THE ZENDESK BENCHMARK

The ROI case for omnichannel support

zendesk

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As companies increasingly look to provide a better experience for customers, offering support across multiple channels is becoming more popular than ever. According to the Aberdeen Group, companies doubled the number of channels they use to interact with customers between 2012 and 2017.

But there's a difference between providing support on a few channels and delivering a truly integrated omnichannel solution. Using the Zendesk Benchmark, our crowd-sourced index of customer service interactions from 45,000 participating organizations across 140 countries, we examined why companies are going omnichannel and what sets the companies using Zendesk for omnichannel support apart from everyone else.

Looking at our Benchmark sample, we defined integrated omnichannel support as simultaneously leveraging Zendesk for support across email, webform, live chat & messaging, voice support, and help centers. We found that this approach is not only in line with changing customer expectations—it also means a tangible ROI in terms of improved efficiency and an all-around better support experience for customers.

Our findings should be a wake-up call for companies: Go omnichannel or risk getting left behind.

Key findings

01

Omnichannel means more efficient support

Among Zendesk Benchmark companies, those using an integrated omnichannel solution outperform those who stick to a limited number of channels or operate channels in silos. Their customers spend less time waiting for responses, resolve their issues faster, and are less likely to require any follow-ups.

02

Omnichannel companies are better positioned to meet customer expectations

Customers have higher expectations, and they want to be able to move seamlessly across channels. Since 2017, a majority of customers with multiple tickets used more than one channel.

03

Live channels are being adopted fastest

Live channels and Facebook are growing most quickly, outpacing the growth of traditional email and webform. For integrated omnichannel companies, live channels are on track to surpass email and webform in terms of the share of a support team's workload they represent.

04

Live channels also outpace others according to key metrics

Live channels aren't just among the fastest-growing—they also perform better across key operational metrics. Tickets handled through voice support and live chat & messaging see higher CSAT, fewer re-opens, and faster first resolution times.

05

B2C companies are going omnichannel at the quickest pace

B2C companies are more likely to take an omnichannel approach, as they represent the largest share of integrated omnichannel companies by the target audience. B2C companies also deal with significantly higher ticket volumes, since they typically have a bigger and more diverse customer base than B2B companies or support desks for internal use.

Customers now expect an omnichannel approach

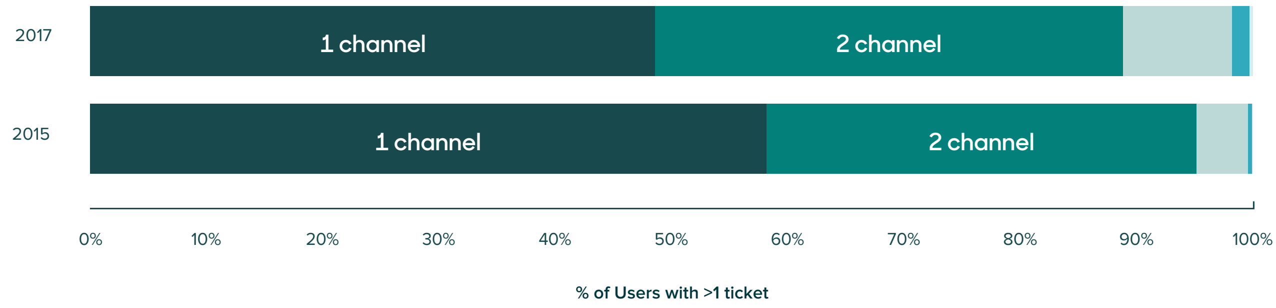
Customer expectations have never been higher, and by taking an omnichannel approach to support, companies are aiming to meet these expectations. That means a support solution that's fully integrated across channels and provides a personalized experience no matter where the customer is or which device they're using.

When we investigated changing customer expectations last year, we found that 61 percent of respondents surveyed said they were less patient with customer service than they were five years prior. So how do companies meet these rising expectations? The answer is by focusing on customer needs and preferences, regardless of which channel they use to contact support. And it means moving beyond simply providing conventional channels like email and webform to also offering live channels like voice support and live chat.

