CUSTOMER SUPPORT TRENDS 2022

Everything You Need to Know
to Delight Your Customers
Next Year and Beyond
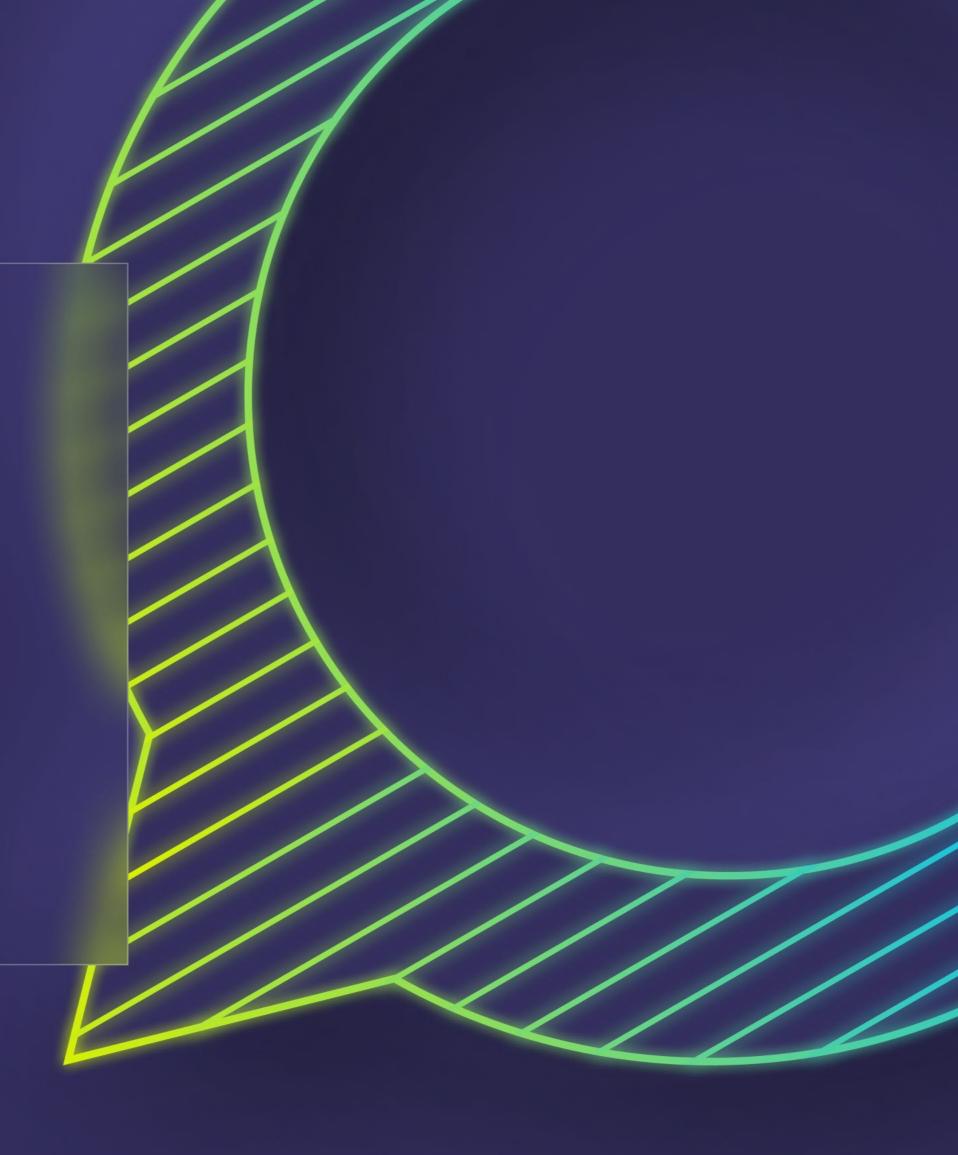
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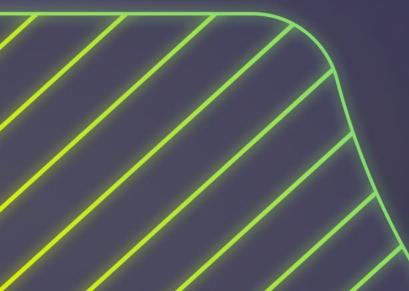
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Introduction

Introduction

Customer Support is now critical to business success. And leaders across all sectors know this.

