



# Making it personal:

## How smart communication tools drive business results



# Overview

Brands must evolve the way they communicate with customers.

People expect to communicate with brands as fast and seamlessly as they do with their friends, family, and associates. In order to do so, brands must implement communication tools that enable fast and personal interactions with their customers, which, in turn, will foster strong, long-lasting relationships.

When assessing the performance of communication tools, the most important metrics are Customer Satisfaction Scores, Cost Per Lead, and Cost Per Sale.

Continuously monitoring these key success criteria is critical to ensure communication tools are meeting customer needs while delivering against revenue goals. Any shortcomings need to be addressed to improve the tools' overall performance.

The best customer communication tools should lay the groundwork for brands to build meaningful, long-lasting relationships with customers.

The customer journey is becoming increasingly complex: people now interact with brands across multiple screens, voice assistants, social media platforms, instant messaging, and offline. It is particularly important for brands to support their customers effectively across all touchpoints, as people who shop across multiple channels spend three times more than single-channel shoppers. Furthermore, shoppers are becoming wary of generic marketing communication and would rather engage in a more personal relationship with brands.<sup>1</sup>

## Google's Business Messages

Business Messages is a mobile conversational channel that allows brands to connect with customers directly from Google Search, Google Maps, and their own channels. It enables rich, asynchronous messaging experiences that delight customers and drive business results.

As the global pandemic has restricted in-person interactions, customers across all age groups have learned to increasingly rely on technology to communicate with brands. Indeed, half of adults have tried a new technology since the beginning of the crisis, including 33% of those over 55 years old.<sup>2</sup> People already have immediate access to their friends, family, and work associates thanks to instant messaging applications. They now expect their communications with brands to be just as seamless and timely.

For businesses, offering messaging options to customers can help promote sales. Almost 8 out of 10 people would like to buy products using chat or messaging,<sup>3</sup> and about 7 in 10 (72%) customers would make a purchase online if they could ask questions in real-time.<sup>4</sup>

Brands must, therefore, accelerate their digital transformation to communicate with customers through one-on-one interactions while handling a large volume of contacts in a cost- and time-efficient fashion. Technologies such as messaging, chatbots, and AI can enable brands to deliver this personal customer experience.

<sup>1</sup> Morgan, B (2020) Customer Journeys Are Becoming Increasingly Complex, <https://bit.ly/2KhZAWx>

<sup>2</sup> Ipsos Essentials, May 2020

<sup>3</sup> Quick (2019) The Future of Customer Conversations, <https://bit.ly/2INl9gX>

<sup>4</sup> Avochato (2019) When it Comes to Communicating With Businesses, Customers Overwhelmingly Prefer Texting, <https://bit.ly/2UCMqFp>

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## Figure 1: Average number of communication tools used

### Customer Support

Average #  
of Tools Used



Most used channels: call center / phone, email, text messages, website (submission form)

