



Positive Real-World Results for Conversational Assistance

Helpshift validates the business value for brands that incorporate messaging and automation into conversational engagements with customers »

Opus Research presents results from a survey of companies that have deployed solutions from customer care specialist Helpshift. The report yielded promising, high-level results for businesses that implement automated, conversational elements to help reduce customer support costs as well as improve customer experience, retention, and satisfaction. Highlighted datapoints include reducing support expenses by more than 30%, speeding up customer support response times by up to 90%, and one customer with a calculated savings of more than \$6.3M annually.

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Introduction, Definitions & Methodology

Since 2011, Helpshift has offered brands a cloud-based platform to foster friction-free conversations with their customers over messaging channels. Recently, Opus Research surveyed a select group of companies that have deployed Helpshift's solutions to support their customer care organizations. The purpose was to discover, document and quantify the business value created from adopting of a conversational engagement model with customers.

Opus Research entered the project with strong conviction, based on prior research, that conversations — defined as ongoing, asynchronous communications that often automate interactions with chatbots and natural language processing to enable customers to describe problems in their own words — are the ideal engagement model between brands and their prospects or customers. In the best cases, they let customers initiate or receive messages while using the most-convenient channel on their own device and in the course of their natural activities.

Automation in customer care has become a business imperative with the goal of rapidly recognizing and resolving customer issues. Implementing an engagement platform with automated assistance can support brands in delivering a consistent and efficient customer support experience at scale. But customer service automation is more than just staff augmentation and resource savings, it's also about retaining customers and building loyalty through an improved support experience and increased visibility of customer feedback. Brands have opportunities to learn from each customer conversation to develop and provide an exceptional customer experience.

Determining the business value of bringing conversational elements into the customer care equation deserves deeper examination because cost-savings alone should not be a justification. An equal amount, or more, attention must be paid to considerations that center on customer experience, retention, satisfaction and long-term profitability. To assess the impact of these factors, Opus Research circulated a detailed questionnaire to a group of companies that now deploy solutions from customer service specialist, Helpshift.

The questionnaire asked specifically about each company's customer care operations, resources allocated, and observed business benefits from implementing Helpshift tools and technology.

Many firms, correctly, regard their use of advanced technologies, such as predictive analytics, machine learning, natural language processing and AI, as a source of competitive advantage. The results reported in this document are both aggregated to give a general indicator of expected outcomes and anonymized to prevent the unintentional release of competitively sensitive information.

Positive Results from Conversational Engagements

Helpshift provides enterprises and brands with a conversational platform that, by itself, is a complete solution. They enable companies access to resources that leverage legacy systems and services, including email, webchat, in-app messaging, live-agent customer service or automated virtual agents (aka “bots”). It is not a “bolt-on” solution; however, respondents that reported the strongest ROI and business value mentioned that they were able to deploy Helpshift solutions more quickly and at reduced expense.

Responses to the Opus Research questionnaire yielded promising, high-level results, including:

- **A multi-million-dollar electronic gaming specialist able to reduce support expenses by more than 30% in less than 6 months**
- **A diversified ISP was able to save \$6.3 million in support costs by migrating 30% of support traffic from phone-based agents**
- **Another electronic gaming company reduced response time for help requests by 90%, from 110-140 hours per average response time to less than 16 hours**

Cost-savings can be especially compelling when high-salaried staff is involved. Firms that offer technical products or services and, therefore, pay premium salaries to support engineers often find a “payback period” (the time it takes for the savings to justify the initial investment) in weeks, rather than years. For example, for the gaming specialist who was able to reduce support expenses by more than 30% in less than six months, the corresponding ROI calculation involving the present value of future savings divided by initial investment could exceed 1200% on an annual basis.

Reducing Support Costs Corresponds with Increased Customer Satisfaction

Helpshift has responded to the demand of today’s mobile, messaging-oriented customers by developing and refining technologies that treat asynchronous conversations as a primary means of communicating with brands. These conversations take place over time, employing text-based chats that enable existing customers to use their chosen devices at the time of their choice. In ideal instances, they can initiate and carryout chats in the course of using a company’s mobile app through messaging, such as invoking assistance during the course of playing a video game.

To document and quantify the value of these conversations, Helpshift customers provided enlightening observations and strategic insights about the use of automated digital assistance that include:

- **Firms under study have enjoyed significantly positive return on investment when looking at reduction in the time it takes agents to successfully resolve customer questions and issues.**
- **ROI is further enhanced by reducing start-up costs and the time and expense required to bring Helpshift online either to automate chat-based interactions or correctly resolve customer issues.**
- **Firms that engage with customers through in-app messaging or chat report reduced expenses associated with customer retention**
- **While one gaming company saw a move to an automated virtual agent or bot gives rise to an initial decline in CSAT (around 10% drop), rapid resolution of issues has a positive impact on customer effort. In general, customers find CSAT improves over time and companies conclude that expenses associated with customer retention are reduced.**
- **Getting actionable data from customer conversations greatly increased speed of information to programmers and content developers for product improvements**
- **Deflection rates exceeded 75% when compared to previous means for supplying information via FAQs on a website**

Other factors that had a positive impact on ROI include reduced reliance and expense associated with business process outsourcing and professional services, including outsourced contact center agents.

Giving Weight to the Intangibles

While not all respondents included quantitative results, sufficient data were captured to provide a real-world assessment of the financial impact and ROI of Helpshift deployments. This included a reduction in support expenses resulting from a shift in volume from live to automated handling of chat conversations and the associated expenses for both internal staff and outsourcers. Opus Research was able to gauge through post questionnaire interviews anecdotal evidence of positive changes in customer retention rates and associated lifetime value.

