



Customer Retention 2.0

How Financial Institutions are Driving Online Conversions & Building Customer Loyalty with Live Chat

A LIVE GUIDE WHITEPAPER

With the advent of Internet banking, financial institutions actively moved their customers online - a powerful change, but one that rendered them anonymous. The loss of personal relationships weakened customer retention, and as a result, institutions now strive to restore a human element online. This paper asserts that live chat is the next step in online member services, and a competitive necessity: driving conversions, cutting costs and boosting satisfaction scores.

INTRODUCTION

Online banking was an experiment in the 1980s. In the mid-nineties, it became an alternative. Now over 20 years later, a financial institution without an online channel is about as competitive as VHS.

The move to the Internet was a positive one, overall: when banks and credit unions moved their customers online, they transcended geography, expanded their customer base and shrank operating costs. However, in the transition from face-to-face to self-service, something important was lost. Personal interaction used to be a kind of glue: it kept customers connected to the people they banked with and emotionally attached to the building and the name. With the advent of online banking, that glue weakened. Customers today have less stake in staying with their financial institution. When a new proposition comes along, they're more likely to move.

The result is a new vulnerability around retention and attraction, losing the ability to bring in new customers and seeing one's existing customer base erode. Other concerns, equally pressing, fill out the landscape. Online security is crucial. So is the constant effort to improve utilization, finding new ways to accomplish more with the same (or fewer) resources. The technology itself has to be close enough to the cutting edge to advance, but non-disruptive enough to make customers comfortable. Pleasing one's customers is important in its own right. Pleasing them in a measurable way is even better.

This translates to a challenge. How can banks and credit unions reinsert themselves in ways that are meaningful for the customer and profitable for the institution?

Live chat presents an opportunity that ties these elements together, positioning an organization at the front of the next great transition in online banking. In today's online landscape, live chat isn't just a competitive advantage. It's a competitive necessity.

WHAT IS LIVE CHAT?

Throughout this paper, we refer to Netop Live Guide for our example.

How It Works

A customer who's interacting with a financial institution online - browsing their website, reading an email or visiting their social network - sees a button (or with proactive chat, a pop-up window) with a customized message: "Question? Chat with us."

They click to chat. A form opens, asking them to fill in some information. The customer service department uses this to route the inquiry to the right person; simultaneously, the customer's history loads on the representative's end, putting their question in context.

When the representative takes the chat, a window pops up on the customer's screen, and a real-time dialogue begins.

ADDED FUNCTIONALITY

- Representatives can stock a response library with pre-written answers to common questions
- If a customer needs help finding the right page, their representative can guide them there
- Text-only chats can transition to audio or video as needed
- Video chat can be initiated at the outset
- Proactive chat lets a representative invite a customer to chat if they seem to be struggling

To connect with customers, banks and credit unions have to be reachable. To keep customers from moving, they have to be personal and trustworthy in a way that rings true.

COMPETITIVE RISK, COMPETITIVE OPPORTUNITY

Financial institutions are not inherently popular at the moment. At a time defined by economic insecurity, the average person sees banks as disembodied and untrustworthy at best; at worst, they're the culprit. In other words, they face a marketing challenge.

Charles Schwab responded to this challenge with remarkable force in 2005, with the launch of Euro RSCG's "Talk to Chuck" campaign: a series of pithy speech-balloons that gave voice to the real financial concerns of Charles Schwab's investors, capitalized on its reputation for listening, and positioned itself as their ally ("New Schwab campaign"). The strategy was brilliant. So were the results.

Much of the campaign's success came from making Charles Schwab approachable: someone you could talk to. This strategy applies to online banking, as well. To connect with customers, banks and credit unions have to be reachable. To keep customers from moving, they have to be personal and trustworthy in a way that rings true.

The Next Logical Step in Online Banking

Live chat combines approachability and human interaction in a remarkably implementable way: with very little technical setup (solutions like Netop Live Guide don't even require a download), it creates a real-time, contextual dialogue between two people, easily initiated by either party. Because it records conversations for later analysis, chat also provides insight into the needs and problems that impact online customer banking relationships.