### Marketing & Sales

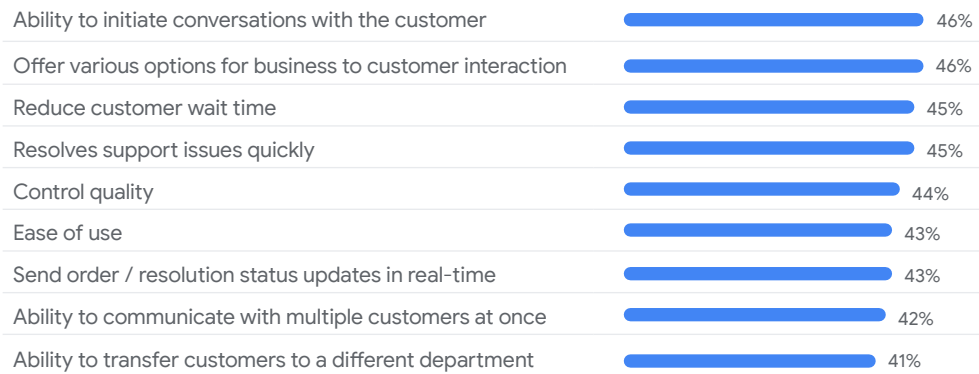


Most used channels: in-person, email, social media, business's app

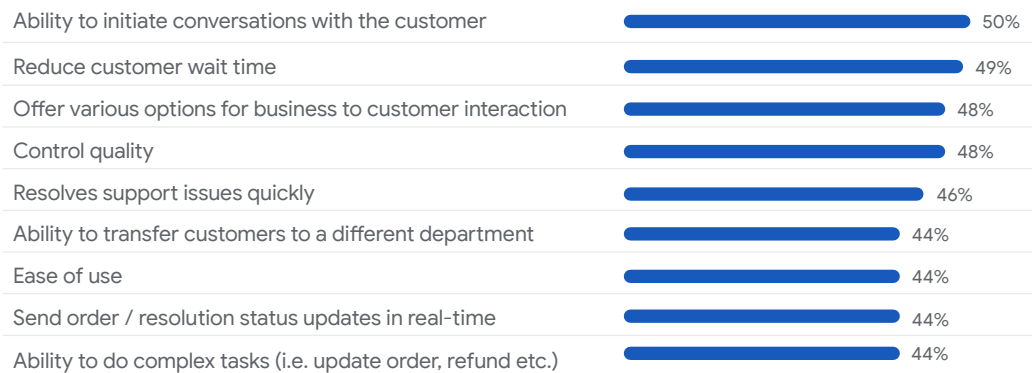
Today, over 60% of brands already use instant messaging and most of them rely on 6-7 different communication tools (Figure 1). The B2C Communication Tools study conducted by Ipsos on behalf of Google brings to light what practitioners desire from these tools (Figure 2).<sup>5</sup> The findings are timely and particularly important as practitioners seek to upgrade and modernize their communication tools: the more recent, more sophisticated AI-powered chatbots are expected to help retailers cut costs by \$439 billion a year by 2023, up from only \$7 million in 2019.<sup>6</sup>

## Figure 2: Most important attributes for communication tools

### For Customer Support



### For Marketing and Sales



# Speed and personal interactions lead to long-lasting relationships between brands and their customers

## Speed

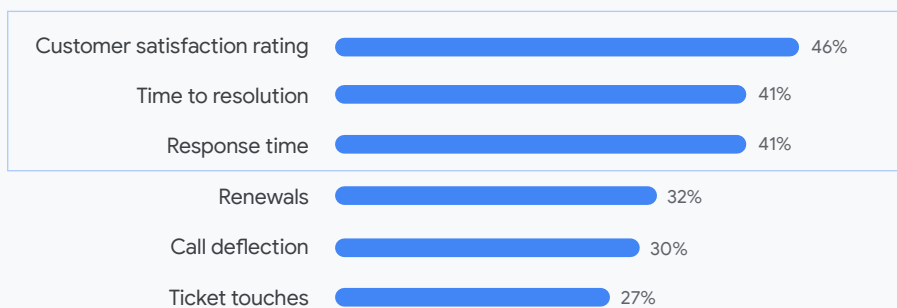
In a typical year, most US customers waste a full day on hold with customer support across the various brands they interact with. People grow increasingly frustrated with wait times, as online services and smartphones have trained them to access people and find answers in the blink of an eye. They now expect brands to answer their questions as quickly as possible. This creates a challenge for businesses who need to service a multitude of customers by addressing their requests as quickly as they can.

In line with this reasoning, the Ipsos B2C Communication Tools study finds that for over 80% of Marketing & Sales and Customer Support business decision makers, it is important that their communication tools help reduce customer wait time.

Speed is particularly important to Customer Support professionals, who measure the ROI of their communication tools based on customer satisfaction rating, time to resolution, and response time (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Success criteria for measuring ROI on communication tools\***

\*Among Customer Support business decision Makers



## Deliver personal and positive interactions at the moment of need

In academia, the field of positive psychology has brought to light how personal interactions give people the sense of warmth, self-worth, safety, and comfort that they crave in this day and age.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, meaningful personal interactions matter whether it is with friends, family, colleagues, or brands: when it comes to making a purchase, customers find their experience with the merchant to be more important than the price of the product.<sup>8</sup>