Our research reveals that customer-focused leaders understand that customers today have higher expectations and are more likely to publicly share their experiences when things go wrong. And they know that investing in Customer Support improves cross-selling and upselling, profits, and customer retention.

The good news is most leaders are, to some degree, taking steps to improve their CX. Almost every leader we spoke to is actively using customer surveys to gather feedback. Similarly, nearly all businesses are making investments to increase their brand's NPS.

The path to Customer Experience success is not without its stumbling blocks, however. Leaders understand that these two approaches might not be enough to meet today's consumer expectations. A conclusive majority states that feedback surveys and online reviews now need to be complemented with more, and richer data sources.

But with more data sources to analyse, potential problems arise.

More than half of the leaders say that analysing Customer Support data takes too long and doesn't provide meaningful insights.

Over a third also lament at outdated or limited tools, with a quarter feeling they have too much unstructured data to analyse. Given this, it's perhaps unsurprising that nearly all the leaders in our survey told us their current tech stack holds them back from achieving their Customer Support goals.

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Here, we spot a clear issue: if businesses are to deliver the increases in sales, profits and customer retention that better Customer Support delivers, they need tech and tools that can address their biggest challenges. We'll discuss this in more detail later in this report.

Finally, in the report, we also consider how Customer Support is becoming a function that is ever-closer to business' revenue operations, and

a consistent source of customer intelligence for almost every other business department.

Customer Support leaders now share their insights with marketing and sales teams far more than their more obvious Customer Experience bedfellows. They also measure their Customer Support teams on repeat purchases and upgrades to a greater degree than speed of resolution and customer satisfaction.

Today, we have entered a new era. Customer Support is no longer a siloed function that deals with customer complaints on the phone. It's strategically important to business success.

But if businesses are to harness the economic advantages that better Customer Support brings, they need to better utilise data, analyse more feedback, and have the right technology in place to make sense of it – only then will they achieve their goals.

Arron Westbrook

Content Marketing
Lead, Chattermill

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Foreword

"At Chattermill, we fundamentally believe that a focus on Customer Experience is what sets great businesses apart from others.

We enable the most customer-centric companies in the world to extract insights from customer feedback channels at scale. These channels include NPS surveys, Product Reviews, App Reviews and many more.

However, there is a dataset that has traditionally gone untapped from a customer insights point of view: Customer Support data. Until now.
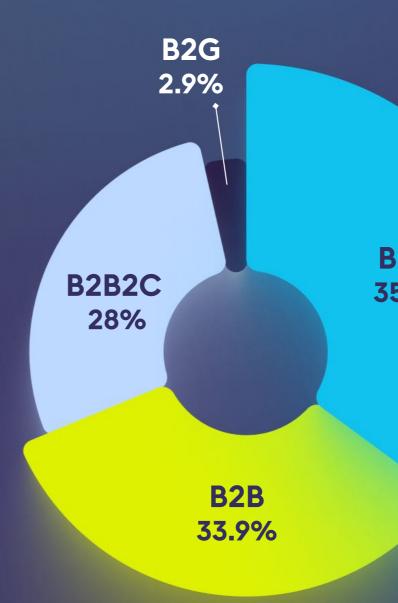
We've created this survey to dive deep into the trends in Customer Support to learn how it fits into the wider Customer Experience strategy. I hope you find it useful."

– Lorenzo Espinosa, Product Director, Support Analytics, Chattermill

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Methodology

This report is based
on a survey of 339 global
customer-focused leaders in
September and October 2021.

Respondents come from key business departments including **Customer Support**, and the adjacent departments of **Customer Experience**, **marketing**, **sales**, **product**, and **operations**. Survey respondents work in **B2C**, **B2B**, and **B2B2C** businesses spanning a number of sectors, including **eCommerce**, **education**, **financial services**, **dating**, and **fashion**.

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How would you define your business?