Put differently, it gives banks and credit unions the ability to address an individual in a way that takes into account his or her unique response. This is how Harvard Business School Professor John Deighton defined interactive marketing in 1996 (Deighton, 1996); today interactive marketing is a major focus for banks and credit unions - and not without cause. In the article "Online Banking Trends in 2012," bankfutura.com reported that customers expect financial websites to offer the same level of service as do shopping and booking sites (2011). "This is a huge but unavoidable challenge for banks for the coming year," bankfutura.com wrote, because the online channel was designed for transactions, not communications and sales. As a response, they advised CRM developments, personalization and a better experience for web users. ("Online Banking Trends in 2012," bankfutura.com)

“The user experience of Internet banks should be improved; it should be increased to the level of web shops, online booking systems. Because the visitors are educated and indulged on these type of portals... they expect the same level of user experience from their banks. This is a huge but unavoidable challenge for banks for the coming year.”

“Online Banking Trends in 2012”

BANKFUTURA.COM, DECEMBER 2011

Live chat accomplishes those needs. Furthermore, customers are coming to expect it. Consider the results of the 2011 live chat report by the e-tailing group, analyzing the opinions and behavior of 1,005 frequent online shoppers throughout the US and UK (e-tailing, 2011). Among customers who had chatted before, live chat was their number one choice across the board. Eighty-three percent agreed it should be made available on every page. Twenty-three percent actually left a website because it didn't offer live chat. “Year over year, shopper receptiveness... is on the rise,” e-tailing reported. “From 2010, the overall increase in receptiveness is 20%.”

Not Everyone is Paying Attention

While some banks and credit unions have been relying on live chat for a decade or more - the Wall Street Journal, Netbanker and American Airlines Federal Credit Union, to name a few - theFinancialBrand.com reported that many others “have yet to embrace this simple customer service solution” (“Maximize your website,” 2011).

This represents a competitive opportunity - one that wasn't lost on health provider Regence. It used chat as a strategy to differentiate itself from its competitors. In 2011, Forrester Research, Inc., wrote, “While most insurers focus on self-service in isolation, Regence BlueCross BlueShield decided to augment its site's self-service capabilities with live chat. The initiative has met with great success, driving customer satisfaction even higher than phone service” (Forrester Research, “Case Study: Regence Uses Chat To Boost Customer Satisfaction”, February 2011).

Indeed, according to the e-tailing group, the principal reason customers haven't yet used chat is not because they're uninterested, but because it isn't available (e-tailing, 2011). In the words of Paul Hopkins, group director of customer services and operations at travel company Thomas Cook: “Live chat is our most productive channel in terms of customer service and satisfaction. Internationally, the next great area in customer contacts is live chat” (Forrester, “Taking chat international,” May 2011).

“Today, our members don’t want cash. They want advice and help, and they want it when they want it and how they want it.”

“Branches Are Now as Useful as a Dead Parrot”

THE CREDIT UNION TIMES, MAY 2011

THE IMPORTANCE OF VIDEO

While text-based chat is central to today’s CRM strategies, video chat is still emerging. Most customers are unlikely to have encountered it. As such, online video chat is the leading edge of customer service.

From the aesthetics of representatives’ workspaces to the equipment required (directional microphones, lighting, etc.), video chat requires more preparation to launch; if an organization isn’t set up to meet these demands, this is a channel to move toward rather than adopt immediately. Still, while video isn’t in the immediate future for some, it is the future: the next iteration of online banking is face-to-face online banking, and as important as text-based chat is today, video chat will be tomorrow.

Organizations that value being ahead of the curve are already moving in this direction. Wilson Field, for example, deployed live video chat to let customers connect with advisors when facing financial problems. And in 2007, Denmark’s fifth-largest bank, Nykredit, deployed Live Guide video chat to bridge the gap between face-to-face and online customer service.

“Customers have varying needs and varying wishes as to how they want to be served,” said Thomas Egede Kragh, assistant director for digital channels at Nykredit. Where it comes to “personally sensitive issues” such as finance, “personal contact and trust are crucial.” In his words, Nykredit implemented video chat “both as an independent advice channel and as a first step toward a traditional, face-to-face meeting: with the help of video chat, it is easy to determine whether the customer’s problem can be solved online or whether it would be better to get together in person” (“Case study: Nykredit,” 2011).

Even for financial institutions that aren’t prepared to launch a video channel immediately, the capability is important. As this solution moves from cutting edge to mainstream, more customers will come to expect it.

Financial institutions, then, should choose a solution that broadens, rather than limits, future possibilities. For example, Live Guide is an expansive option because it supports text, audio and video chat across a variety of channels: websites, emails, social media and electronic invoices. Its provider, Netop, is a leader in the live chat industry; in fact, it’s currently the only provider of secure audio and video chat in the market. A technology such as this meets today’s needs appropriately, while also ensuring that when a financial institution needs to expand its services, there will be room to do so.

