Delivering transformative Messaging experiences to your Transportation, Travel & Hospitality customers
The travel and tourism industry took a major hit as a result of pandemic restrictions, perhaps harder than any other sector. Time stood still, abandoned planes lined the tarmac, hotel rooms sat empty and cruise ships languished in port. Fortunately, the industry has since rebounded and the number of travelers has surged well beyond pre-pandemic numbers. And that’s a problem.

While travelers are on the move again, transportation, travel and hospitality brands are struggling to keep up with them. A combination of staffing shortages, rising operating costs and antiquated systems has made it difficult for transportation and travel companies to deliver superior passenger experiences. In addition, hospitality brands continue to feel the impact of the pandemic and have scaled back guest services accordingly. And all must deal with a disparate set of systems across functions that limit any one individual’s ability to have a 360-degree view of the customer and prevents them from delivering a seamless experience across all customer touchpoints.

We’re also now living in a conversational world, where digital interactions are often the foundation of your customer’s relationship with your business. And the rules of engagement have shifted as customers have much higher expectations than ever before. Our 2023 CX Trends report echoes this shift in the customer mindset:

- 71% demand natural, fluid and personalized conversational experiences
- 62% agree personalized recommendations are better than general ones
- 59% believe businesses should use the data they collect about them to personalize their experience

Fortunately, there is a solution. Leading players in the industry have now transformed their passenger and guest experiences using messaging, delivering personalized experiences across all channels to their customers no matter where they are. Whether your customer service agents are helping your customers deal with urgent travel issues or your hotel staff is assisting guests throughout the course of their stay, messaging enables you to drive more engagement and loyalty than any other channel your teams may be using today. The beauty of messaging is the way in which you can get things done within the conversation, thereby making it far more powerful, innovative and, frankly, better adapted to creating those VIP experiences that customers are craving.
With messaging, you can

- Provide support wherever your customers are – before, during and after a trip – and stay connected across web, mobile and social apps
- Give customers personalized 24/7 help with custom bots that make life easier for both your customers and your agents
- Engage in personalized conversations that are real-time (live, session-based, synchronous) or ongoing (persistent, asynchronous), or a little of both, so it’s convenient for your customers
- Deliver tailored answers to meet the needs of your customers and to ensure that the right people are working on their behalf behind the scenes
- Give customer service agents the context they need to respond to customers across any channel so that the conversation is ongoing and customers never have to repeat themselves
- Send proactive messages that provide timely information to customers and help them plan ahead

Zendesk enables you to build personalized conversational experiences in just a few clicks with our easy, out-of-the box Messaging solution. Or, take it one step further by also integrating our advanced messaging platform, which enables businesses to create custom and engaging messaging experiences for their customers that are in line with their brand and business needs.
Zendesk also works with many technology partners who integrate our messaging platform directly into their AI-powered automation systems. For instance, Ada’s 24/7 customer service chatbot solution leverages Zendesk’s advanced messaging platform on the backend to deliver personalized self-service experiences to travelers and guests. The chatbot draws from Zendesk’s knowledge base using large language models while also synchronizing data with backend booking or reservation systems in order to carry on intelligent conversations with customers. Please check out Ada’s virtual agents in action through these showcase videos that highlight the OTA experience and the hotel experience.

Ultimate also utilizes Zendesk’s advanced messaging platform to deliver automated CX solutions to the travel industry. Ultimate offers a no-code automation platform that supports over 100 languages and features seamless CRM integration. Their virtual agent is powered by conversational and generative AI across multiple channels. You can learn more about how leading travel companies are using Ultimate here.

Finally, you can work with our partner Alliants, who has integrated the Zendesk advanced messaging capabilities directly into their Alliants Experience Platform (AXP) to deliver customized guest experiences on your behalf. This video provides a comprehensive overview of the AXP features and capabilities that deliver VIP experiences for hospitality brands across the globe.

Let’s take a closer look at how Zendesk powers these transformative messaging-based experiences.
Serve passengers and guests across all channels

In today’s connected world, you need to be able to interact with your customers wherever they are through a wide range of devices and channels. With Zendesk messaging, you can now reach customers anywhere using pre-built connectors for all the leading messaging apps. In addition, Zendesk web and mobile SDKs enable you to embed modern messaging into your website and natively integrate messaging directly into your iOS and Android mobile apps.

Zendesk messaging also allows you to deliver a seamless experience across channels.

The solution stitches conversations together, enabling you to transfer conversations from web to mobile or any social channel, without losing context. In addition, you can route inbound messages anywhere within your organization, thereby giving your teams a shared view of the customer conversation.
Maritime transportation company Baleària has been transporting cargo and passengers for more than two decades, guided by its commitment to customers, innovation, and continuous improvement.

