How Conversational Business Can Help You Get – and Stay – Closer to Your Customers

It can be a struggle to grow your business at scale while keeping customer experiences both authentic and actionable. Add to that the complexity of identifying where, when, and how people want to be contacted by businesses across digital channels, and it's easy to see why so many enterprise companies fail to develop a strategy for messaging channels.

But overlooking the power of messaging is a costly error, especially as conversations increasingly become a vehicle for building long-lasting customer relationships in the digital world. Never was this more evident than during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic when digital apps and messaging allowed people to connect with businesses while staying safe.

So, how do businesses seize the opportunities for relationship-building that messaging can help drive?

By embracing a conversational approach to business and, by extension, delivering high quality customer experiences at scale.

But wait, what exactly is "conversational business"?

Conversational business is the use of messaging apps to deliver personalized experiences at scale through the use of chatbots as well as one-to-one human conversations. It's a growing trend that is poised to become the new medium for interactive conversations, including where and how businesses engage with their customers.

Where has this trend emerged from?

This shift to a more conversational model has emerged alongside several other trends like the use of AI technology and the broad adoption of predictive analysis. But at its core, conversational business is about connecting with customers where they want to connect, and that's increasingly through messaging apps.

In fact, the most popular messaging apps in 2021 represent 2.87 billion+ users worldwide.[1] Pair this with the growing trend towards personalization in almost all aspects of our lives – from shopping to banking to healthcare and beyond – and the argument for embracing a conversational approach to business becomes increasingly clear: Messaging gives businesses the power to form stronger bonds with customers and learn their preferences in order to deliver and use non-intrusive, meaningful interactions that can be both revenue-driving and cost-effective.

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[1] Statista, 2021:
Number of mobile phone messaging apps users worldwide from 2018 to 2022

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How to Create High Quality,
End-to-End Customer Journeys with Messaging

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital adoption by sending shock waves through the world of work and online consumer behavior.

During quarantine, use of messaging spiked across the globe. As users quickly acclimated to digital exchanges that were safer, big brands took notice. That's why companies like Coca-Cola, Walmart, Hilton Hotels, Sephora and IKEA have already embraced this conversational approach to doing business.[2]

And what's driving some of the world's most recognizable brands to adopt this messaging approach?

It's simple:

People's inboxes are overflowing with offers and batch-and-blast email campaigns have become an unfortunate norm. Messaging technology, on the other hand, continues to improve thanks to greater personalization, more human-sounding chat bots, and AI getting better at unstructured exchanges.

> This allows enterprises the opportunity to quickly move beyond old ways of doing business to get and stay close to consumers at every step in the customer journey. Today, conversational business solutions allow companies to send the right message, at the right time, and on the right channel to customers, while effectively serving as the glue that connects pre-sale experiences to personalized updates to customer support and beyond.

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[2] The Economist, 2021:
"Will conversational commerce be the next big thing in online shopping?"

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Messaging can drive results at every stage of the customer journey

1

Pre-sale

- Share product information
- Boost consumer engagement
- Offer personalized promotions

2

Purchase

- Facilitate convenient mobile orders
- Personalize product recommendations
- Send reorder reminders

3

Customer support

- Instantly answer customer questions
- Resolve customer issues
- Securely handle personal data

Fast-tracking digital transformation and economic recovery now means forward-thinking brands are adjusting their strategies towards more personalized, end-to-end customer journeys with messaging.