20%

Businesses that use live chat report a 20% increase in online conversions

To put it bluntly, leaving customers with questions unanswered when they're in the middle of a transaction is like giving them a link to your competitor's site.

LIVE CHAT BOLSTERS PROFITABILITY

The value of live chat is known and measurable. Far from being merely popular, it brings tangible benefits as well.

Conversions

Wells Fargo was a pioneer in the use of online chat. In 2002, the bank's online conversions were lower than desired; its applicant approval rates, suboptimal. It also felt a need to inject human assistance into the shopping process. In response, it implemented live chat.

The results were not only high satisfaction scores, but a double-digit bump in conversions. Customers who chatted were approved at a higher rate; they also generated higher loans balances than those who didn't. With the launch of live chat, Wells Fargo's online home equity conversation rates jumped from 30% to 40%.

Wells Fargo was not a lonely pioneer. When the Internet pharmacy ITSRx launched Live Guide, it noted a 20% rise in conversions ("Case study: ITSRx," 2010). Hoover's called chat one of its best conversion vehicles, reporting an 11% increase in average order value and a 48% reduction in average sales cycle length. When David's Bridal implemented proactive chat, its shopping cart conversions bloomed from 30% to 50%. National City's conversion rate for chat users grew six-fold ("Maximize your website," 2011).

Application Completion

When a customer runs into a problem online, their first reaction is to back out. To put it bluntly, leaving customers with questions unanswered when they're in the middle of a transaction is like giving them a link to your competitor's site.

Live chat breaks this cycle. When CRM solutions provider Axonom implemented Live Guide, it received its first promising lead within the week, later noting "a one-to-one match between qualified leads who use live chat and those who fill out lead forms" ("Case study: Axonom," 2011). After implementing proactive chat, Nationwide Mutual Insurance captured 30% to 40% of its abandoners. The same proves true across industries from retail to financial, where chat is reducing abandonment, improving conversions, and driving customer satisfaction.

An institution's chat history represents a cumulative bank of information that can be harnessed to design customer service training initiatives, website developments, business improvements and so on.

LIVE CHAT PRUNES COSTS

On the other side of the coin, live chat shrinks operation costs.

Service Efficiency

A phone operator can take only one call at a time. However, a good chat agent can handle two or three conversations at once. When Scandinavian Airline System (SAS) implemented Netop Live Guide, they found they could take five to six chats in the time it took to complete one phone call ("Case story: SAS," 2009).

With a good interface, a live chat solution can push efficiency even further. In 2011 Axonom said that the Live Guide interface let its representatives "effortlessly toggle between other duties" while answering chat requests ("Case study: Axonom," 2011).

Indeed, service efficiency is one of the main reasons that companies invest in live chat. According to theFinancialBrand.com, American Airlines Federal Credit Union "realized a 20% savings compared to standard 800 and international phone charges," achieving "increased sales and retention rates while simultaneously decreasing the cost of customer interactions" ("Maximize your website," 2011). Aviva, an international insurance company, said that "nearly 25% of its contact volume shifted away from telephone and email to live chat," constituting an operational savings of over £1 million per year (Forrester, "Taking chat international," May 2011). Likewise EarthLink reported a permanent decrease in support cost after launching proactive chat in 2006. When ITSRx launched Live Guide, it noted a 25% drop in operating costs ("Case study: ITSRx," 2010).

Business Development, Customer Efficiency

Live chat can help the customers themselves become more efficient too, ultimately resulting in fewer support requests.

"When customers have questions that can be answered on the website, chat reps help them navigate to the appropriate page as well as paste links that take the customer directly to the answer. This not only provides answers in context but also teaches customers where to find the answers the next time they need them" (Forrester, "Case study: Regence," February 2011).

Moreover, an institution's chat history represents a cumulative bank of information that can be harnessed to design customer service training initiatives, website developments, business improvements and so on.

Regence continually analyzes its chat data, reaping insights "into what customers don't understand in the self-service environment" as well as "which areas are ripe for contextual help," Forrester wrote. Based on the "invaluable trove of data" it collects from live chat, the company "created an extensive registration and login FAQ... significantly reducing the need for assistance with these functions." ("Case Study: Regence Uses Chat To Boost Customer Satisfaction," Forrester Research, Inc., February 15, 2011)

MEASURING ROI

Companies can use Forrester's Total Economic Impact™ (TEI) model to evaluate the always-elusive and difficult-to-measure potential return on investment more systematically. The TEI model helps companies consider the benefits, costs and risks of implementing interactive chat in their particular circumstances.