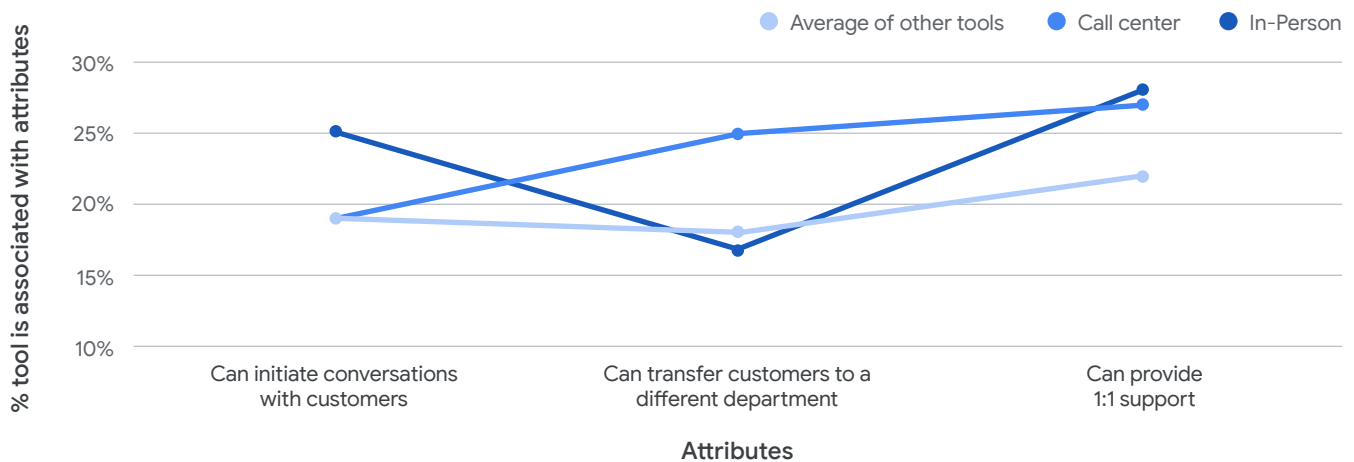
Brands, therefore, must harness the power of positive psychology to deliver a customer experience that is both personal and positive. To that end, over 80% of practitioners stress that the most important attribute of a communication tool is the ability to support customers in a personal fashion.

Of all the communication tools, call center/phone and in-person stand out as the most personal channels to communicate with a customer, especially for starting a conversation, giving one-on-one support, and transferring a customer to a different department when necessary (Figure 4).<sup>9</sup> As it pertains to messaging, 40% of businesses report that Google's Business Messages is particularly well-suited to

communicate with customers since it offers numerous options for business-to-customer interactions. Indeed, Google's Business Messages delivers on the top 3 features Customer Support professionals seek from their messaging tool: to reduce customer service time, allow for smart automation, and enable smooth transition to a live agent when one-on-one help is needed.

## Figure 4: Key features of communication tools

How strongly each tool is associated with top attributes



## Foster strong, long-lasting relationships

Establishing a human, personal connection with customers and addressing their questions quickly enables brands to drive sales and improve customer satisfaction. Customer Satisfaction Scores are particularly important for Customer Support decision makers, who often rely on these metrics to measure ROI on their communication tools.

To foster these long-lasting relationships, brands need communication tools that allow for both human interactions and automation. That is, brands must be able to talk with their customers in a personal fashion, while implementing smart automation to handle high volumes of interactions in a cost-efficient manner.

The B2C Communication Tools study reveals that 90% of participants believe Google's Business Messages will improve the interactions with their customers (Figure 5). Indeed, the smart automation built into Google's Business Messages allows Marketing & Sales practitioners to make a strong first impression by establishing a personal relationship with customers from the get-go, and helps Customer Support professionals to reduce these customers' wait time.

## Figure 5: Improving interactions with customers



9 in 10

Business decision makers believe Google's Business Messages will improve (improve a lot/improve slightly) the interaction with their customers

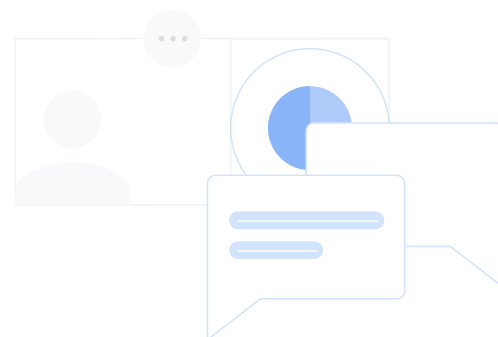
## Recommendations for practitioners

To sum up, brands must take control of the customer journey by implementing communication tools that empower them to accompany their customers every step of the way. These tools should enable customers to complete their purchase faster, with fewer touchpoints, and address their questions as quickly as possible.

