

LIVE CHAT IN SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTS

How live chat impacts customer satisfaction.



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Key Benefits of Live Chat for Support

- Improves quality of support
- Positively impacts customer satisfaction rating
- Helps control support costs
- Overall, the results show that live chat saves money while simultaneously improving a firm's ability to deliver exceptional customer experiences.

How live chat positively impacts customer support

Executive Summary

Based on a primary research effort with more than three hundred companies who are active BoldChat customers, this report takes a close look at how live chat is used and measured in support settings.

This report, inspired in part by recently released data from Ovum¹, had the following goals:

- To understand how organizations are using live chat to engage with prospects and customers.
- Investigate what metrics are important to organizations using live chat for support engagements.
- Learn why they believe live chat helps them to achieve their business goals.

The report concludes that customer satisfaction is the most important metric in use today, live chat can have a positive influence on satisfaction, certain live chat features contribute to a firm's ability to achieve high levels of satisfaction, and that maintaining these levels will become increasingly challenging as customers request support through an increasing number of channels.

While previous research projects have focused on live chat as a sales tool, the reality for contact centers is that the line between 'sales' and 'support' is becoming more and more ambiguous; a support interaction can easily end with a sale just as a sales engagement can easily turn into a support interaction. The respondent pool itself makes this clear as the majority, 57%, use live chat for both sales and support, while 17% and 26% of companies use it strictly for sales or support, respectively.

For the vast majority, live chat saves contact centers money while simultaneously empowering them to offer new support options, improve interaction speed and quality, and increase customer satisfaction.

The survey reveals that the #1 way organizations measure both the success of the contact center overall, and the success of the chat operation specifically, is customer satisfaction. Historically touted contact center metrics like first contact resolution rates, average handle time, and wait time were all ranked below customer satisfaction. The respondents also indicated that live chat helps them to achieve high levels of customer satisfaction:

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¹ <http://solutions.logmeinrescue-enterprise.com/ovumsurvey>

Percent Agreeing with Statements About Live Chat	
Live chat has had a positive impact on customer satisfaction.	94%
Live chat has saved us money in the support organization	78%
Live chat allows us to offer support options we couldn't before	87%
Live chat has improved the speed with which we offer support	90%
Live chat has improved the quality of support we offer	91%

Figure 1: Percent Agreeing with Statements About Live Chat

For the vast majority, live chat saves organizations money while simultaneously empowering contact centers to offer new support options, improve interaction speed and quality, and increase customer satisfaction.

Specific features that contribute to a firm's ability to execute against their goals were also revealed by the research. The most popular feature was Chat History with 81% of the sample saying it was very or extremely useful in helping them to provide support. Chat History allows an agent to view the complete transcripts of all past chat interactions from the same interface in which the current chat conversation is occurring. Canned Messages, with 71% indicating its usefulness, are predefined messages used for common questions.

Reporting, the ability to run ad hoc reports on a wide variety of chat related metrics was either very or extremely useful for 61% of the sample.

The report concludes with a look at social media and its likely impact on text-based support.

Introduction

In our recently released Live Chat Benchmarking² report, we learned about an intriguing correlation between customer satisfaction and a firm's ability to drive conversions. Specifically, we found that companies with the highest scores for live chat satisfaction had a 266% better chance to convert chatters than sites with lower average scores. This fact, along with data from our Live Chat Effectiveness report, has led us to investigate the key metrics being used by organizations that use live chat for support.

While BoldChat has produced and published many reports, whitepapers, and other ephemera about the efficacy of live chat software in a sales environment we are now beginning to understand that, from a website visitor's perspective, the distinction between "sales" and "support" is a blurry one. As such, firms will need to consider live chat deployments from both sides of the customer equation.

Due to this convergence, and the multi-faceted nature of live chat, we set out to understand:

- How companies are using live chat for support related engagements.
- What metrics are most important to organizations using live chat for support.
- Why they believe live chat helps them to achieve their business goals.

