Making the switch: How four companies improved customer experience with Zendesk

Your business is never too big to deliver a powerful, personal customer–service experience

When you think about the best customer-service experiences, what do you remember?

You have probably had no problem accessing customer support contact information, contacting the company on the channel that worked best for you and encountering a friendly customer-service representative who took the time to really listen to you, going above and beyond to solve your problem. The person at the other end of the phone or the live chat always seemed to know the context of your problem, no matter how much interaction it took before resolution. And even if you couldn't see their face, you could tell that they delivered service with a smile and genuinely cared.

The bigger your business gets, the more challenging it can become to deliver the kind of personal, thoughtful experiences that stand out in your customers' memories. But that doesn't mean it's impossible. Agents willing to tackle difficult problems, who are empowered with the right technology that preserves important context about each support problem, are what it takes to deliver exceptional customer support at scale.

We've had ample opportunity to see how powerful that combination can be. Across industries, enterprise companies have improved efficiency, maximised ROI and delivered exceptional customer service by merging the right tools with a strategic, customer-centric approach. You're probably thinking about the daunting task of implementing such tools and technology, not to mention initiating this type of transformation, in your own organisation. However, it really can be simple with a modern, easy-to-use CRM solution that can be deployed quickly, solving problems and supporting business growth from day one. To help you visualise doing the same for your business, we've collected some of these success stories.

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Implementation: Tackling complexity with a simple, quick-to-deploy solution

With size and scale come complexity.

Whether it's offering a diverse product portfolio, servicing multiple audiences or depending on a variety of technology partners for the business to run smoothly, your requirements can be complicated. But whatever that looks like at the back end, the customer has to come first, and their experience must be seamless.

Technology platforms sometimes add to the complexity in a growing business. Disorganised migrations, convoluted code management and unclear platform strategies with legacy systems can all lead to unnecessary complication behind the scenes, resulting in a confusing experience for customers who need help. But with streamlined and intuitive platforms, it can become part of the solution, allowing you to centralise operations and start creating a better experience for your customers immediately.

Uber

Business complexity
30,000 chats a week
Thousands of agents
10 languages
450 cities
79 countries
Multiple products

Simplicity achieved
Fast onboarding
Real-time communication
Improved workflows

CX results
CSAT 95%
Chat first response: < 30 seconds

The challenge

Uber grew at a rate that most start-ups only dream of, spreading operations over more than 420 cities, rapidly onboarding drivers and acquiring customers in each region. Not only was their community growing at an incredible pace, but the company added new lines of business on top of their ride-sharing service, such as Uber Eats and Uber for Business.

That growth, combined with Uber's business model — which requires appealing to and managing relationships with multiple audiences — creates unique challenges. Their support team services their entire community, which includes customers, drivers and restaurants. In order to continue creating seamless experiences for everyone, the support team also grew — from a couple of dozen to more than 1,000 dedicated agents in just a couple of years.

For every customer-service problem that comes up, the company needs a way to make sure that all parties are on the same page and can communicate in real time. And they need to be able to resolve problems quickly — harried customers trying to get to the airport for a flight or someone desperately hungry for dinner won't be happy if they're kept waiting.

Scaling with Zendesk

Uber started using Zendesk early in the company's history, so instead of making a switch, they were able to adapt the product to their changing requirements as they grew. With more relationships to manage and additional products available, Zendesk Chat became a particularly important tool.

'Chat is great for onboarding new drivers, empowering agents to answer many questions in one interaction,' says Ashley Bradford, Global Chat Support Programme Manager. The business model only works if they have enough drivers, so getting them ready for their first ride quickly is important for the bottom line.

'Uber Eats is also an interesting use case for chat,' Bradford added,' because we're connecting three parties – "eaters" with restaurants and then couriers handling the delivery.'

A successful Uber Eats delivery requires careful coordination between the driver and the restaurant at the minimum and, in many cases, an agent as well. And all of it has to happen behind the scenes so that the experience is seamless for customers. Zendesk's real-time dashboard and chat features make that possible, and getting started with it is easy. The tools help Bradford's team keep the average CSAT score above 95%.

'You can set up Zendesk Chat quickly and use it to test user experience. All you really need is a strong Internet connection.'