- B2G 2.9%
- B2C 35.1%
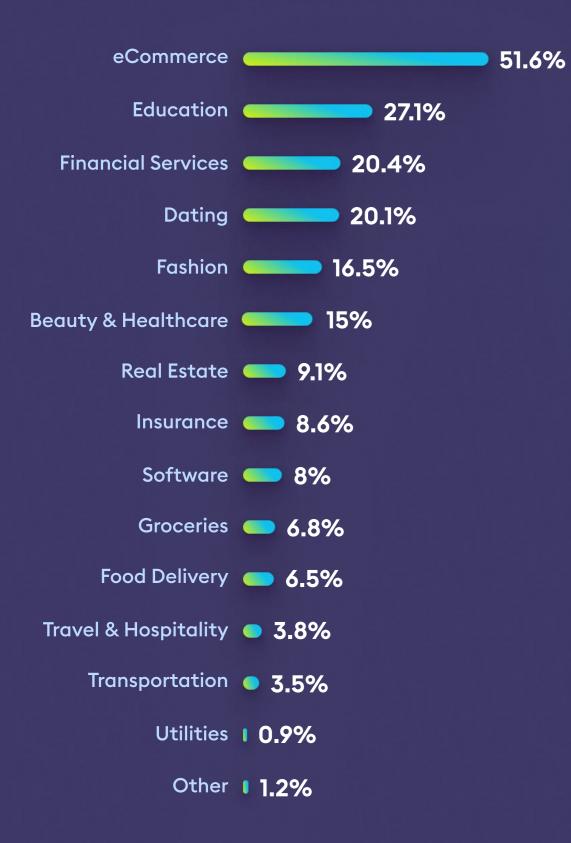- B2B 33.9%
- B2B2C 28%

Which of the following departments best describes the team you work in or manage?

Marketing
44.8%

Customer Support (e.g. contact centre)
35.7%

Operations
31.9%

Sales
26.3%

Customer Experience/VoC/Customer Insights
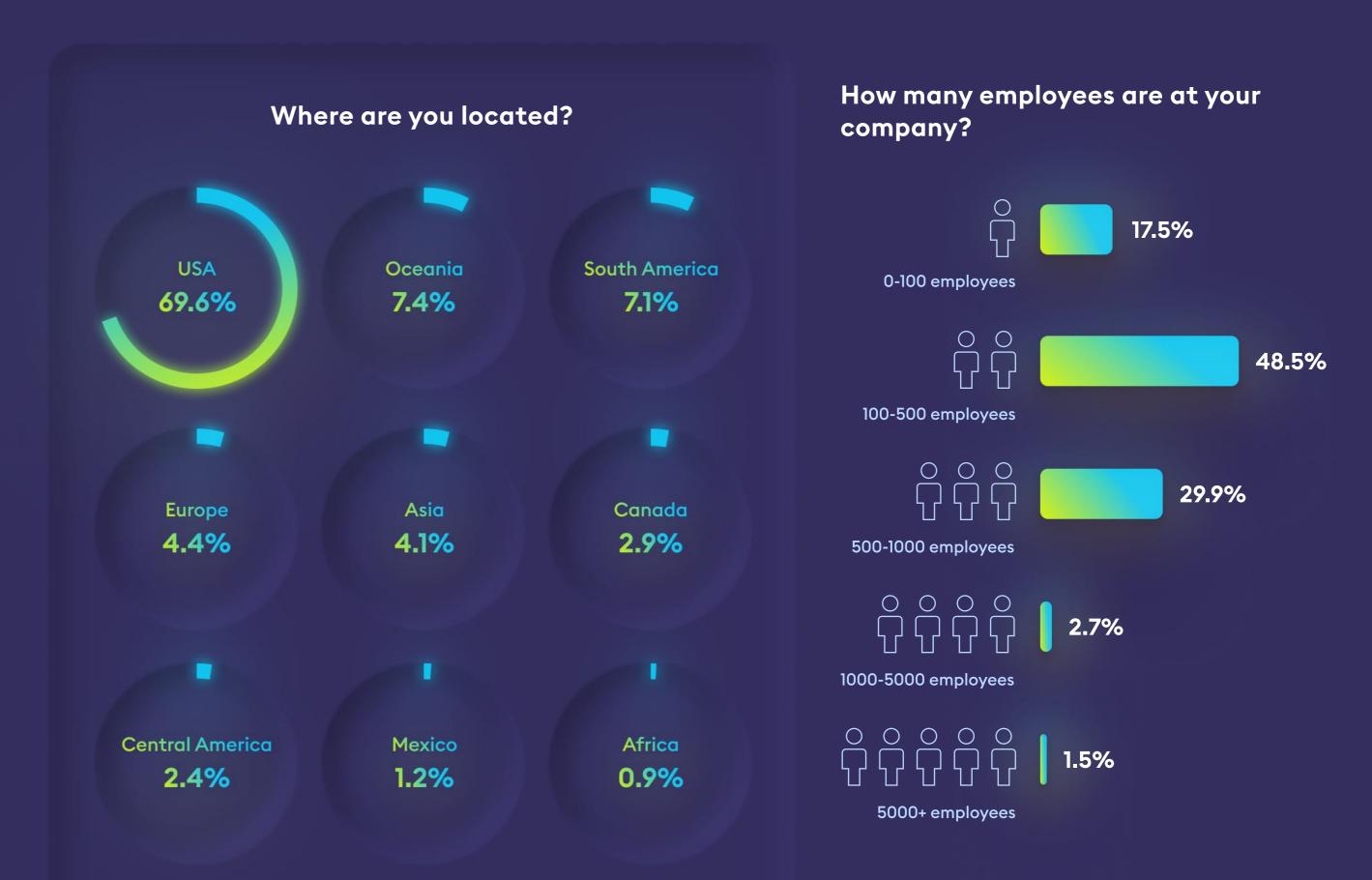23%