Of all the communication tools available, AI-powered chatbots, in particular, help practitioners streamline their customers' journey and cut costs. These chatbots save brands \$0.70 per customer interaction and are able to answer up to 80% of routine questions.<sup>10</sup> In addition, retail chatbots deliver a

personalized experience for every customer and can help raise shopping cart conversion rates by up to 30%.<sup>11</sup>

The Ipsos B2C Communication Tools study shows that Google's Business Messages is a particularly efficient tool to seamlessly communicate with customers throughout their journey. Google's Business Messages delivers on what is most important to both customers and brands: a fast response and personal, human connection delivered through smart interaction.

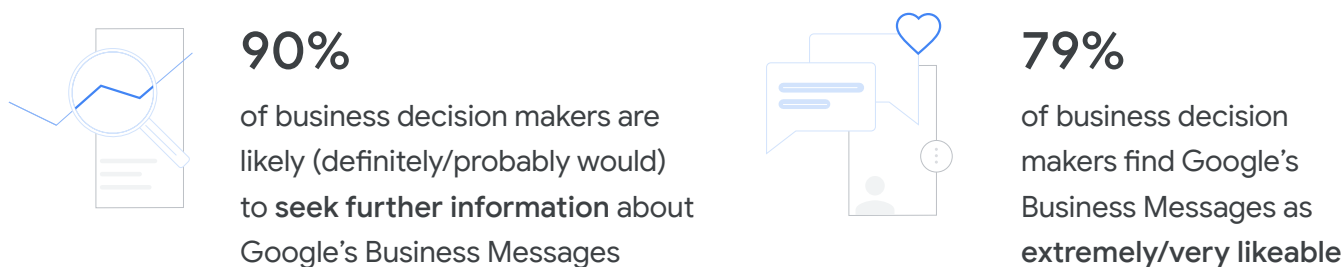


For these reasons, 9 in 10 participants in the study find Google’s Business Messages highly likeable. Most (79%) say they would be highly likely to seek further information about the service.

When implementing such communication tools, practitioners should frequently monitor Customer Satisfaction Scores, Cost Per Sales, and Cost Per

Lead in order to measure ROI and improve overall performance. To that end, a majority of participants in the Ipsos study trust that Google’s Business Messages will enable them to drive sales and improve client satisfaction (Figure 7).

**Figure 6: Impressions of Google’s Business Messages**



**Figure 7: Impact on the business**

Success Criteria Used and Perceived Improvements from Business Messages

	Success Criteria Used to Measure ROI (% Selected)	Business Messages Improvements (% Business Messages would improve a lot)
<b>Customer Support</b>		
Customer satisfaction rating	46%	55%
Time to resolution	41%	50%
Response time	41%	49%
<b>Customer</b>		
Sales	39%	57%
Cost per sale	36%	52%



## Ipsos

Ipsos is the world's third-largest market research company, present in 90 markets, and employing more than 18,000 people.

Our passionately curious research professionals, analysts, and scientists have built unique multi-specialist capabilities that provide true understanding and powerful insights into the actions, opinions, and motivations of citizens, consumers, patients, customers, or employees. We serve more than 5000 clients across the world with 75 business solutions.

Ipsos conducted an online, 18-minute survey with business decision makers who support marketing/sales and/or customer service in companies with 500+ employees. Companies spanned three main verticals: Retail, Business Services/Logistics and Tech/Telecommunications. The surveys were conducted on September 8–19, 2020 with a sample size of N=300.



About the author:

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Emmanuel's background combines over 15 years of market research and marketing experience with strong academic achievements. He leverages this expertise to help his clients predict, measure, and optimize the impact of their brand and marketing efforts. Emmanuel also teaches Consumer Market Research at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), and is the author of *Brand Hacks – How to Build Brands by Fulfilling the Human Quest for Meaning* (Paramount Market Publishing).

Emmanuel holds an MBA in Marketing from the University of Hull, United Kingdom and a Doctorate in Consumer Psychology from the University of Nottingham Trent, United Kingdom.