ENTERPRISE EXECUTIVES LOOKING TO ACHIEVE THE ROI GOALS OF THEIR AUTOMATED ASSISTANCE IMPLEMENTATIONS DON'T HAVE THE LUXURY OF VAGUE NOTIONS OF SUCCESS WHEN IMPLEMENTING CUSTOMER SUPPORT TECHNOLOGIES.

Real-world experience seldom lives up to the indicated expectations when it comes to measuring customer support outcomes for automated assistance. In the case of “capture rates” — meaning the number of contacts that are handled by automated agents — the true outcome is likely never 100%. Some issues, like arranging for a refund, are complex by nature or require human intervention in order to comply with company policy or prevailing regulations. Therefore it is a best practice for companies to give customers the opportunity to reach a live agent in the course of all conversations.

Enterprise executives looking to achieve the ROI goals of their automated assistance implementations don't have the luxury of vague notions of success when implementing customer support technologies. Therefore it is both instructive and consequential to take a look at the broad spectrum of factors that directly impact their customer care automation strategies on their bottom line. Thanks to insights from the project respondents, Opus Research was able to identify the factors and implementation tactics that correlate with more positive outcomes.

Keeping Customers Happy with Embedded Support

Helpshift's solutions enable the end-users of a customer's app or service to reach support resources in the course of carrying out their normal activities within the app. If they are gamers, for instance, they can initiate a support request directly from the game they are playing, simply by starting a messaging-based conversation in-app. This is a best-case scenario for gaming companies especially, as the hours or days required for an email response or minutes in queue waiting for a conversation with a live chat agent increase churn. Time that could be spent on game play is wasted waiting for support. In the absence of automation, firms need to employ excess staff or turn to business process outsourcers with attendant high expenses to keep wait times low.

One of the respondents to the survey made it clear that deploying Helpshift's solutions had reduced the time it took to resolve support tickets by 90%. As a result, the actual volume of requests declined by 65% (reflecting a decline in follow-up calls regarding open issues). The company also cited a 130% increase in CSAT that corresponded with the reduction in response times and increase in resolution rates.

Documenting the Key Success Factors for Automated Assistance

Overall, the Helpshift customers emphasized these key success factors to effectively utilizing automated digital assistance in their customer support strategies:

➤ Speed Time to Train and Deploy

Helpshift customers debunked the myth that implementing conversational agents is expensive and time consuming and that it relies heavily on professional services

➤ **Manage Automation Rates and the Bot/Agent Balance**

Customers ultimately decide whether they want to deal with what they perceive as a bot or automated virtual agent. The firms under study took control of how they marketed and promoted their chat and in-app offerings to balance the bot/human workflows.

➤ **Positive impact on the Bottom Line**

The firms under study ultimately reported a positive impact on the bottom line. In reducing expenses associated with customer care outsourcers by 30% in the less than 6 months, the multi-million-dollar gaming company emphasized Helpshift's mobile SDK and flexibility in new feature development as factors in accelerating business value.

➤ **CSAT Doesn't Suffer**

Automation of customer care used to strongly correlate with a decline in CSAT, but that has not proven to be true with the implementation of Helpshift-powered chatbots. Respondents reported a slight decline in their preferred measure of customer satisfaction, primarily CSAT or net promoter score, but those metrics tended to rise over time. They also indicated a willingness to introduce new measures of satisfaction surrounding speed to task completion and reduction in "customer effort."

➤ **Significant positive return on investment**

➤ **Electronic gaming specialist reduced support expenses by 30% in 6 months**

➤ **Diversified ISP saved \$6.3 million in customer support costs**

➤ **Improved response times by 90%, from 110-140 hours to less than 16 hours**

➤ **Accelerated product development cycles**

➤ **Cut contact volume by 65%**

Shaping the Future of Digital Customer Support

Opus Research regards the respondents to this project as experienced practitioners of conversational customer support. They have learned firsthand that there is value in communicating with customers or prospects in a series of "moments" in the course of a long-standing conversation via in-app and messaging-based communications. While reaching customers "at their time of choice over their device of choice" may be a cliché in the world of real time, mobile-first customer support, veteran Helpshift customers have a positive metrics and ROI to validate their choice of vendor and customer support tactics.

Helpshift's Model Merges Automation with Positive Business Impacts

Companies will continue to justify investment in customer care automation with stories of "capture rates" and "staff reductions" but they do so at their own peril. Our survey of Helpshift clients documented the results of use-case driven deployments that accomplished the heretofore unheard-of goal of increasing automated handling of customer care contacts while sustaining or increasing measurable levels of customer satisfaction. Additionally, customers emphasized a flexible, transparent business relationship with Helpshift helped solidify a positive client experience.

The magic of implementing messaging-based support of customer care functions is best expressed by one of Helpshift's customers:

"Helpshift has been a great investment for us.... We have shown the value that service can play in the development cycle and cut contact volume by 65%."

Imagine the impact of applying that percentage to your company's customer care metrics. Combined with clear, bottom-line impacts in cost savings (upwards of \$6.3M annually), improving customer response times by up to 90%, and implementing an accelerated system to provide actionable data and information to product development teams, Helpshift customers are truly achieving positive ROI and business value with automated customer care.

About Opus Research

Opus Research is a diversified advisory and analysis firm providing critical insight on software and services that support multimodal customer care. Opus Research is focused on "Conversational Commerce," the merging of intelligent assistant technologies, conversational intelligence, intelligent authentication, enterprise collaboration and digital commerce.

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