“Banks are starting to see the need to inject that human element.”

George Tubin, senior analyst at the research firm Tower Group

QUOTED BY THEFINANCIALBRAND.COM, JANUARY 2011

RETENTION AND ATTRACTION

The success of a financial institution depends on its customer base. To continuously broaden and strengthen that base is, to put it gently, a necessity.

Live chat attracts:

- People preparing to switch financial institutions
- Web visitors who have questions, but aren't ready to act
- Millennials setting up their first account

The Decision-making Process

When a person is choosing a financial services provider, their decision is steered by a number of forces. Which institution do their friends and colleagues use? What stories do they tell? Personal forces like these are some of the most powerful and persuasive.

However, most people do some research of their own too, going to the source - the institution's website - to get details. The window of time that a visitor spends on the website, then, is an invaluable opportunity for a bank or credit union to build its case, differentiate itself and create a connection. In fact, it may be its only chance to do so.

This opportunity becomes all the more important considering how little time most viewers spend on a site: minutes at best. If they can't find what they want immediately, they bounce.

However, given the option to get a direct answer from another human being, visitors are more likely to stay until their questions are answered. In the e-tailing study, 11% of those who had intended to purchase online ended up abandoning their cart "because they desired human assistance," whereas 29% said they were "more likely to purchase" if live chat was available (e-tailing, 2011). Also, e-tailing notes that "the population that prefers live chat is a highly desirable one." The average live chat fan "is aged 31-50, has considerably higher household income than average, is more likely to be college-educated, and spends more money online per year than other groups of shoppers."

How Chat Impacts the Decision

Even if a prospective customer's live chat experience is not their first impression, it has the potential to be their strongest. Of the forces that influence a decision, personal experience is the greatest, outweighing even word of mouth.

In the e-tailing group's study, 58% said they were more likely to visit a company's website again after having chatted once (e-tailing, 2011). Fifty-four percent said they were more likely to trust a website that offered live chat, and 61% said it made them more likely to recommend the company to others. Seventy-three percent said the chat experience positively influenced their attitude. This is the landscape of online decision-making, whether the decision is to buy a pair of shoes or open an account.

A WORD ABOUT MILLENNIALS

Where the youngest customers are concerned, theFinancialBrand.com recommended that financial institutions use live chat to "position themselves as tech-savvy" - not only to encourage customers to use the online channel, but also to make "the financial institution more attractive to a hyper-digital Gen-Y audience."

"Maximize Your Website by Humanizing it with Live Chat"

THE FINANCIALBRAND.COM, JANUARY 2011

To stay relevant, banks and credit unions need to position themselves at the front of the wave. Live chat is indispensable in this regard. As time goes on, video chat will emerge as indispensable, as well.

Furthermore, to begin a dialogue is to begin a relationship. People are more likely to invest in what they've already begun rather than wandering forth in search of the unknown. By addressing a customer's need through human interaction, live chat helps draw even a casual web visitor in the direction of the institution it represents.

The Importance of Being Personal

As powerful as personal relationships are, it's important to understand what they are not. Personal relationships, in themselves, are not what customers are after. Their fundamental desire is for efficacy, not interaction. Customers want to get their banking done; they want to do so in the fastest and most convenient way, with the fewest expenses and the greatest returns.

However, people respond to relationships even when they don't have an explicit desire for them. Human interaction makes a measurable impact on customer behavior, as does the lack of it.

While self-service channels do work for many customers in many circumstances, they don't erase the need for live interaction. Personal relationships create a bond between customer and institution, building loyalty and keeping people rooted. For financial organizations, which deal in services that are effectively intangible, this is critical: human interaction makes these institutions real to the customer, differentiating them from their competitors in a meaningful way. Without it, customers move.

"Banks are starting to see the need to inject that human element," said Senior Analyst George Tubin of the research firm Tower Group. In the words of theFinancialBrand.com, "With relatively simple and inexpensive live chat technology, financial institutions can restore that vital 'personal touch' that gets lost in the online experience" ("Maximize your website," 2011).

44%

of online consumers say that live interaction during an online purchase is one of the most important features a site can offer.

“Live chat is less invasive than a phone conversation and has a better response time than forms.”

“Case Study: Axonom”
NETOP, 2011

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Customer satisfaction can be altogether too abstract: easy to talk about, yet hard to accomplish in a meaningful way. Still, the concept is simple.