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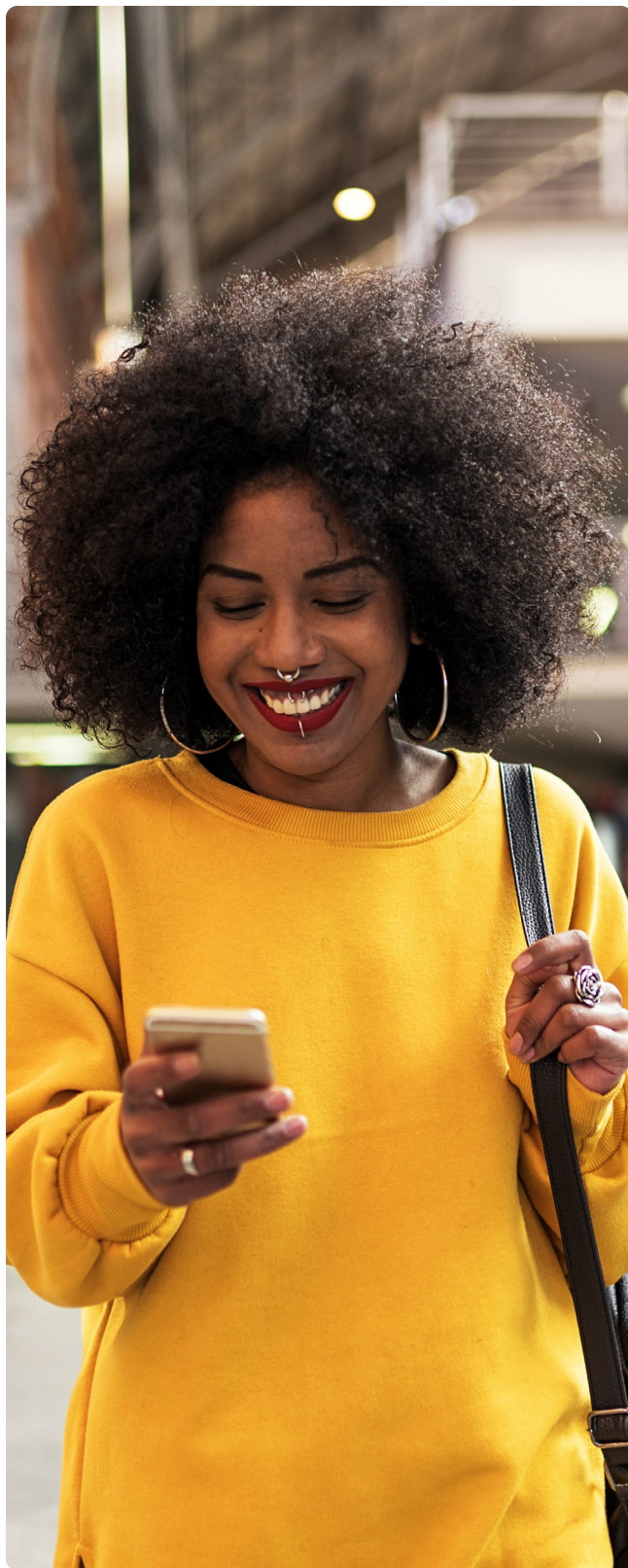
Minding The Gap

Messaging is increasingly bridging the communications gap between brands and their customers. For example:

• 70% of customer interactions by 2022 will involve emerging technologies such as machine learning, chatbots, and mobile messaging.[3]

• Based on 2020 data, 68% of international adults surveyed said "I prefer to message (e.g. chat app, text) with a business when I need to contact them now more than I did prior to the pandemic.[4]

• Based on 2020 data, Nearly 7 in 10 (68%) of international adults said "I am more likely to do business with/purchase from a company that I can contact via messaging (e.g. via chat app, text) than one that I cannot."[5]

Offering Authentic Experiences and Faster ROI

Messaging is ideally suited for supporting end-to-end customer experiences – and moves at the speed of the modern consumer, while providing a secure experience, no matter where they are in the world. For example, the best business messaging solution doesn't require a stable internet connection yet end-to-end encryption always protects users' sensitive data.

Messaging can also share rich media such as pictures, videos, PDFs, audio files, and more, which resonates with today's modern consumers and makes it easier for sales teams to answer product queries and provide customer support in real-time.

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[3] Smarter with Gartner, 2020: "Top CX Trends for CIOs to Watch"

[4] Business Messaging Research Study (Facebook Commissioned study of 8,214 adults ages 18 and older in U.S., Germany, the UK, India, Mexico, Brazil and Indonesia), September 2020

[5] Ibid

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Practical Implementation

Enterprises that are considering using a conversational business strategy should take practical steps to better understand the technology and the use cases that could apply to their business. Here are some specific use cases that apply across industries:

Deliver Live Customer Updates & Alerts
Through 2-way conversations, companies can instantly update customers and customers can follow up for clarification. This can be used for tracking a shipment, back-in-stock alerts, and high quality offers.

Make Purchases
Customers can request product information, then purchase or reorder items quickly via messaging.

Enhance Customer Experiences
Through AI-powered chatbots, businesses can recommend items to shoppers based on previous purchasing history.

Quickly Resolve Issues
Issues related to payments, account balance, loyalty points, or products can be resolved without a phone call.

Gathering Customer Requirements
Chatbots can be set up to gather customer requirements using automation and propose choices based on customer's answers.

Sending Reminders
Customers can receive reminders via messaging about products, payments, and more.

Sharing Important Documents
Companies can send important documents securely through messaging for transactions or product support.

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Taking a more conversational approach to business allows brands to meet consumers where they're at and create engaging, personalized experiences. At the same time, it also helps realize cost efficiencies within the organization – offering a win-win scenario for both you and your customers.

It all starts with understanding where you'll have the greatest conversational impact with your customers, then building complete experiences that will help craft an end-to-end conversation.

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