CONSIDERING
VIDEO CHAT
FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE?

10 Steps to Get Your Contact Center Ready
for Video Chat

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Video chat is taking off as a key service strategy, as high profile brands across the globe use real time video to provide a more personal and efficient service experience to web and mobile customers. With today's standard network speeds, modern browsers and the ubiquity of video-ready devices in the hands of consumers, businesses are finding that the time is right to start leveraging the power of this new service channel.

Understanding and planning for all the nuances that come along with adopting video chat as a service channel can be tricky. It's important to think carefully about situations in which video chat will be the best fit for a contact center, as well as some of the potential challenges that may arise as a video chat strategy is rolled out. To help you navigate the implementation of this new engagement channel, below are ten key steps to work through before moving forward with a video chat implementation.

1. **Make sure your contact center environment is video-ready**
   Beyond the technology investments associated with adding video chat as a support channel, like cameras and microphones, many companies find they have a great deal of work to do to make sure their contact center's physical environment is also ready for prime time. Video agents need a quiet workspace with good lighting. These agents also need a clean and uncluttered background, with careful consideration given to any internal materials or signage visible within the video frame. Some companies even provide branded backdrops for agents to add to the visual experience for customers.

2. **Make sure your agents and managers are ready for video**
   Video chatting is a fairly new skill-set for agents and it may be hard to build a strong team of agents who are ready to support this channel out of the gate. Minimally, there will be significant training required to make sure these agents understand the techniques and procedures for effectively communicating through this medium while properly representing the corporate brand. Managers will need to think through staffing requirements depending on the volume of video interactions expected. Unlike text chat, video is a one-to-one interaction channel. Additionally, video agents will have different workload requirements than a typical chat or voice agent. Being "on camera" during customer interactions is more taxing than traditional service channels, and these agents will need a carefully structured pace with more frequent breaks.

3. **Be sure your customers are ready for video**
   Before deploying a video chat solution, it's important to research the technical capabilities of your customer base. Research what percentage of your customers are visiting your website from modern browsers like Chrome and Firefox that support web video. Does your average customer have the technical aptitude to be comfortable using video to communicate with agents? Think about whether it makes sense to roll out video chat in a phased approach, starting with certain customer segments like VIPs or customers with tech-savvy attributes and behaviors.

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4. **Solidify your video chat use cases**
   Video chat use cases tend to fall into two main categories; using video to facilitate a highly personal face-to-face interaction, or using video as a means to evaluate and solve problems in the customer's physical environment. Many companies have multiple use cases for video chat that cross the spectrum between customer service and sales, and it's important to map out those use cases carefully to ascertain whether other complementary services, like Co-browse for example, will be crucial to completing the experience.

5. **Design your video chat user experience**
   Once you've mapped out your use cases, you'll need to decide how to incorporate video into your user experience. Do you want to keep video chat as an escalation channel within a standard text chat interaction? Do you want to make video chat an available service channel that customers can choose from when they need help? Do you want to set up business rules to route certain types of interactions directly to video-enabled agents? What type of messaging do you want to display to customers to make sure they're comfortable entering a video interaction?

6. **Choose the format of your video feed**
   Depending on the use cases you've identified, you'll also need to plan the direction of your video feed. For use cases centered on relationship building, it's often preferred to set up a one-way video feed so customers can see the agent on their screen, but are not shown on video to the agent. This gives a friendly face to your brand without requiring the customer to worry about his or her privacy and appearance. For use cases where video is used as a tool to remotely diagnose and solve problems, two-way video is the way to go. You'll need your agents to be able to see into the customer's environment via the video feed, and often times the agent will need to visually demonstrate steps to solve whatever problem the customer is having.

7. **Know what your peers are doing with video**
   While most companies still have the luxury of further evaluating video chat's value and planning for a strategic roll-out, some industries and regions are adopting this medium at a faster pace, and video chat has become an important competitive differentiator. For example, financial services organizations in Europe are quickly adopting video chat as a standard support channel and it's become a necessity to have this technology available just to compete in this market. Keep an eye on the opportunity in your market to either be a leader in bringing this service to your customers or to make sure you don't get left behind as your competitors start rolling out video chat.

8. Standardize on modern browsers

To incorporate modern communication channels like web audio and video into the contact center, it's important to give agents access to browsers that support these new and emerging channels. For Video Chat, agents will need to use Firefox, Chrome, Opera, Chrome for Android, or Chrome for iOS. Other browsers are emerging as additional options, but still do not fully support Video Chat. For example, Microsoft has introduced ORTC support into the Edge browser, which handles much, but not all of the required WebRTC capabilities. Apple recently announced plans to incorporate WebRTC functionality into the Safari WebKit, but timing is uncertain.

Browsers List

Chrome 47 (Latest Release)	Firefox 41 (Latest Release)	Opera 33 (Latest Release)	Microsoft Edge	Android 6.0 Marshmallow Chrome, Firefox, Opera	IOS 9
Chrome 46	Firefox 40	Opera 32	IE 11	Android 5.0, 5.1.1 Lollipop Chrome, Firefox, Opera	IOS 8
Chrome 45	Firefox 39	Opera 31	IE 10	Android 4.4.x Kitkat Chrome, Firefox, Opera	IOS 7

Supported - Native

Not Supported

9. Know the bandwidth supported in your contact center

Video Chat is a high-bandwidth channel, so it's important to check with your network team to be sure your contact center can support the speeds necessary to provide a good experience to customers. Each video chat session will consume up to 3mbs per second upstream and downstream, so plan to support roughly 6 mbps for each video chat session you expect to be handled concurrently.

10. Optimize your contact center network to ensure audio and video quality

Aside from bandwidth, there are other key performance indicators that should be tested ahead of time to ensure good audio and video quality. Ask your network team to perform testing to confirm levels of packet loss, which should be less than 2%. High levels of packet loss will result in video and voice streams that appear "choppy" to one or both parties. Measure round trip latency, which should be between 300-500 ms, otherwise you may experience a "talk over" effect during video connections. And finally, measure jitter, which should be less than 30 ms. High levels of jitter will result in garbled audio and video connections. There are strategies for addressing each of these quality factors and your video chat technology partner can assist you with remediation steps before deploying.

While video chat as a service channel has many unique environmental and training requirements, it also provides a unique opportunity to get closer to your customers than you've ever been able to before, combining an effortless communication channel with the powerful benefits and efficiencies of digital customer service.

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