Customers are already expecting to easily move across channels. According to our data, starting last year, a majority of customers with more than one ticket used more than one channel.

It's likely that this trend stems in part from customer expectations for communicating with others in their personal lives mirroring how they now want to interface with brands. Research by Conduent indicates that the average customer uses five channels to talk to family and friends and two channels when engaging with brands.

In addition to having higher expectations for their overall experience, customers also have different needs and assumptions on a channel-by-channel basis. Depending on the time of day, their particular set of channel preferences, and a host of other factors, customers may engage with a single channel or several channels to resolve their issues.



What the customer says	Which channel they turn to	What they expect
“I want to find the answer myself.”	Self-service	Customers tend to look to self-service as a first point of contact, with 76% of customers preferring self-service to alternatives. According to Loudhouse, 91% of consumers would use a knowledge base or help center if it were tailored to meet their needs.
“I’m looking for an answer to my question, but not immediately.”	Email and webform	With these traditional support channels, customers expect to be able to write in and receive a response in a timely fashion, though not necessarily instantaneously.
“I have a complex or urgent issue and need to talk to a person.”	Phone	Research shows that customers still view phone support as the fastest way to get a complicated issue resolved, with the Software Advice Survey finding that 79% of respondents preferred phone support for complex financial questions.
“I’m short on time and need help now.”	Live chat	Customers typically write in via chat when they are looking for immediate help that’s efficient and allows them to multitask. According to Software Advice, millennials are more likely than baby boomers to prefer chat, pointing to limited wait time and convenience as their top reasons.
“¡Help me $%#!”	Social media	Social media is usually customers’ preferred channel when they want to write in to express their frustration. According to the Sprout Social Index, of customers who address a company via social media, 70% just want other customers to be aware of their issue, and only 54% are using the platform to actually get a response from a business.

Live channels aren't just growing fastest—They also perform better

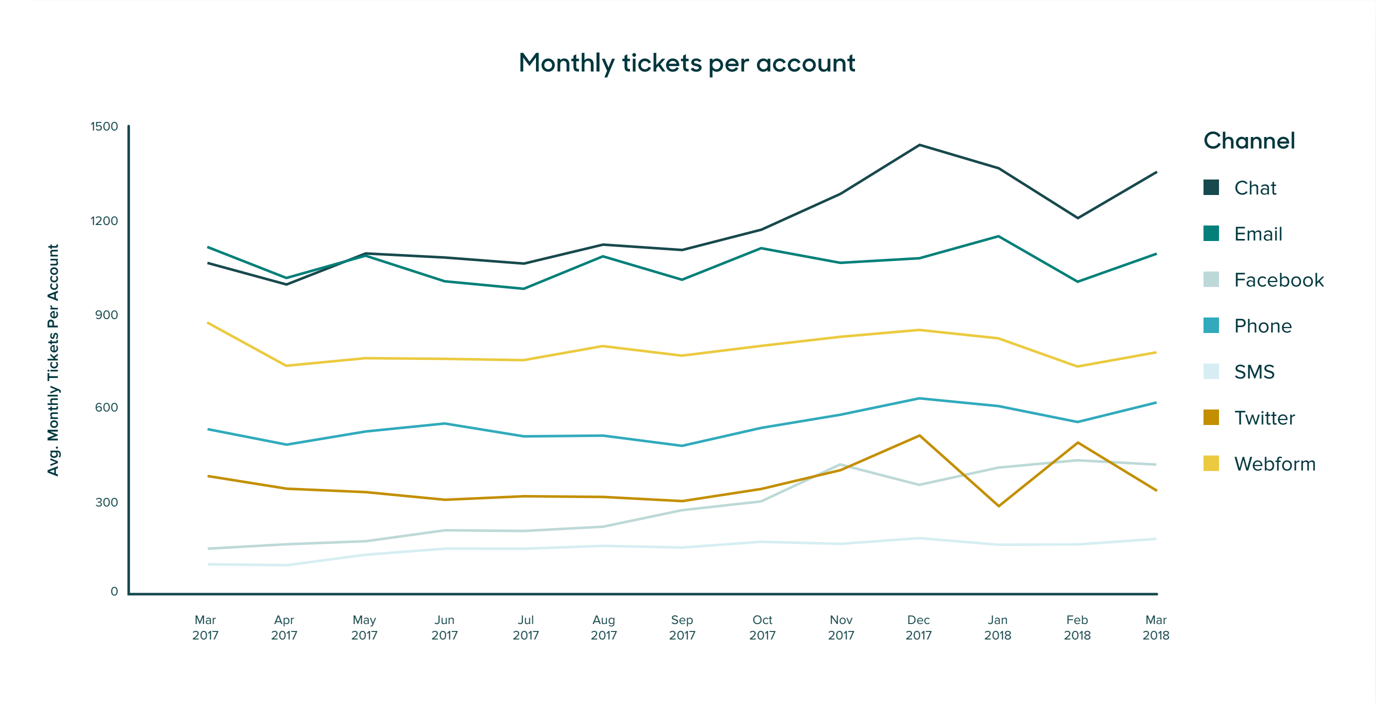
As customer expectations shift toward wanting an always-on, seamless experience across channels, companies are increasingly moving to supplement traditional email and webform with additional channels.