Customer satisfaction depends on three questions:

- What does the customer want?
- What gets in the way?
- What would it take to resolve that?

Meet the Customer at their Need

Perhaps the customer approaches the bank's website with a question in mind. They're not sure where to find the answer on the website. The longer they look, the less convinced they are that the information exists. Even if it does, how much work will it take to unearth it?

They could visit the bank in person, but that's an inconvenience. They could call, but they don't know if they'll get a person or a robot, or have to wait on hold. They could email, but the reply would take a day, maybe several; they want an answer now.

According to online consumers, having questions answered by a real person during an online purchase is one of the most important features a website can offer. When asked why, consumers name several reasons, the e-tailing group said (e-tailing, 2011).

Of the customers who preferred live chat:

- 77% said, “I get my questions answered immediately”
- 52% called it “the most efficient communication method”
- 43% preferred live chat because it let them multi-task
- 40% said, “Once I used live chat I realized how well it works”

Multi-tasking is one of the biggest reasons that chat works for “the ‘no-I-don't-want-to-talk-to-you’ crowd” (“Maximize your website,” 2011). In the words of theFinancialBrand.com, “someone could sit at home wearing their comfies ping-ponging between Seinfeld reruns and their Facebook page while waiting for a service rep to respond to their question. It sure beats driving to the branch to stand in a line.”

Put differently, live chat “allows website visitors to stay in their channel of choice,” according to a 2008 comScore study (“Maximize your website,” 2011). “They don't have to go to a branch or pick up the phone. They are already at your website, so they don't have to remember to do it later. This gives people the feeling of convenience and immediacy.”

THE LIVE CHAT ALTERNATIVE

Live chat gives the customer a fourth option:

- They don't have to research
- They don't have to drive
- They don't have to wait on the phone
- They can ask their question of a human being, not a robot
- They don't have to wait for an email
- They can do other things while chatting
- They can end the conversation when they need to

"I know what it's like to go to a website and not feel comfortable talking to a representative over the phone," said Michael Bauer, marketing manager at Axonom, which leveraged Live Guide for "instant gratification of personal answers in real-time," as a low-impact alternative to phone service ("Case study: Axonom," 2011). "Live chat is less invasive than a phone conversation and has a better response time than forms. We have enhanced our website visitor's experience with the power of choice."

Go Beyond the Immediate Need

Live chat doesn't just meet the customer's need; it does so in a way that makes everything else easier for them, too.

For instance, chat lets customers discuss sensitive information at work or in public without being overheard. Torben Nielsen, vice president of online strategies and services at myregence.com, reported consistently high satisfaction scores with live chat (Forrester, "Case study: Regence," February 2011). He attributes these to the customer's freedom to multi-task, but also to the fact that "cube-bound site users" can "type their questions rather than talk on the phone."

Customers can also scroll back through the chat, or print a transcript - especially useful with information-dense financial questions. They "like the convenience of being able to review what their service rep said by simply scrolling their screen," noted theFinancialBrand.com ("Maximize your website," 2011). "At the end, they have a written transcript of the entire conversation, complete with addresses, phone numbers and hotlinks to specific web pages on your website."

Live Chat Proves the Story

Chat provides instant gratification, efficacy, privacy, convenience and a sense of control. It lets customers skip the annoyances and check something off their list. Because they interacted with a person, they feel personally taken care of. Most importantly, they get their banking done - their fundamental priority.

In providing these needs, live chat provides customer satisfaction, to the extent that "if your brand is built around 'superior customer service,'" offering live chat is key to "proving your story," said Jeff Stephens, financial branding expert at Creative Brand Communications ("Maximize your website," 2011). "For any bank advertising itself as responsive and customer-centric, a feature like online chat seems almost indispensable."

THE RESULTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

When ALKA Insurance implemented Live Guide, the response was so enthusiastic, the company turned live chat into an independent sales channel. Area Manager Christian Wimmelmann said, "It was not really our intention to move sales over to chat. But after seeing [the] customer response, we do not want to deprive them of a service and sales channel that they so greatly appreciate." Responses included:

- "Very short waiting time and very friendly and helpful, rare to get such good service nowadays."
- "Super cool idea to offer chat. It's perfect if you don't have time to wait on the telephone. Super cool!"
- "Yet another great experience to communicate with you via chat! It is a REALLY great concept you've got there! Thanks so much!"

"Case Study: ALKA Insurance"
NETOP

The need for security is non-negotiable.

CHOOSE A PROVIDER CAREFULLY

Each live chat solution has its particular strengths and features. Whichever one a financial institution selects, the decision will influence future possibilities on many levels - from branding, to security, to usability.