Product
3.5%

Other
0.6%

Which of the following categories best describes the industry you primarily work in?

Category	Percentage
eCommerce	51.6%
Education	27.1%
Financial Services	20.4%
Dating	20.1%
Fashion	16.5%
Beauty & Healthcare	15%
Real Estate	9.1%
Insurance	8.6%
Software	8%
Groceries	6.8%
Food Delivery	6.5%
Travel & Hospitality	3.8%
Transportation	3.5%
Utilities	0.9%
Other	1.2%

Most respondents work out of the **U.S.**, **Oceania**, **South America**, and **Europe**. Almost half (**48.5%**) are from businesses that employ **100-500** employees, with **29.9%** coming from larger organisations (**500-1000** employees), and **17.5%** from smaller businesses (**0-100** employees).

Where are you located?

Location	Percentage
USA	69.6%
Oceania	7.4%
South America	7.1%
Europe	4.4%
Asia	4.1%
Canada	2.9%
Central America	2.4%
Mexico	1.2%
Africa	0.9%

How many employees are at your company?

Company Size	Percentage
0-100 employees	17.5%
100-500 employees	48.5%
500-1000 employees	29.9%
1000-5000 employees	2.7%
5000+ employees	1.5%

Key Findings

99.1%
of leaders

think that **customers have higher expectations when it comes to service and experience** compared to previous years.

96.2%
of leaders

say **customers are also more likely to share positive or negative experiences** now than in the past

98.2% of leaders

believe that **good Customer Support is now a key driver of customer advocacy and loyalty.**

97.3%
of leaders

send out customer surveys to gather feedback, with 94.7% actively investing in increasing NPS.

98.2% of leaders

feel that **feedback surveys and online reviews need to be complemented with more data sources** (e.g. Customer Support data).

The biggest priority for customer-focused leaders is to

reduce costs

44.2%

with sharing actionable insights

34.2%

and reducing customer effort close behind

29.8%

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The biggest difficulty leaders face in analysing Customer Support data is the problem of manually tagging tickets (63.1%), which they say takes too long, and doesn't provide meaningful insights.

Behind this, leaders state that they struggle with 'outdated or limited tools and methods to prioritise the most problematic support tickets' (33.6%), and the issue of 'too much unstructured data to analyse at scale' (25.1%).

Customer Support teams are measured in multiple ways. The most common metric is

repeat purchases/upgrades **21.7%**

followed by speed of resolution **18.1%**

and customer satisfaction **17.8%**

52.1% of leaders believe that **investing in Customer Support leads to improved up-selling and cross-selling**

52.1%

with 43% stating **investment in Customer Support results in higher profits**

43%

and 32.5% believing it **improves customer retention**.