Conclusions

The research and data explicated below supports the following conclusions:

1. Customer Satisfaction is the key metric by which contact centers providing support through live chat judge their success.
2. Live chat has had a profound positive impact on support organizations.
3. Certain features are relatively more important or less important for live chat in support vs. sales.
4. Live chat agents are really multi-channel agents.

Definitions

Throughout this report, the following terms are used repeatedly to describe different sub-groupings of respondents.

Large Customers: Respondents from firms which have 10 or more concurrent chat operators.

Supervisors/Admins: Respondents who are either a supervisor of chat operators or the IT administrator of the BoldChat system.

Live Chat for Support

The majority of BoldChat customers use our technology for support – either for support only, or for both sales and support. Only 17% of our customer-base uses live chat strictly for sales.

²<http://www.boldchat.com/live-chat-whitepapers.asp#BenchmarksV3>

How Do Customers Use BoldChat?

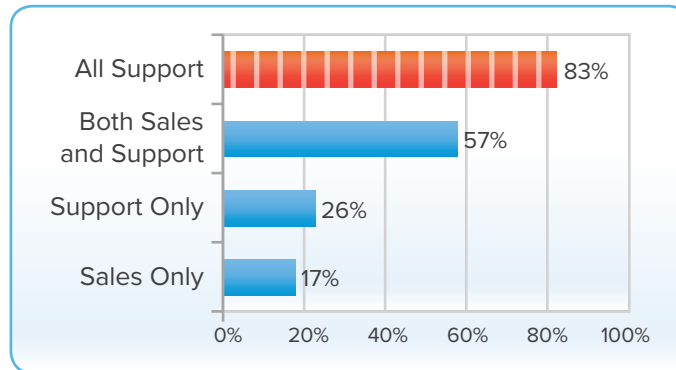


Figure 2: How Do Customers Use BoldChat?

What Kind of Support is Offered via Live Chat?

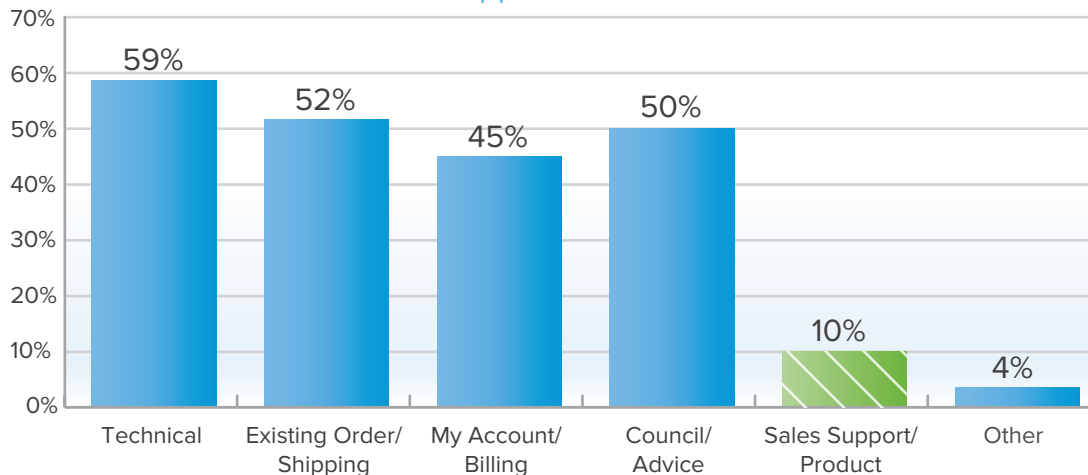


Figure 3: What Kind of Support is Offered via Live Chat?

The 83% of participants who specified that they use live chat for support were asked what type of support they offer via live chat. The most popular types of support being provided by the BoldChat customer base are “Technical Support” and “Existing Order Support.” Interestingly, 10% of this group indicated that they provide sales support, reinforcing the grey area between the sales and support.

Measuring Success of Live Chat

In a recent Ovum Whitepaper³, 100 customer service managers from various enterprises were asked to indicate which metrics were the most important in determining the success of their support organization.

