

Customer engagement, Digital & messaging

How web chat and AI became a power couple for customer service

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Web chat and AI are the most commonly planned tech investments for UK contact centres in the next 12 months. We explore what's behind the two technologies' meteoric rise, and explain why they're even more valuable together than they are apart.

According to a new ContactBabel report, artificial intelligence and web chat will be the technologies most implemented in UK contact centres over the coming 12 months. And it's easy to see why.

85% of the senior CX and customer contact professionals surveyed believe web chat has a positive effect on customer experience. In comparison, 77-78% said the same about web self-service and interaction analytics – both of which increasingly rely on AI.

How have these two technologies broken through to become such mainstays of the UK contact centre? And how can you combine their attributes to deliver even smarter experiences?

The rise of web chat and self-service

We all know there's no silver bullet for customer engagement – different channels are best suited to meeting different needs, for different customer demographics. But still: web chat is a bit of an all-rounder.

In compiling its report, ContactBabel also spoke directly to 1,000 consumers to gauge their preferred channels for different interaction types; web chat placed in the top three preferred methods for both high

emotion and high complexity interactions – across all demographics.

Perhaps this shouldn't be a surprise. Web chat can offer customers quick, human responses without leaving a company's website. The latest web chat experiences are even richer, giving customers and agents the ability to share images, videos, and web links – making it ideal for solving the kind of customer challenges where a picture can paint a thousand words. (Think product troubleshooting or item returns.)

There's a similar case to be made for AI-powered web self-service. ContactBabel's study saw self-service not only place in the top three channels for high complexity interactions, but prove the most popular choice for those with a high degree of urgency.

AI-powered self-service offers quick resolutions and eliminates customer wait times, offering support any time of the day. And it's not just customers that see the benefits either – agents get more time to spend on other conversations, and the business achieves a lower cost per engagement.

Untapped AI opportunities

While ContactBabel found web chat to be a well-established technology – it's already in use in over half of all UK contact centres surveyed – AI-powered self-service is still a fresher proposition.

Whether you're set to implement both technologies in the coming months, or you're planning to deploy AI-powered self-service alongside your web chat, there's enormous value in exploring the various ways you can combine their strengths.

Here's just a couple of ways to team web chat and AI up to deliver even smarter customer experiences.

1. Front-end web chats with virtual assistants

Deploying a virtual assistant (VA) at the front of your live chat platform is a strategic way to deflect frequently asked questions and common customer challenges from your agents, allowing them to focus on complex cases.

Esurance, a leading US insurance provider, integrated Nuance Virtual Assistant as the first touchpoint for its live chat engagements. It achieved an 85% first contact resolution rate within the VA – which meant many of its customers were solving their challenges before they even spoke to an agent. And with a lower cost per interaction and boosted agent availability, the brand saved a total of \$1.6M in the virtual assistant's first quarter.

2. Power your VA with transcripts

When deploying a VA, it can be challenging to know which customer cases it should handle and which ones it should pass onto human agents. But if you've already been using a live chat platform to serve your customers, you'll be able to find the answers in your existing chat transcripts.

That's exactly what one of the UK's largest retailers did when it deployed Nuance Virtual Assistant – leveraging its existing live chat transcripts to identify frequently asked questions and common customer challenges.

With these insights on-hand, the brand was able to create decision trees that accurately reflected the topics its customers were engaging about. This process resulted in a significantly faster VA deployment and helped the brand achieve a 70% first contact resolution rate within the VA after launch.

The power of two

That's just a glimpse at what's possible when you get smart about combining your web chat channel with AI. There are plenty more opportunities, from putting AI in charge of targeting your agent coaching programme, to using it to provide agents with the customer insights they need, exactly when they need them.

The Nuance Digital Engagement Platform combines the benefits of both web chat and AI-powered self-service into one unified, enterprise-grade solution – so you can empower your agents and deliver the experiences your customers expect.



About Sebastian Reeve

Seb Reeve is a customer experience industry leader who is always seeking to provide thought-leadership, lateral-thinking and decision-support for Fortune 1000 Enterprises who are both his customers and partners. Reeves has more than fifteen years of experience in deploying technologies to improve the user experience. In his current role at Nuance as EMEA Director of Product Management and Marketing, he is responsible for defining and evangelizing the Nuance customer care proposition across Europe, the Middle-East and Africa – sharing how companies can create extraordinary automated experiences which their customers actively choose to use rather than simply tolerate and complain about, promoting best practices in AI and Machine Learning to the world of Customer Experience.



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