Ashley Bradford
Global Chat Support Programme Manager

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Connections and customisation: Making tech work for you

On average, enterprise companies have more than 1,000 different tech products in the cloud alone. One of the complexities of running a modern business is making sure that all the technology that your company depends on integrates well together. It is equally important for this technology to have built-in features, such as advanced workflows, AI and out-of-the-box integration, to make it easy to customise and meet your company's unique requirements successfully.
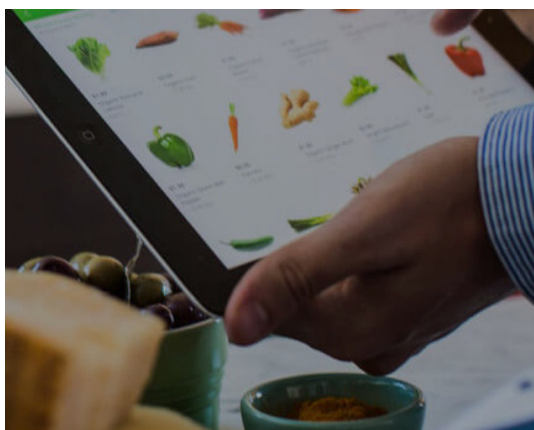
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Unique requirements
Segmentation for two audiences
Integration with custom tools
40,000 support calls and emails a week

Customisation and integrations achieved
User data included in product view
Five Most Recent app
Internal support provided

CX results
90%+ CSAT
Better understanding of a customer's journey

The challenge

Instacart's business model requires serving two unique audiences effectively: shoppers and customers. Their support process depends on having data about both audiences and the ability to find that data at a moment's notice. To do this, the company needed a system that could integrate with the custom internal tools used to track and organise the data.

'When helping customers, it's important to know their contact information, recent order information, and voucher and credit balances,' says Jeremy Flanagan, the Customer Ops Project Lead for Tools. 'When helping shoppers, it's important to know what type of shopper they are and if their status is active or dormant.'

The team needed a way to keep those two worlds of data separate, but equally accessible. And they needed their system to help them serve a high volume of service requests efficiently – up to 20,000 calls and another 20,000 emails a week.

Making the switch

The most important feature that they were looking for in a customer-support product was the ability to call up user data whenever it was needed. Since it integrates nicely with the company's custom data tools, Zendesk helps provide a holistic view of the relationship that the company has with each customer and shopper, enabling more productive conversations at crucial moments.

'We have almost every piece of relevant data coming in on the ticket, based on the user,' says Flanagan. This helps them route each request to the best support agent and ensures that they have all the information they need to deliver quick, effective service – paving the way for an exceptional customer experience.

Zendesk's Five Most Recent app provides even more useful information every time an agent helps a customer by displaying the five past tickets that they've submitted. 'It's always helpful to gain more context around a user's past support requests,' says Flanagan.

'It's paramount for us to be able to build exactly what we need. Zendesk provides a vast collection of integrations and opportunities for customisation as part of our subscription.'

Jeremy Flanagan
Customer Ops Project Lead for Tools at Instacart

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Differentiate through CX: Delivering superior experiences

Speed of implementation and improved efficiency are important for every business to consider when choosing the right vendor. But what matters most in customer service is creating the best possible experience for the people you serve.

The right customer-service software empowers your agents to deliver exceptional customer experience (CX), and the right vendor will partner with you to help your team achieve that goal. You can be sure that you won't have to choose between delivering great CX and enjoying speed, efficiency and cost savings. We've seen Zendesk customers do it all.

airbnb

Customer challenges
191 countries
65,000 cities
20 languages
4 million+ listings
More than 100 million guests

CX results
Personalised support
360° view of customers
Phone calls answered within minutes
Emails answered within 24 hours
1 to 1 messaging enabled

The challenge

Airbnb went from booking three million guests a year in 2012 – already surpassing many established hotel chains – to more than 100 million in 2017. In addition to serving a huge number of travellers, they also cater to hosts located in more than 65,000 cities.

To satisfy the requirements of so many different people, the company has thousands of customer-service agents operating out of 20 locations around the world. Given the nature of their business, when someone needs help, they need it fast. Agents need a way of getting up to speed quickly in respect of the situation of any traveller or host who gets in touch, no matter what channel they use – be it email, social media, SMS or other messaging channels.

Furthermore, every problem these customers face is unique, and agents have to tailor each response to make sure that it applies to a traveller's or host's location, the rental type in question and the specific problem that the customer is facing.

Providing personalised support to multiple audiences in more than 100 countries and 20 languages is therefore no easy feat. The company needed a tool that could handle the complexity, as well as a vendor willing to help them tailor it to those requirements.