Baleària implemented Zendesk’s comprehensive CX solution, including chat, to respond to requests across channels. “We are taking steps to convert the traditional call center that we had, which handled calls and emails, into a more modern and agile contact center, through an omnichannel strategy,” said Alessandro Zollino, the company’s director of customer experience. “This will allow our clients to be able to choose the channel that best suits them at all times—telephone, email, chat, instant messaging through WhatsApp, social networks, etc.”

In addition, Baleària became the first Spanish shipping company to send boarding passes with WhatsApp. Baleària also uses WhatsApp to send all travel-related notifications to passengers traveling to the Balearic Islands. When customers book passage on a ship, they authorize Baleària to use WhatsApp as a channel. Those passengers receive tickets for their reservation through the app and can sign up for SMS as an alternative.
ALLIANTS DELIVERS A TRUE OMNICHANNEL MESSAGING EXPERIENCE IN LUXURY HOSPITALITY

The Alliants Experience Platform (AXP), powered by Zendesk’s advanced messaging platform, delivers the richest messaging experience in the industry, supporting 14 messaging channels with translations into over 100 languages.

This allows guests to communicate with the hotel on their channel and in their language of choice and prevents them from wasting time on the phone or going to the front desk.

Guests can just message hotel staff at their convenience and never have a need to repeat themselves with a history of all the interactions.

From a hotel perspective, conversations can be seamlessly routed to the right departments and, with intelligent escalations, the most demanding service levels can be met. The Alliants platform powers Messaging for many luxury brands including Four Seasons, Nobu, and Jumeirah.
Use conversation bots to deliver 24/7 service and drive efficiency

By deploying bot-enhanced messaging, you can offer more complex, automated conversations through your web widget or mobile messaging configurations. Conversation bots provide 24/7 support for passengers and guests with built-in automation that helps you deliver faster, more efficient and personalized service as you scale your business. Finally, the automation tools help orchestrate seamless handoffs from bots to live agents for more complex customer issues.

Bot builder is the tool that you use to define the workflow for your bot, thereby determining how your bot should behave in response to customer input. After you’ve created a conversation bot, you can begin adding answers to define its behavior.

Answers tell a conversation bot how to best respond to customer questions through the web widget or mobile SDK. Each answer addresses a single issue, or “intent,” and your bot can be trained to understand customer intent when phrased in different ways.
Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad is an excursion railway, dedicated to preserving and renovating vintage rail cars so they may be enjoyed by future generations. They serve 30,000 passengers per year and have five customer service agents who handle up to 2,000 tickets per month. Having deployed an omnichannel strategy, CVSR now interacts with customers through email, phone, social media and messaging channels.

As CVSR’s passenger numbers continued to grow, it quickly became urgent to find a way to minimize the time that agents were spending answering simpler, repetitive inquiries so that they could focus on higher-level tasks. According to Max Carmichael, Customer Service Manager at CVSR, “We are a small staff considering the volume of inquiries we get everyday, plus the CVSR Customer Service staff is responsible for ticket sales and seating.” In addition to managing agent workload, it also became increasingly important for CVSR to provide service to their passengers outside of normal business hours. Enter Zendesk.

In 2022, Cuyahoga deployed Zendesk’s messaging platform across their business. Zendesk bots now provide 24/7 support and are used to deflect common high-volume requests, thereby providing customers with the immediate answers they need. Using Zendesk web SDKs, Cuyahoga has also deployed a messaging widget on their website so that customers can get easy-to-find answers and up-to-date information about train services without having to search the website from their computer or mobile device. As such, CVSR now delivers a seamless conversational experience to their customers across all channels with orchestrated handoff to live agents, if needed.

“Our automated messaging channels have been a game-changer for us. Zendesk bots, combined with their bot builder tools, have made our team more efficient as they can now provide our customers with more timely and accurate information. It’s been a tremendous asset to our workflow,” says Carmichael.
The Alliants team relies on intelligent automation to create innovative guest experiences across the hospitality industry. In one large luxury hotel chain, bots now respond to 15% of the messages that are received through the Alliants Experience Platform (AXP). These bots are trained with the content from the hotel compendium and are capable of answering the most frequently asked questions from guests. For example, “What floor is the pool on?” or “What time is breakfast?”

Mollies, a Soho House-inspired motel brand in the UK, uses the Alliants Experience Platform to turn events within the hotel into triggers for automation. Triggered notifications include everything from when a guest room is ready for check-in to vouchers for the complimentary in-house breakfast that is included in every room rate.

Since deploying AXP, Mollie’s has seen a 30% increase in spend per customer.
Extend automated intelligence with embedded apps

Using the Zendesk advanced messaging platform, you can also deliver rich and immersive components through your messaging channels that help your conversation bots do more. For example, integrate video content, rich media carousels, schedule or purchase buttons, etc to supplement text-based messaging experiences.