Knowing that the respondents included in the Ovum study were likely heavily telephone-centric, we replicated this question because we were curious if the live chat-centric part of contact centers thought about success metrics differently. By and large – they do not.

Ranking of Contact Center Metrics by Importance

	Ovum Research	BoldChat Research
1	Customer Satisfaction	Customer Satisfaction
2	First Call Resolution	First Contact Resolution
3	Average Handle Time	Wait Time
4	Wait Time	Average Chat Length
5	Net Promoter Score	Net Promoter Score

Figure 4: Ranking of Contact Center Metrics by Importance.

In both studies, Customer Satisfaction was the far-and-away winner. The other metrics are ranked almost identically as well, with the only difference being in regard to Wait Time and Chat Length. This is an intuitive finding for those who understand live chat technology. Because live chat is asynchronous, agents can take more than one chat at a time and the chatter on the other side, likewise, can multi-task. If you can do something else while engaged in a chat and if agents can take multiple chats at once then the importance of “average handle time” is diminished, while the importance of waiting to begin the engagement is elevated.

³ Five steps to improving the customer service experience, Jan. 2012, Ovum, Sponsored by LogMeIn.

The same rankings are seen by Supervisor/Admin respondents and by respondents employed at larger organizations, further driving home the idea that customer satisfaction is king.

What Metrics Are Used to Determine Success?

	Entire Sample	Supervisors/ Admins	Large Customers
Customer Satisfaction	1	1	1
First Contact Resolution	2	2	2
Wait Time	3	3	3
Average Chat Length	4	4	4
Net Promoter Score	5	5	5

Figure 5: What Metrics Are Used to Determine Success?

Live Chat-Specific Metrics

Because all the respondents in our survey are BoldChat users, we wanted to know what metrics were used to determine success of the live chat operation in a support environment. The results for each of the sub-groups we evaluated show, again, that customer satisfaction rules the day.

What Metrics Are Used to Determine Success of the Live Chat Operation?

	Entire Sample	Supervisors/ Admins	Large Customers
Satisfaction scores regarding the chat itself	1	1	2
Wait time until the chat is answered	2	2	1
Time between customer question and agent response	3	3	3
Overall time the entire chat takes	4	4	4

Figure 6: What Metrics Are Used to Determine Success of the Live Chat Operation?

The fact that larger customers – those with at least 10 simultaneous chat agents – selected Wait Time as the most critical factor is interesting. It’s intuitive to assume that larger chat operations are the ones most likely to experience chat volume sufficient enough to cause queues of visitors waiting to engage. It’s possible that Wait Time is causally related to satisfaction to such a degree that firms focus on it because it actually drives high satisfaction scores. The data herein can’t be used to positively conclude this as fact, but it certainly points in this direction.

Finally, we asked customers who use live chat primarily as a sales channel to tell us how they measure success of the chat operation. The results from this question are fascinating.

What Metrics Are Used to Determine Success of the Live Chat Sales Operation?

	Entire Sample	Supervisors/ Admins	Large Customers
Conversions resulting from chat interactions	1	4	4
Wait time until the chat is answered	2	3	1
Time between customer question and agent response	3	2	3
Satisfaction scores from the chat itself	4	1	2
Overall time the entire chat takes	4	5	5

Figure 7: What Metrics Are Used to Determine Success of the Live Chat Sales Operation?

There is little consistency between the sub-groups of responders, with the exception of “overall chat time” being least important. We again see the amplified importance of “Wait Time” for large customers. Also, it is important to highlight that supervisors/administrators ranked ‘satisfaction scores from chat itself’ as the most important live chat metric, while the entire sample ranked ‘conversions resulting from chat interactions’ the highest.

This indicates a potential disconnect between management and live chat operators. Since customer satisfaction metrics are a new focus, it is important for management to align metrics and goals appropriately, as well as provide agents with the right tools to ensure optimal customer service experiences.