32.5%

Leaders measure the success of their Customer Support operations in three key areas:

customer
retention

customer
satisfaction

ROI

Surprisingly, Customer Support teams share their insights more often with

marketing **55.4%**

and sales **50.6%**

rather than CX/VoC/customer insights **36.9%**

and operations **24.1%**

Looking ahead, the top area of investment for Customer Support leaders in 2022 is moving from reactive to a proactive approach in Customer Support (50%), with increasing work efficiencies (42.3%) a close second.

88%

Exactly 88% of leaders we surveyed believe that their **current tech stack holds them back from achieving their goals.**

PART 1

The Strategic Importance of Customer Support

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Customers today demand more than ever from Customer Support interactions. In 2022, it's time to make Customer Support a strategic business priority.

In today's customer-first age, Customer Support is business-critical. Customers have never before been so vocal when Customer Support experiences go wrong, or indeed right.

At the same time, customer expectations of our businesses have never been higher. In today's global, interconnected digital world, you are no longer just competing with your competitors, you're competing with the best Customer Support experience your customers have ever had.

It isn't a huge surprise to see leaders aware of this. The sheer extent to which leaders are aware might surprise some, however.

99.1% of leaders

agree that customers have higher expectations when it comes to service and experience compared to previous years

At the same time

96.2% of leaders

agree that customers are more likely to share positive or negative experiences now than in the past. It's truly a customer-first age.

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As we have all experienced at some point, getting Customer Support wrong can have a disastrous impact on customer advocacy, loyalty and the bottom line. On the flip side, creating Customer Support experiences that delight our customers can lead to more cross- and up-selling, better customer retention, and increased profits.

The data supports this.

52.1% of leaders we surveyed believe that investing in Customer Support will lead to improved up-selling and cross-selling, 43% state that investment in Customer Support results in higher profits, and 32.5% believe it improves customer retention.

In other words, investing in improving the Customer Support experience pays across multiple levels.

investing in Customer Support leads to improved up-selling and cross-selling

52.1%

investment in Customer Support results in higher profits

43%

investing in Customer Support improves customer retention.

32.5%

The revenue impact of improving Customer Support is somewhat reflected in the shifting role of Customer Support within businesses.

Customer Support teams now most commonly share their insights with revenue-focused parts of the business like marketing (55.4%), and sales (50.6%). This is a trend we expect to see continue

in the years to come as Customer Support becomes increasingly important to the economic success of businesses.

Customer Support teams share their insights with

marketing 55.4%

sales 50.6%

CX/VoC/customer insights 36.9%

operations 24.1%

But leaders must also understand that blind investment alone isn't enough to shift the needle. To create exceptional Customer Support experiences, leaders need to employ the right technology to analyse, understand, and enact the changes to their Customer Support operations

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that will ultimately lead to net-positive results.

Sadly, for many leaders, this isn't the reality.

88%

of the leaders we surveyed

believe that their current tech stack holds them back from achieving their goals.

What this suggests is leaders today need to find new technological solutions to improve their Customer Support operations.

We'll investigate this in more detail in part four of this report, where we'll take a deep dive into the current technological challenges in Customer Support, and discuss potential ways to solve them. But what's clear from the data is there's a gaping gorge that needs to be bridged.
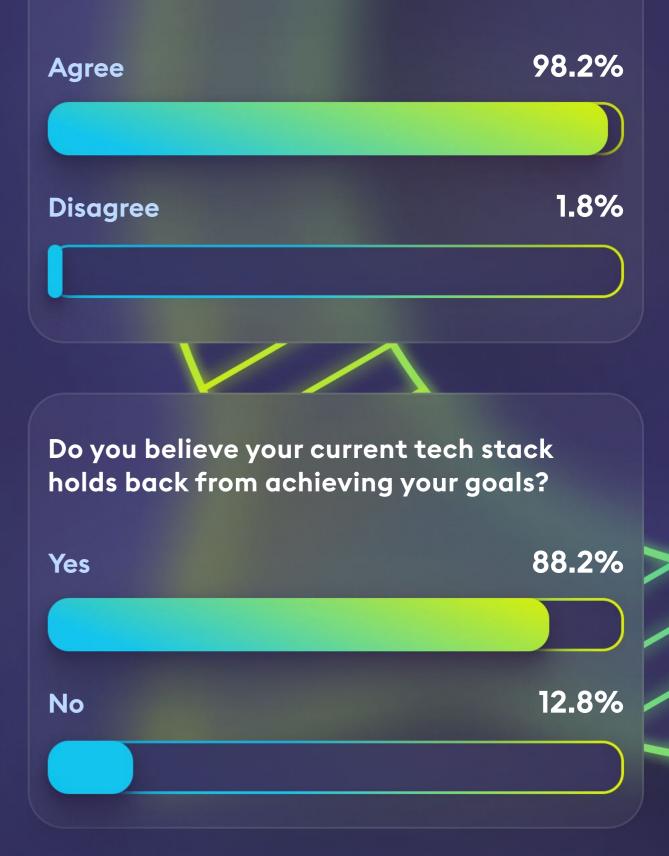
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Key Points:

Leaders are fully aware of the importance of Customer Support to their business' revenue, but at the same time, they are currently hand-tied by their current tech stack to make real, meaningful, and measurable improvements to their Customer Support operations.

Customers are more likely to share positive or negative experiences now than in the past?
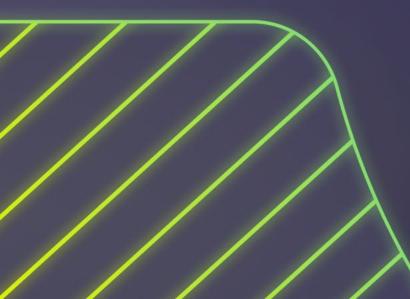
Agree   **96.2%**

Disagree   **3.8%**

In your opinion, do you believe that good Customer Support is now a driver of customer advocacy and loyalty?

Agree   **98.2%**

Disagree   **1.8%**

Do you believe your current tech stack holds back from achieving your goals?

Yes   **88.2%**

No   **12.8%**

Success can mean many things to many people. But is how we measure Customer Support consistent across teams and leadership?

With this question in mind, we asked leaders two questions: how they measure the overall success of their Customer Support operations, and how Customer Support teams are measured.

For most leaders, the critical signal of the success of their Customer Support operations is customer retention (49.9%). Many others also cite customer satisfaction (28.4%) and return on investment (20.3%) as key measurements of success. Surprisingly, only 1.5% think NPS is a critical metric.

This data may surprise some. One might expect to see customer satisfaction and NPS as more

significant signals of operational success in Customer Support given its role within businesses.

However, given the data discussed in the previous section, it's not as big a surprise as it might be. Customer Support is becoming more closely aligned with businesses' revenue operations.

There is also alignment between how leaders measure success themselves, and how Customer Support teams are measured.

The most common measure of Customer Support teams' performance is revenue-related, with 21.7% of leaders stating that purchases and

upgrades are the most important Customer Support team metric. Beyond this, 18.1% of leaders measure their teams on speed of resolution, 17.8% customer satisfaction, 16.6% new sales, and 16.3% cancellation/retention rate.

Surprisingly, operational metrics like the number of tickets closed is not a metric leaders measure their Customer Support teams on. Only two respondents stated this was important.

Likewise, Net Promoter Score was also not a significant factor, with just 9% of respondents stating that they measure their Customer Support teams against this metric. This closely aligns with how leaders themselves measure Customer Support.