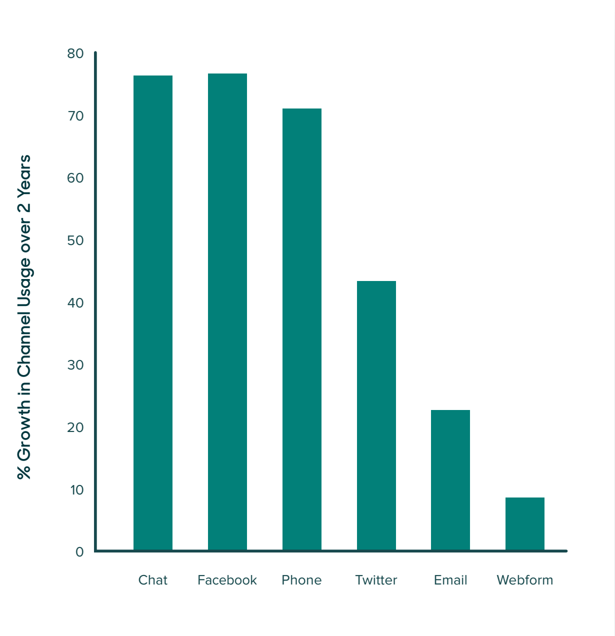
Live channels and Facebook are growing fastest in terms of tickets and customers

With our sample of companies from the Zendesk Benchmark, we looked at channel growth in terms of both ticket volume and the number of customers using them, finding that live chat, voice support, and Facebook (social channels) are the fastest-growing channels.

Among these companies, email and webform still account for the biggest share of tickets by a wide margin. However, when we look at how quickly channels are growing in terms of ticket volume, we can see that live chat, voice support, and Facebook are outpacing conventional channels.

Over the past two years, live chat has grown about twice as fast as email in terms of ticket volume, and voice support has grown nearly four times as fast as email, likely due to many companies shifting to connect a third-party voice system with Zendesk or beginning to offer voice support for the first time. Facebook is growing even faster in terms of ticket volume—about eight times as quickly as email and webform.





They're also outpacing other channels as a share of a team's workload

If we compare how much of a support team's workload a given channel represents, captured by how many tickets per account a channel makes up, we can see that live chat has grown especially quickly. In fact, for Benchmark companies over the past year, live chat makes up the highest share of tickets per account—more than both email and webform. This means companies rely heavily on live chat when they use it.