For instance, the **Alliants Recommends** app allows concierges to send tailored recommendations to their guests. This takes into consideration their itinerary, their profile and their preferences to make personalized recommendations. These can be delivered over the customers channel of choice including rich-media messaging channels. Through the app, guests can also create their own personalized itineraries and share them with fellow travelers.

Through this same mechanism, you can also embed custom apps within the messaging window. For instance, passengers can grab a seat assignment through an interactive seat selector or hotel guests can book services using an interactive concierge app.
Engage and delight through proactive messaging

While most customer service organizations and guest relations staff tend to engage with customers in response to some form of inquiry, Zendesk messaging enables your teams to proactively reach out to your customers with more meaningful, contextual, timely and personalized interactions. For instance, an airline can provide proactive support for known travel issues such as flight delays. Hotels and resorts might make proactive recommendations to their guests based on the latest weather forecast. This capability enables you to drive greater customer engagement, acquisition and retention by knowing your customers and serving their needs.

This capability also allows you to create targeted, personalized, and proactive experiences that drive upsell and cross-sell opportunities. For instance, airlines can remind customers to purchase tickets and packages, upgrade their seats, meals, and entertainment, etc. Top hotel and resort brands are also using the Alliants Experience Platform to send proactive messages to sell additional services. For instance, these brands ensure that guests are offered arrival transportation in advance of their trip, and they give their customers the opportunity to book a table at the onsite restaurant to avoid disappointment when they arrive. With an understanding of the individual guests as well as their itineraries, hospitality brands are now able to tailor the customer experience that they’re delivering, thereby defining the moments that these brands want to own across the whole customer journey.
LATAM Airlines is one of the largest regional airlines in the world, serving 69M+ passengers per year across 26 countries in Latin America. With over 1300 flights per day, LATAM needed to find a way to efficiently and proactively serve their customer base without adding significant operational costs to their customer service center.

LATAM turned to Zendesk for advanced outbound messaging and automated self-service, and they are now able to:

- Proactively update customers on check-in status and flight changes
- Coordinate handoffs between bots and live agents for travel inquiries
- Share conversations between travelers and flight staff across multiple back-office systems
Extend conversations through group messaging

While one-to-one conversational messaging is sufficient for a majority of your customer engagements, Zendesk group messaging takes it to another level by allowing you to simultaneously connect passengers or guests to multiple individuals who have been tasked to deliver various elements of a travel experience. Or, you can establish group messaging with multiple travelers or guests who are sharing a common travel experience. For instance, a resort concierge can proactively provide updates or notifications to several families who have booked a group snorkeling excursion. As such, you can now connect your business, your customers, and third parties into a single conversation so that everyone can talk to one another directly.

In hotels, there is nothing more infuriating to a guest than to be put on hold and passed from department to department in order to book something as simple as a Spa appointment. The Alliants Experience Platform allows hotels to use group messaging that includes the right departments in the conversation, thereby helping them seamlessly resolve the customers’ requests and ultimately increase customer satisfaction.
Finally, you can use Conversations APIs to integrate the advanced messaging platform with almost any other business system in order to exchange data back and forth, including multimedia integration. With this capability you can extend conversational data to any system to power automations, analytics, and chatbots, thereby enriching the self-service customer journey. Agent-assisted messaging sessions are also enhanced as the agent now has a 360-degree view of the customer, including loyalty programs, itineraries, travel history, preferences, etc.

In the example shown below, a messaging conversation that a hotel guest initiated through WhatsApp has been handed off to a live customer service agent, who can now seamlessly pick up the conversation in any language. Data integrations with the CRM system, the loyalty system, and the restaurant reservation system give the agent the ability to personalize the interaction with the guest.
Deliver VIP experiences with transformative messaging

As the transportation, travel and hospitality industries continue to explode on the other side of the pandemic, it’s critical that you deploy innovative customer experiences that help set you apart from competition. Omnichannel messaging is one way to do that. Zendesk’s trailblazing customers, as well as partners like Ada, Ultimate and Alliants, have discovered the power of our messaging platform and are now:

- Serving passengers and guests across all channels
- Delivering 24/7 support and gaining efficiency through intelligent automation
- Deploying embedded apps through their messaging channels to engage and delight customers
- Utilizing proactive messaging to deliver personalized notifications and recommendations
- Extending conversations with group messaging
- Making bots smarter and providing 360-degree customer views to their agents through data integration

This is an established blueprint that companies throughout the industry have successfully used to deliver exceptional and personalized messaging experiences to their customers. Won’t you join them?

Ready to deploy Zendesk?

→ See how other transportation, travel and hospitality companies have delivered exceptional customer experiences with transformative CX

→ Talk to a sales rep