

Channelling customer expectations through WhatsApp

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BY: MATT GROBLER

Markets are noisy and busy. Companies are clamouring for customer attention and their share of wallet and engagement. It has become increasingly important for organisations to make connections with their customers, to create personal environments from which they can interact with brands and build relationships. The challenge is finding the right channels and ensuring that those channels are validated, secure and relevant.

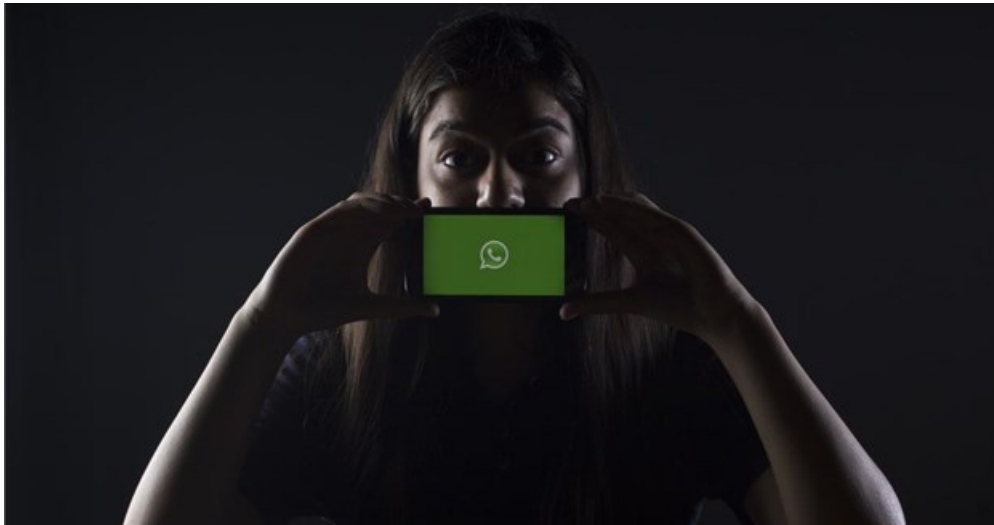


Image credit: Rachit Tank on [Unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com).

WhatsApp provides the ability to infuse brand personality into B2C communication, enabling businesses to engage with their customers on a more personal level. This channel has more potential than email or SMS to increase trust and brand loyalty because it's accessible, popular and relevant to the South African consumer.

WhatsApp has become the most popular mobile messenger app in the world with more than two billion monthly active users in more than 180 countries. South Africans make up around 38 million of those two billion users which makes the platform one of the most accessible and ubiquitous in the country. According to Digital 2020: South Africa, a report developed by HootSuite, 62% of the South African population is on the internet, 94% of those are engaged on social media, and most of them use WhatsApp.



Using tech for social needs in lockdown

If you compare these numbers to email, it rapidly shows how relevant WhatsApp has become a method of communication for the business. Many people in South Africa don't have access to or are not active on, email, which makes WhatsApp a far more accessible and relevant choice.

What do customers want?

The 2019 South African Digital Customer Experience Report analysed South African consumer behaviour to find out what people want when it comes to service, experiences and brands. The upshot was that they wanted seamless self-service channels, better information, and someone to help them when they got stuck. Customers want on-demand support that's relevant to their needs and don't expect them to wait for hours, listen to bad music or get transferred around the call centre.

Incorporating WhatsApp into the business via the contact centre is the perfect way to do this.



How SA consumer behaviour is changing in the Covid-19 world

Thanks to the metrics built into the contact centre technology, all WhatsApp messages and handling times are recorded. There is full visibility into how the company and contact centre agents are performing across all channels.

If agents are currently replying to customer queries via phones or the WhatsApp web application, these interactions are completely isolated from the rest of the contact centre. Agents, therefore, have no context into customer queries, there is no visibility into interactions, and agent performance is left unchecked. Without any form of measurement across all contact channels, this is bound to result in a bad customer experience and gives no opportunity for business growth, identifying problems or monitoring changes over time.

Available to serve

While businesses can use WhatsApp to provide instant responses to customer queries, chatbot functionality can also be added to the channel, opening up additional self-service opportunities.

There is an ever-growing number of business use cases for introducing self-service options via WhatsApp. People think about chatbots in isolation, but they can be leveraged through a channel like WhatsApp to field repetitive customer queries, such as opening times or product availability.

This provides a win-win situation for everyone – customers are able to quickly get the answers they need when they need them, while contact centres are improving their CX, reducing the cost of service, and freeing up their agents to handle more complex queries.

It is also important for any business onboarding WhatsApp to select the most relevant use case that will provide the most significant business benefit and then focus on doing that extremely well.



Remaining relevant to clients in the time of lockdown

Rather than trying to do too much via the channel and diluting the customer experience, it's vital to utilise it in a way that makes sense for the channel and ultimately makes it easier for the customer.

Relevant customer engagement

While WhatsApp can be used to send updates on applications, deliveries or other important information through notifications, it also provides an opportunity for enhanced real-time engagement and on-the-spot resolution.

WhatsApp's ubiquity means that any customer-facing organisation can leverage it to provide richer customer engagements – from sending boarding passes and sharing verification codes to accepting contract information, the channel can be used to help customers instantly and effectively.

Up until now, businesses have been able to use WhatsApp to communicate with customers, but only in an ad hoc way, and without proper measurement and reporting. Once it is being managed in the same way as other customer contact channels, you will be able to identify more ways to use WhatsApp to improve the performance of your business.

Five ways to digitally market your company during the lockdown



Ultimately WhatsApp plays a significant role in creating customer communications that are relevant, accessible and targeted. If incorporated into your entire customer communications strategy, this messenger app allows for deeper control over customer engagement, taking you one step closer to providing the type of on-demand support that customers want and need.

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