Live Chat's Impact on Support

We were interested in uncovering not only how success is measured, but what results firms employing live chat for support are experiencing. Overall, the results show that

live chat saves money while simultaneously improving a firm's ability to deliver exceptional customer experiences.

The companies surveyed strongly communicated that live chat has an overall positive influence on their support operations. More than 90% of the respondents agreed that live chat has improved the quality of support, the speed with which support is delivered, and customer satisfaction of support engagements. More than three quarters of those surveyed agreed that the technology has enabled their organization to save money.

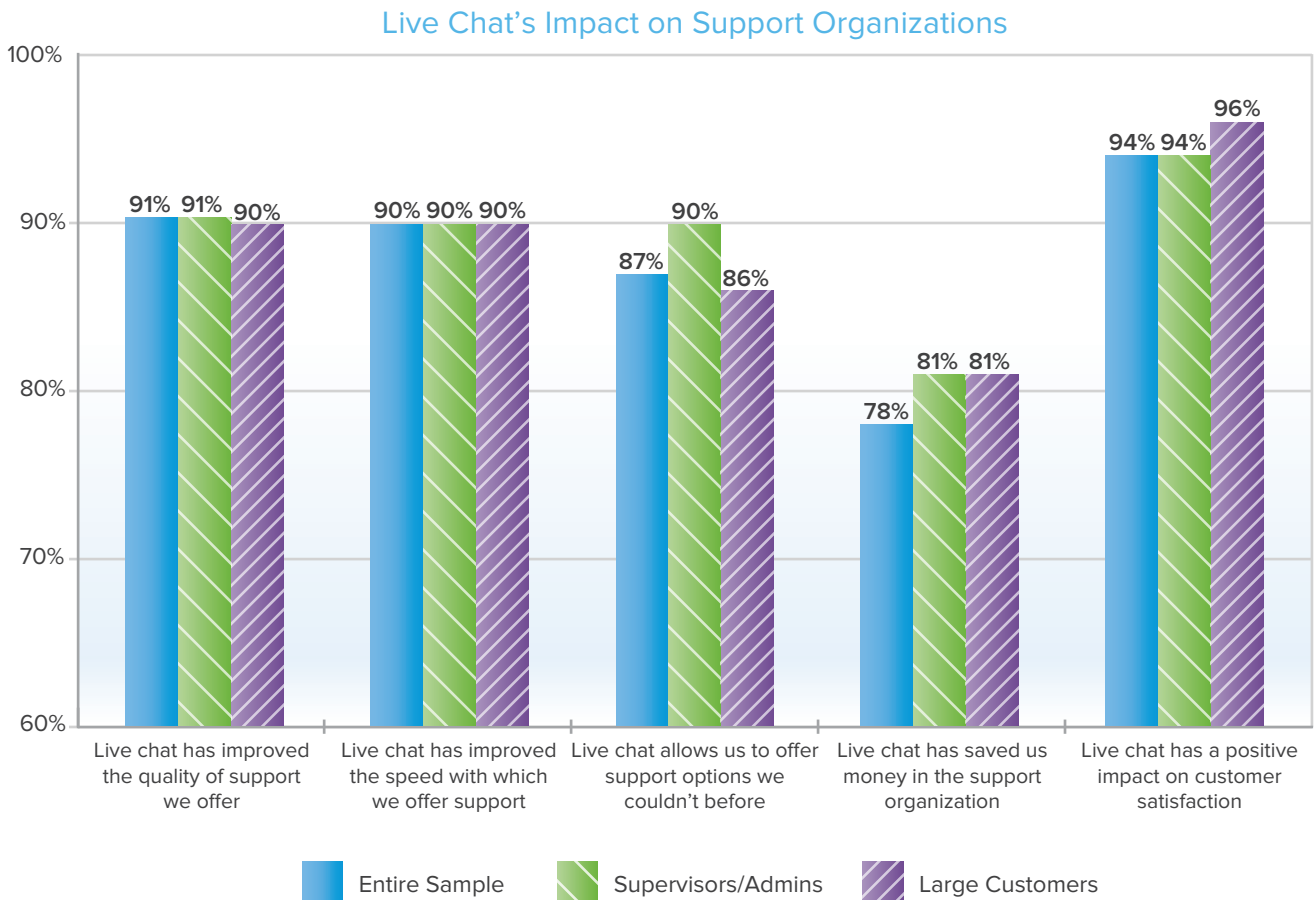


Figure 8: Live Chat's Impact on Support Organizations

Usefulness of Live Chat Features in Delivering Support

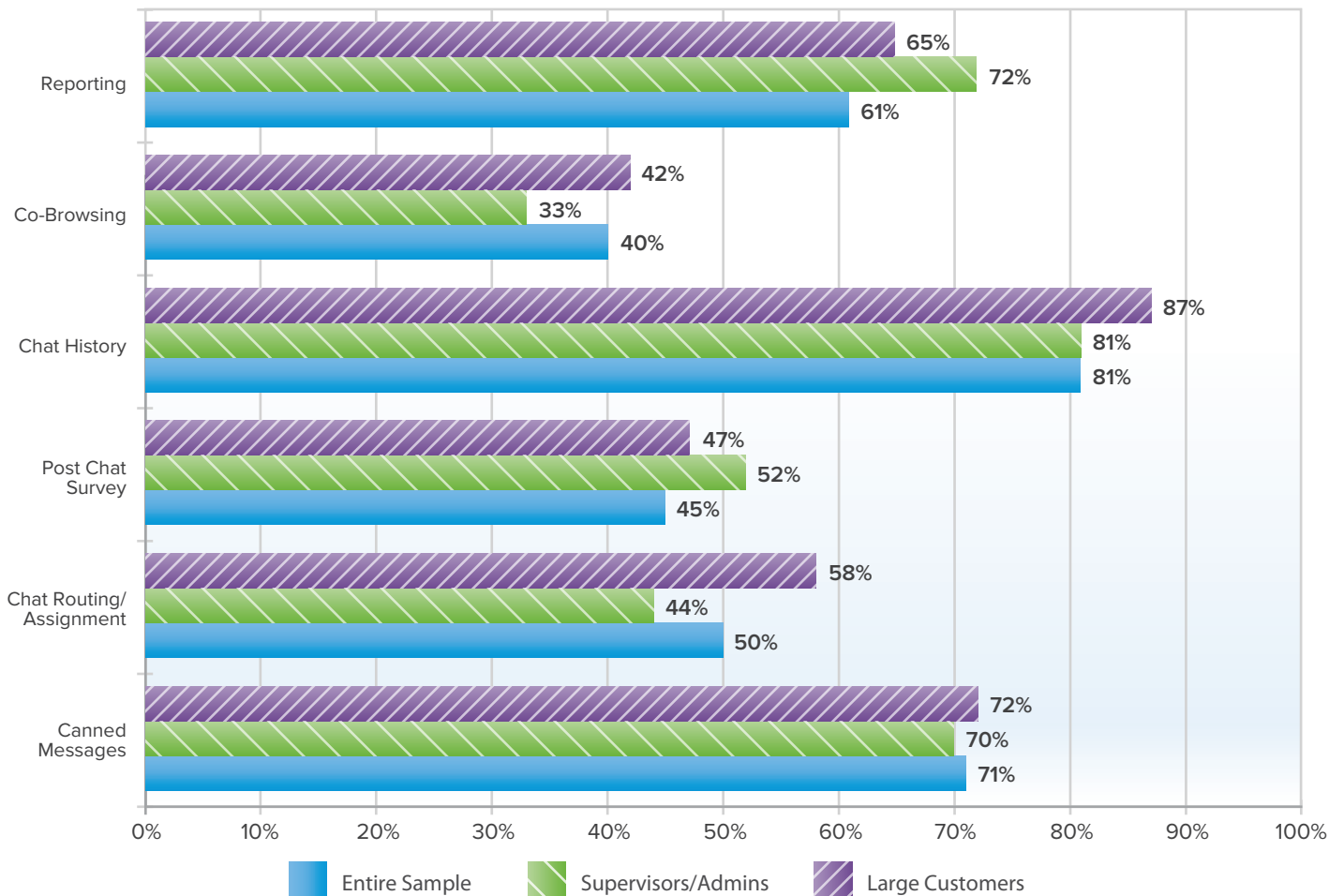


Figure 9: Usefulness of Live Chat Features in Delivering Support

Live Chat Support Features

We asked the sample universe to rate the usefulness of certain live chat features in helping them to provide support to their customers. Below are the results for features rated as “Very” or “Extremely” useful.