Features to Select For

The need for security is non-negotiable, especially for financial websites. For example, Live Guide provides strong data encryption, and its IT infrastructure is managed and monitored remotely to safeguard network integrity for customers; its provider, Netop, states, "Security is our DNA." Because the demand for security can be a burden for some vendors, it's important to confirm that one's provider will rise to the challenge.

Video chat is indispensable, even for those institutions not yet ready to implement it: a live chat provider should be able to transition a bank or credit union from text to video as soon as they decide to do so. Netop Live Guide meets this requirement. In 2011, Forrester wrote, "Chat vendor Netop has extended its offering to include one-way and two-way live video chat. The capability is integrated into the browser so there are no additional downloads required, which allows for a seamless consumer experience. Netop leverages its text-based chat workflow and routing, and consumers can easily escalate from text chat to video chat" (Forrester, "Capitalizing on live video chat," August 2011).

A live chat solution must also be non-disruptive. Here, the choice of technology can make or break the success of the online channel. For example, proactive chat can achieve remarkable results if the invitation is well timed and non-intrusive; if not, it's detrimental. Customers in the e-tailing report did not appreciate "certain types of invitation technology that - purposefully - force the visitor to acknowledge the invitation, either receptively or negatively, before the visitor can resume whatever it is they were doing before the invite appeared" (e-tailing, 2011). They also reacted negatively to repeat invitations caused by "a live chat software's inability to distinguish between an 'already invited/chatted visitor.'"

The software should present the customer's question to the representative in context, especially when crossing from one channel to another. Forrester wrote, "This leads to better routing of chat requests to appropriate reps, avoids the need for customers to begin the process of accomplishing their goal again (because the rep can see their context on the service screen), and results in higher satisfaction. It also rewards customers for the self-service work they have already done (e.g., navigating to the right claim), teaching them that their online efforts won't leave them stranded or starting from scratch if they need help" (Forrester, "Case study: Regence," February 2011).

ADDITIONAL FEATURES BEHIND A SUCCESSFUL CHAT

Chatters in the e-tailing report identified several other features that determined a successful chat:

- Agent's ability to insert images into the chat thread
- Ability of the transcript to be printed or emailed
- Look and feel of the chat window

"The Effectiveness of Live Chat Technology"

THE E-TAILING GROUP, 2011

Beyond these essentials, a live chat solutions should provide convenience, cost-effectiveness, ease of use and fast implementation.

It should include robust data-tracking technology. ALKA used the statistical tool in Live Guide to “evaluate response times, the number of customers assisted, the length of customer dialogues, searches regarding specific questions, etc.” (“Case study: ALKA”). Live chat achieves the strongest results when the online team is continuously analyzing the results and responding to them; the software should support their ability to do so.

Beyond these essentials, a live chat solution should provide convenience, cost-effectiveness, ease of use and fast implementation. Michael Bauer of Axonom chose Live Guide because “we were able to try it for free, the price was reasonable, and the interface was easy to use.” He said, “Deployment of the Netop live chat solution took less than a day” (“Case study: Axonom,” 2010). Likewise, Brian Smith of ITSRx said that because Live Guide runs on Adobe Flash Player, “There’s nothing on the technical end to stop anyone from connecting to us” (“Case study: ITSRx, 2010).

CONCLUSION

At a time when customer retention is more important than ever, the value of quick answers and personal, human interaction is crucial - not only to achieve customer satisfaction, but to bolster the banking relationships upon which financial institutions are built.

Live chat does that - while also driving conversions, lowering operating costs and streamlining efficiency.

Financial institutions are well aware of these realities, which is why current trend points with force of necessity to strategies like website personalization, CRM development and interactive marketing. In no uncertain terms, it points to live chat as a competitive necessity in the world of online finance. As a competitive advantage, it points to video chat. In the trajectory of online banking, live chat is the next logical step.

Briefly put, live chat is essential to the success of the online channel for today's banks and credit unions. Its importance simply cannot be overstated.

NETOP LIVE GUIDE

Our example throughout this paper, Netop Live Guide, is the only live chat solution currently providing secure audio and video chat as well as text-based chat. It also provides a robust feature set, including every feature indispensable to a successful live chat implementation. The provider, Netop, has been a leader in creating secure enterprise solutions for years; Live Guide is easily launched, and the interface is simple to use.

For more information on Netop Live Guide as a live chat solution, see www.netop.com/live-guide.

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