Scaling with Zendesk

While the team was weighing their options for the right customer-service product, 'scalability, reliability and 24/7 uptime were big factors,' says Shirley Lin, Product Lead for the Support Products Group. They started using Zendesk early on, and as the company's requirements became more complicated over time, the software continued delivering.

'We have customers who book room listings, but they also book experiences and have restaurant reservations,' she says. When they get in touch with customer service, the agent needs an easy way to see the details of their relationship with Airbnb, as well as all the bookings and rentals associated with their account. Connecting Zendesk with Airbnb's internal tools, they can tap into a 360° view of each customer and their history.

This helps them provide accurate, personalised responses quickly. The majority of phone calls are answered within minutes during peak periods and emails are generally answered within 24 hours. This workflow was the result of working closely with Zendesk to customise the product for their requirements.

'Having a partner who really understands our business, and how ambitious we are, is huge – because service, at the end of the day, needs to be in lockstep with every single track of work that's happening within Airbnb.' says Lin.

'Zendesk has been a good partner to us. They've constantly worked with us to make sure that Zendesk scales with Airbnb, which is no small feat.'

Shirley Lin
Product Lead for the Support Products Group

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By the numbers:
Making sure that it pays off

Customer-service software stands to make life easier across an entire organisation, not just within support. Although these ripple effects are likely to come further down the line, support software has to start providing value ASAP. That's why it's crucial to select a solution that will prove to be a return on that investment in terms of cost savings and support efficiency.

For our customers who have done the maths, the ROI on Zendesk is clear.

ROI by the numbers
£200 million saved annually
50% reduction in onboarding time

CX results
Customer Service of the Year Award 2017
20-second reduction in average
handling time

The challenge

As the UK's largest independent energy supplier, First Utility serves more than 800,000 homes with a variety of utility services. On top of the complications inherent in supplying multiple services to such a large number of customers, the amount of technology required to run an energy company brings an extra dose of complexity. First Utility uses multiple systems for different types of energy, for billing, for new provisions and for moving house.

As the company's offerings and number of software systems that it depended on grew, the Salesforce platform they used became increasingly difficult to integrate with everything else.

'It evolved into a difficult-to-manage beast,' explained Rob Harris, Head of Customer Service Platforms. 'We ended up in a place where we had a very convoluted interface, and the advisor experience was negatively impacted as a result of that.'

While striving to meet their customers' requirements in the face of continued growth, the Salesforce platform failed to adapt to their needs – limiting their ability to achieve their goals. 'I would've ended up in a very restrictive place – uncomfortably dependent upon on a very complicated system that would only cost more as time went on,' says Harris.
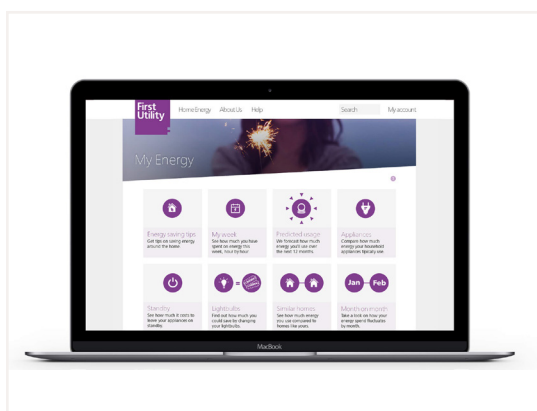
Making the switch

Instead, Harris looked for a product that could integrate seamlessly with the other systems that they used and provide an ease of use that was lacking in their previous solution. On switching to Zendesk, they quickly saw a difference.

'It is far simpler to administer our Zendesk solution than it was to administer the Salesforce platform, partially because we've been able to clean up the interface and get rid of a lot of the old, dead wood we had hanging around,' says Harris.

That simplicity led to measurable results in efficiency. Because of how much faster they can train advisors on the product, onboarding time went down by 50% and average handling time was reduced by 20 seconds.

'We've seen around a £2 million annualised benefit by making this move this year, and we certainly expect that to grow next year as we develop additional Zendesk apps to replace the different systems our advisors use when helping our customers.'

Rob Harris
Head of Customer Service Platforms

Conclusion

Rolling out a new customer-service solution can be intimidating, especially for businesses with many interwoven stakeholders and processes. But with a product that's intuitive, easy to use, and armed with features that meet your requirements and improve ROI, the switch can pay off quickly, with minimal disruption.

Zendesk provides the mixture of simplicity, flexibility and rich features that businesses need to meet their customer-service goals, while supporting the bottom line. Contact us to learn more about making the switch.

zendesk