What we can ascertain from these two sets of responses is that Customer Support is now less about churning through support tickets and is now a department that's focused on improving a business' revenue.
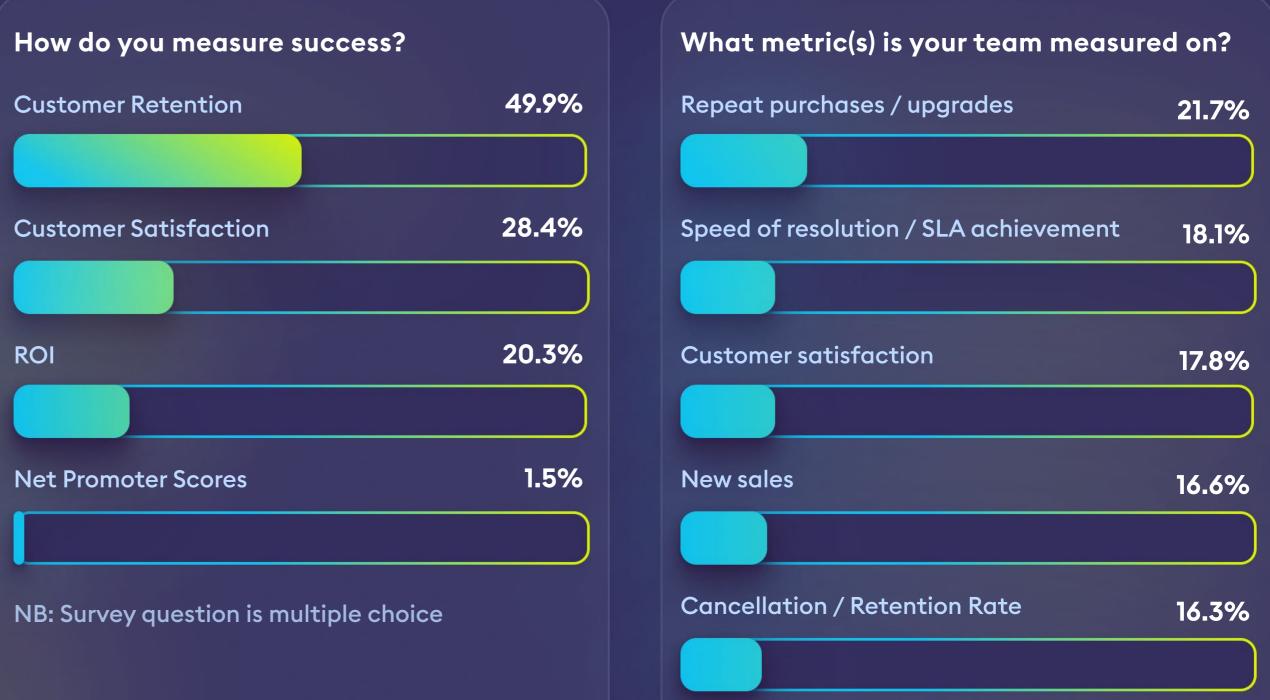
Of the top three most important measures of success for overall Customer Support operations,

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two are revenue-focused. And even when it comes to measuring Customer Support teams themselves, three out of the top five relate to increasing and retaining customer revenue.

To tie back to the previous section, it's pretty evident that Customer Support is now a strategically important factor in overall business success. In the future, we predict that this will continue to be the case.

Key Points:

Leaders are aligned in the metrics used to measure their operations overall, and their Customer Support teams. These metrics are related to revenue far more than they are traditional Customer Support metrics, which is a big step-change for the industry.
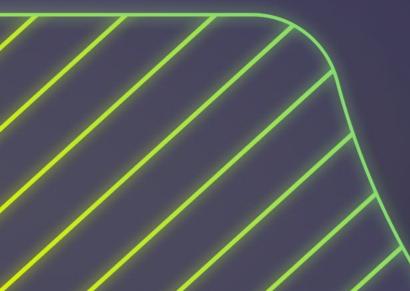
How do you measure success?

Customer Retention — 49.9%

Customer Satisfaction — 28.4%

ROI — 20.3%

Net Promoter Scores — 1.5%

NB: Survey question is multiple choice

What metric(s) is your team measured on?

Repeat purchases / upgrades — 21.7%

Speed of resolution / SLA achievement — 18.1%

Customer satisfaction — 17.8%

New sales — 16.6%

Cancellation / Retention Rate — 16.3%

NB: Survey question is multiple choice

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PART 3

What's Holding Businesses Back?

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Customer Support is critical to business success. So what's holding businesses back from improving their Customer Support experience?

The first question that needs to be addressed in this section is how leaders currently go about measuring and improving their Customer Support.

Of the 339 leaders we surveyed, 97.3% currently send out customer surveys to gather feedback. At the same time, 98.2% feel that feedback surveys and online reviews need to be complemented with more data sources (e.g. Customer Support data).

In other words, leaders need to look beyond customer surveys and incorporate more Customer Support data if they are to level up their Customer Experience. They also need to look to unify their customer feedback and support. And to some extent, they are already doing this.

But they also need to ensure the data they use is supported by technology that enables them to analyse data at scale, provides meaningful insights, improves efficiencies, and enables a shift from reactive to proactive Customer Support.