Live channels are also poised for growth when we look at tickets per account. Live chat & messaging, voice, and Facebook have grown at more than three times the rate of email and webform based on this metric.

Given current growth rates, live chat & messaging will likely continue to increase its gap over email. And since webform is one of the slowest-growing channels, voice support is expected to surpass it in terms of tickets per account in the next year.

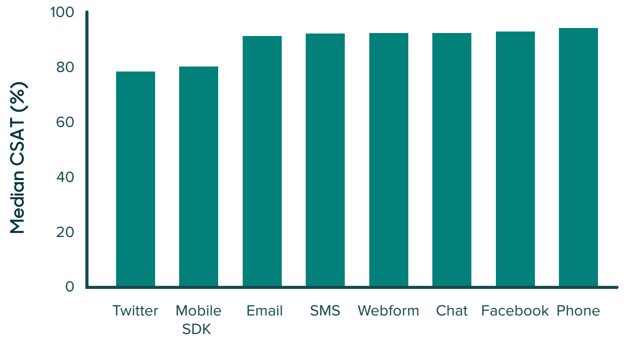
Live channels perform better

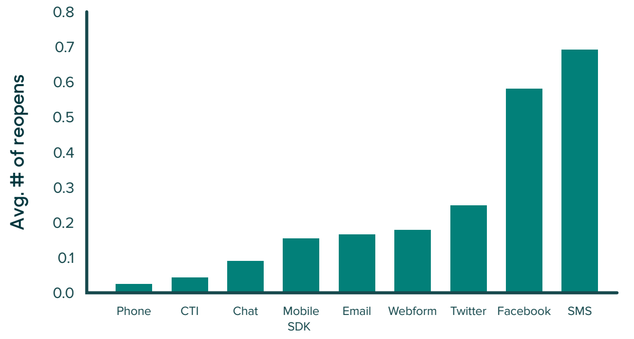
The explosive growth of live channels is well founded—and not just because customers are increasingly expecting to be able to use them. Live channels outperform other channels across key metrics of CSAT, number of re-opens, and first resolution time.

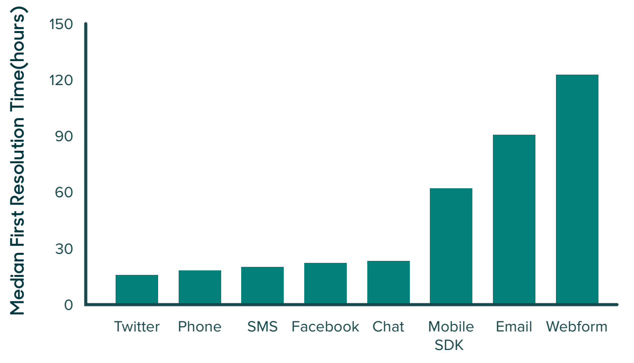
Live channels and Facebook have the highest CSAT. They also have the fastest reply time, take fewest replies to resolve a ticket, and are the most efficient.

Live chat & messaging and voice support see the lowest share of tickets get re-opened, meaning customers who use those channels are much more likely to have their issues resolved on the first try. The percentages of tickets that are re-opened for live chat and voice support are less than half the percentages of re-opened tickets for email and webform.

Compared to traditional email and webform, live chat & messaging and voice have much lower first resolution times—the time it takes for a ticket to be resolved the first time. With first resolution times of under a day, live chat and voice support are a whopping five to six times faster than traditional email and webform at getting customer issues addressed.







How the State of Tennessee used omnichannel support to boost CSAT by 35%

INCREASE IN CSAT WITH VOICE SUPPORT

35%

FIRST-TOUCH RESOLUTION

90%

TECH PARTNERS

Geckoboard
Innotas
Oomnitza
Rise Vision

The Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development needed a support solution that kept customers happy and allowed them to use analytics to continue to improve their services. That's why they went with Zendesk for a full omnichannel approach.