Chat History – the ability to access, in real-time, past chat conversations for a given visitor was the most highly rated feature. As consumers, we all know that dealing with an agent – through any channel – who can quickly come up to speed on past issues is highly valuable.

“Canned Messages” also received one of the highest ratings and this is consistent with other research projects we’ve completed⁴. Canned Messages must be implemented appropriately to be effective; in surveys with online shoppers, we’ve discovered that the overuse of canned messages is significantly detrimental to the perceived success of a chat session.

It’s predictable that Reporting would be more useful for the admins and supervisors and that Chat Routing and Assignment would do well with Larger Customer implementations. A noteworthy result is the relatively weak performance of Co-Browsing. Co-Browsing is the ability for an agent to share an Internet browser session with a visitor. Among BoldChat eCommerce customers who use live chat for sales, co-browsing was chosen last year as among the top five features to be used during the selling-season. Co-Browsing, it seems, appears to be a sales focused feature rather than a support one.

⁴<http://www.boldchat.com/live-chat-whitepapers.asp#holiday-readiness>

The Future – More to Do Through More Channels

Support organizations are busy, and will likely get busier. We asked the survey respondents if the live chat agents inside their contact centers work simultaneously across other channels like texting and email. An overwhelming 86% of the sample indicated that yes, live chat agents work concurrently on different types of work. And two thirds indicated that they are also actively supporting customers through Social Media channels.

Social Media as a Support Channel

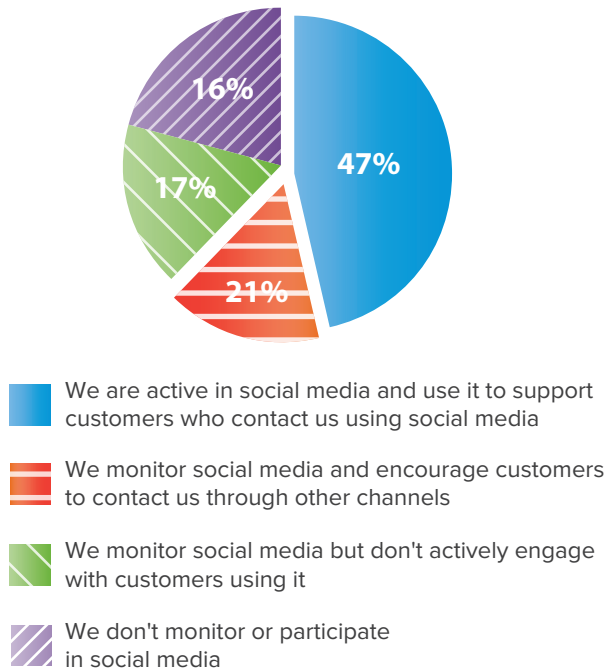


Figure 10: Social Media as a Support Channel

Research Methodology

The survey was fielded directly from our client application (both the PC version and the web-based client) through the use of the product's built-in communication mechanism, the HomeTab. The HomeTab is our "tips" repository, hosting hundreds of categorized posts aimed at making chat agents more proficient at using the BoldChat interface. From time-to-time we use the HomeTab to announce new product releases, planned maintenance, or to collect feedback through optional surveys.

This survey was presented only to paying customers (ie: customers in our 10 day free trial were not offered the survey). The survey was completed by more than 400 respondents representing more than 300 unique companies. The respondents were from all over the world with a majority (83%) being from North America, 10% from Europe, and the remaining 7% from elsewhere.

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