

Getting chat commerce right from the start is critical

By [Joe de Wet](#)

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Companies are quickly catching on to the importance of chat commerce in their channel strategies, but far too many are not paying attention to user experience (UX). A poor user experience will not only frustrate customers but can stop them from ever engaging with a business in the channel again.



Source: www.pexels.com

We've lived through the dotcom revolution and experienced the mobile and social media revolutions. Now, we are in the chat era, and companies need to acknowledge that chat may have more impact than any of the previous tech revolutions because it's a combination of each one.

Helping customers achieve what they need through self-service options is a dream come true for organisations looking to drive efficiencies, but to provide chat self-service effectively, businesses must spend time designing an exceptional user experience.

Simple mistakes that could cost a lot

When it comes to chat, people want instant gratification. Users are more forgiving when things don't go right online. However, with chat, users are used to instant responses, just as if we were having a conversation with a friend. The goal with chat is to give users what they need as quickly as possible with as little disruption as possible.

One of the big failures when it comes to chat implementations is many companies simply throw another channel into their omnichannel bouquet without thinking of how it adds to the overall customer experience. Another problem is while each channel needs its own consideration, companies are often guilty of creating siloed channels.

These missteps don't enable one view of a customer and can create multiple profiles for a single user within an organisation. This defeats the purpose of omnichannel and can critically damage the customer experience.

Companies can conflate social media with chat. Chat is an engagement channel rather than a reactive social media platform.



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Another major mistake when deploying chat is the obsession with automating too many services. What's more, some organisations cling to the belief that a bot will solve all their problems.

When it comes to high frequency, low complex issues, customers will tolerate dealing with a machine or bot. But when it comes to resolving complex issues, your chat solution must be able to support human involvement or a hand-off to a customer service agent.

Six steps to getting chat right

Here are a few best-practice tips that I believe will help companies get off to the right start.

1. A company needs to know where their users are. This means understanding which messaging or chat app they prefer to use such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Apple Business Chat, or other chat apps. Not all customers are on the same chat channels.
2. Businesses need to identify what they want clients to do via a chat channel. Like do they only want clients to authenticate in the chat channel, or do they want to provide Chat Commerce offerings? Understanding what customers want is key, and businesses need to determine what they hope to achieve through the channel.
3. Businesses must understand their technical constraints and backend integration capabilities before they begin the process of integrating a chat ecosystem.
4. Businesses need to ensure they have thought through an aligned, proven conversation user experience. One of the first principles of creating a great chat experience is to break down the user journey into bitesize steps with the aim of gently guiding users.
5. Always ensure a customer outcome. If customers get stuck, they must have the option to be passed on to a human agent who can meet them in the chat channel.

6. Don't settle for a 'dumb' bot. There are excellent technologies out there like Natural Language Understanding (NLU) and AI that can be used to build a digital assistant rather than a bot.



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Having a clear understanding and business objectives for integrating a chat channel may sound simple, but few companies have gone through the process or know all their options. For this reason, Clickatell has developed a complete end-to-end chat commerce platform that provides its clients with solutions to meet their various business needs and their customers' needs.

Chat has quickly become the universally preferred method of communication, and brands are rushing to include it in their channel offering. Pausing to better understand your objectives and then putting the effort into developing an excellent conversational user experience is what stands between success and potentially losing a customer for good.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joe de Wet is product director at Clickatell

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