The department manages a $171 million budget, which includes the state's OSHA program, workers' compensation, labor laws and standards, plus the oversight of elevators, boilers, and amusement devices. This amounts to coverage of 6.6 million residents and 120,000 businesses.

Rolling out voice support led to a huge spike in metrics. The department sees roughly 80 percent of tickets created by inbound calls, and after launching voice support, full resolution time, first reply time, and customer satisfaction all improved. CSAT for voice support also jumped 35 percent.

Help center and live chat work together to save money and help with ticket deflection. "The cost savings around that is huge," said the department's Deputy Commissioner Dustin Swayne. "If a person visits a career center it's about $35. If they do it online through a live chat, it's about $1."

The department also leverages a host of third-party tools to round out their approach to support and analytics. They use Innotas for project management and Oomnitza for keeping track of IT assets. In addition, Geckoboard and Rise Vision, an open source product, power KPI dashboards and digital signage for smart TVs that help employees understand how the department is performing.

With omnichannel support, Monese ramped up analytics and improved response time

INCREASE IN CSAT WITH VOICE SUPPORT

10%

FIRST-TOUCH RESOLUTION

59%

TECH PARTNERS

Google Play Reviews
PlayVox Quality Assurance
Trustpilot Reviews

Monese opted for Zendesk's omnichannel solution, moving over from Freshdesk thanks to Zendesk's ability to connect multiple channels, powerful analytics, and seamless integrations with third-party tools.

The company offers a banking app that, combined with an account and debit card, allows people who've arrived in a new country to easily set up banking services.

Through omnichannel support, Monese is able to see the entire view of customer interactions across channels, including those that don't lead to tickets.

Since implementing Zendesk's omnichannel solution, Monese has seen CSAT spike by 10 percent and has reduced its overall first reply time by 59 percent. These are big improvements that allow Monese's core team of 25 agents to adhere to SLAs across channels and deliver a great experience for customers over seven languages.

Monese also leans on several third-party integrations. They integrated the PlayVox Quality Assurance tool with Zendesk, as well as other third-party apps from Zendesk's marketplace, including Google Play Reviews and Trustpilot Reviews, to pipe in customer feedback. The company also uses Zendesk to turn Facebook and Twitter direct messages into tickets.

Who's going omnichannel?

What sets integrated omnichannel companies apart?

Compared to Benchmark companies that do not use Zendesk for an integrated omnichannel approach across email, webform, voice support, live chat & messaging, and a help center, omnichannel companies have*:

FIRST REPLY TIMES

16% lower

FIRST RESOLUTION TIMES

31% lower

REQUESTER WAIT TIME DURING BUSINESS HOURS

39% lower

REPLIES

13% fewer

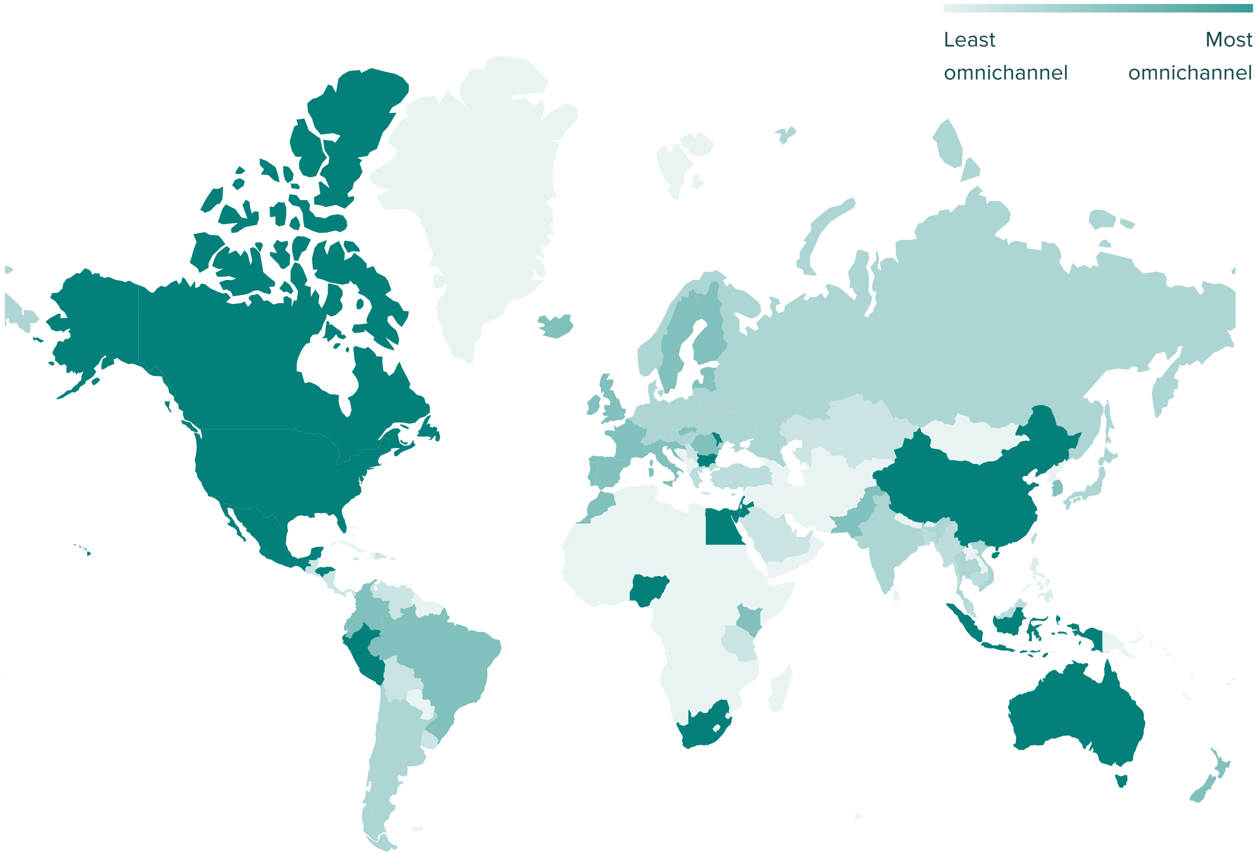
*Based on performance improvement on non-live channels for Zendesk Benchmark companies that use a ticketing system, help center, voice and live chat compared to companies that do not take an integrated omnichannel approach to support.

Based on Zendesk Benchmark data, the benefits of an integrated omnichannel approach are clear. Omnichannel support gives companies a single view of the customer, allowing them to improve operations by ensuring they can refer back to a complete record of past interactions. It's a way for companies to meet customers on the channels they're already using in their daily lives, and it means leaning heavily on live channels, which perform better across key metrics.

Omnichannel support also means reducing the time it takes for agents to respond to customers and resolve their issues. And it results in less time spent waiting for an agent and fewer follow-ups after a customer makes a support request.

Still, despite customers increasingly expecting to be able to contact support over a variety of channels and the quantifiable benefits, truly integrated omnichannel support is still a relatively new phenomenon, and many Zendesk Benchmark companies have yet to take the plunge.

We took a look across location, industries, company sizes, and target audiences to see which companies are leading the way when it comes to going omnichannel and what sets them apart.



Country

Most omnichannel:

- Singapore
- Mexico
- USA

Least omnichannel:

- Norway
- Russia
- Turkey

Industry

Most omnichannel:

- Retail
- Travel
- Financial Services

Least omnichannel:

- Consultancy
- Social Media
- Marketing

Target audience

Most omnichannel:

- B2C

Least omnichannel:

- Internal use case

Company size

Most omnichannel:

- 10-99 employees

Least omnichannel:

- 5000+ employees

For more on taking an omnichannel approach, check out The Zendesk Suite, which offers everything companies need to enable conversations with customers to flow across channels seamlessly, wrapped up in one simple package and an amazing price.

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