we can answer questions quickly and thoroughly, it is the greatest method of communication for helping a client navigate our site. ”

–Madison Page, Manager



Case in point, Signs.com now offers custom proofs via live chat. That way, customers know what they’re ordering and how it will look when they receive it. “We can answer questions about the material, usage of our products, and installation, all online! Our clients don’t have to go searching for answers,” says Page. “We have knowledgeable, friendly staff available to help them however they need!”



## Collaboration for the Win

According to Page, the entire Signs.com team thrives on and believes in collaboration. This collaborative spirit allows their contact center to drive success and process improvements that benefit the entire team. The free design services Signs.com offers, for example, sometimes lead to customer questions. While the customer experience team is trained to understand the ins and outs of the process, as well as the day-to-day role of the design team, customers sometimes have specific design questions that a support team member can't address. That's why open communication is a priority at Signs.com. The design team and customer experience team work together to make sure that clients are taken care of promptly. If a customer experience representative receives a design related question, they can chat with the designer in real-time using an internal chat system to check up on the design. The result? The customer gets an immediate response instead of a transfer to another department. And according to Page, customers love it!

"Our clients tell us time and time again that having a team that works so closely together is incredibly beneficial. We think so, too! We strive to make sure our entire team has great communication! Further, our customer experience representatives even communicate with the development team to troubleshoot website issues on the spot!"

It's a smart approach. After all, the frontline support team often gets a firsthand look at any product or website "bugs." Empowering the support team to report those issues immediately allows for quicker resolution. That's exactly how the Signs.com team sees it, says Page. "This type of department-to-

department communication is virtually unheard of in large contact centers. Dealing with a contact center often means getting switched from one department to another to solve a problem. This type of nonsense doesn't happen at Signs.com. We believe that interdepartmental communication, although non-traditional, is the best way to serve clients most effectively."

## Relentless Improvement

While this team has accomplished a lot over the past few years, they're still relentless in their pursuit to improve. In November 2015, Signs.com hired a Customer Experience Officer to oversee their customer experience team. Before this hire, their COO oversaw the day-to-day operations of the customer experience department but hiring a dedicated CXO set them up for greater, more focused success.

The CXO made time for learning a priority and began training representatives to answer customer questions quickly and correctly, making it easier for them to help more clients. With a wider range of training and better-developed tools and processes at their disposal, customer experience representatives are now able to finish chats faster and get to new chats in a record time of 7 seconds, which is **7 times faster** than the industry average of one minute. Perhaps even more impressive, those stats are translating to revenue for the business. Since implementing live chat, website pages viewed per session have increased by 263%, the sales conversion rate rose by 679%, and the average order value has increased by 14%.

Would you like to replicate this level of success? Page shares this advice and encouragement:



*Our accomplishments didn't happen overnight. It took a lot of trial and error to perfect a queue system that worked well for our clients. And we're still learning! Every day, every chat, we learn and grow. That's what makes our chat system so different from our competitors. We're willing to listen to our client's suggestions, get employee feedback, and always continue improving."*

## Final Advice

As you deploy chat, be careful not to do it in a silo. Agents need access to all context from the chat so that they can apply that knowledge to conversations in other channels. With a complete view of the customer's journey, agents can respond more personally and reduce effort. For example, if a customer later calls in after chatting, the agent should be able to answer, "Hi, Sally. I noticed you were last chatting with us about the new iPhone. Would you like to be routed to a specialist who can help you with that?"

Whether you build it or buy it, a customer service platform that allows a single conversation across all channels will enable this sort of seamless, integrated experience. Cloud versions are easy to deploy and enable the flexibility to add new channels at any time.

# Chat Self-Check

<b>WHO</b>	Who are the stakeholders?	
	Who is accountable for your chat program's success?	
	Who are your chat customers/members?	
	Who determines what you can and can't say on chat (compliance, legal)?	
	Who is your target audience on chat (demographics, industries, etc.)?	

<b>WHAT</b>	What chat tool will you use?	
	What do you want your brand's chat voice to sound like?	
	What metrics are you going to use to gauge your chat program's progress/success?	

<b>WHEN</b>	When will you be available (hours, days)?	
	When should your customers expect a response (service level)?	
	When is it okay not to respond?	
	When will you escalate issues, and to whom?	
	When do you want to implement your chat strategy?	

<b>HOW</b>	How are you going to staff? How many people do you want chatting at any given time?	
	Are your chat interactions integrated with other channels?	
	Will you have a dedicated chat team, or will chat-tasked agents have other responsibilities?	
	If you need to hire, internally or externally, what skills will you hire/hope/train for?	HIRE  HOPE  TRAIN

# ABOUT US



ICMI is the leading global provider of comprehensive resources for customer management professionals—from frontline agents to executives—who wish to improve customer experiences and increase efficiencies at every level of the contact center. Since 1985, ICMI has helped more than 50,000 organizations in 167 countries through training, events, consulting, and informational resources. ICMI's experienced and dedicated team of industry insiders, trainers, and consultants are committed to helping you raise the strategic value of your contact center, optimize your operations, and improve your customer service.

ICMI is organized by UBM, which in June 2018 combined with Informa PLC to become a leading B2B services group and the largest B2B events organizer in the world. To learn more and for the latest news and information, visit [www.ubm.com](http://www.ubm.com) and [www.informa.com](http://www.informa.com).



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The company was founded by a team of industry veterans who pioneered the leading on-premises solutions and today are delivering an architecture for the future with an advanced cloud-first approach. Bright Pattern's cloud contact center solution is used globally in over 26 countries and 12 languages.