For most leaders, this is sadly not the reality. In our survey, leaders say the biggest difficulty they face today is the problem of manually tagging tickets (63.1%), which they say takes too long, and doesn't provide meaningful insights. Behind this, leaders state that they struggle with 'outdated or limited tools and methods to prioritise the most problematic support tickets' (33.6%), and the issue of 'too much unstructured data to analyse at scale' (25.1%).

Little wonder then that the top area of investment for customer-focused leaders in 2022

is moving from reactive to a proactive approach in Customer Support (50%), with increasing work efficiencies (42.3%) a close second.

When we consider these challenges, it isn't surprising that 88% of leaders believe their current tech stack holds them back from achieving their goals.

So what's the solution? It's clear that what leaders want to achieve and what's actually achievable is being held back by limited technological capabilities.
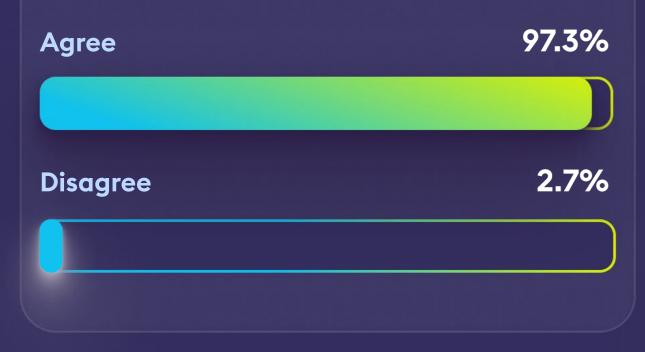
They're looking to actively invest to achieve this in 2022 to some degree, but they need technology that will enable them to move from a reactive to a proactive approach, easily analyse unstructured data at scale, and provide meaningful, actionable insights.

In the next chapter, we'll look at technology in more depth to uncover which technologies could potentially solve leaders' Customer Support problems.

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Key Points:

Leaders know they need to use more data sources to improve their Customer Support. But at present, they're held back by technology that can't effectively analyse this data, which in turn restricts their ability to meet their strategic goal of creating a more proactive Customer Support strategy led by real, meaningful customer insights.

Do you send out customer surveys to gather feedback?

Agree **97.3%**

Disagree **2.7%**

How does your company listen to customers?
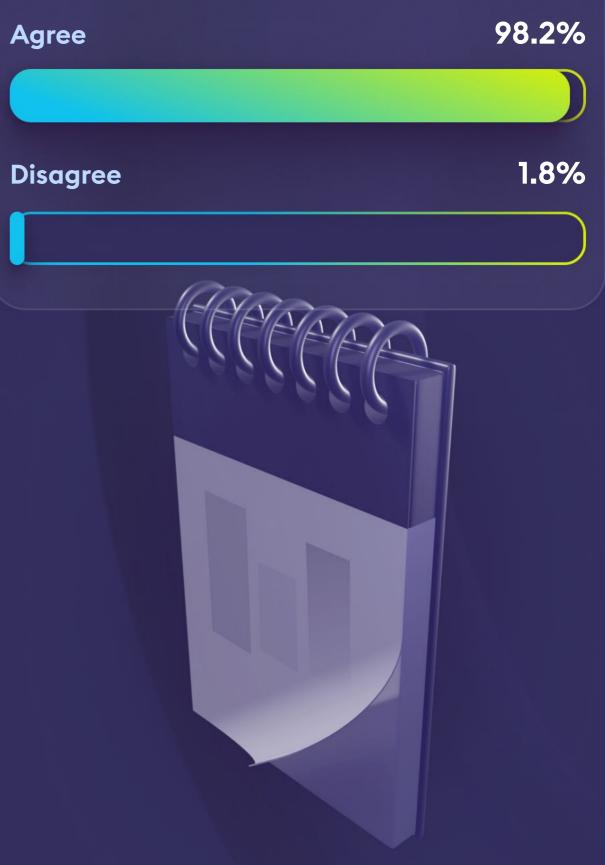
We track customer satisfaction / happiness when interacting with our staff (e.g. customer support) **42.8%**

We survey customers at specific parts of the customer journey to get feedback **29.8%**

We monitor online review sites and social media posts **15.3%**

We have a format customer advocacy program **5.3%**

We monitor customer feedback captured across their digital experience **4.1%**

NB: Survey question is multiple choice

Do you feel that feedback surveys and online reviews need to be complemented with more data sources (e.g. customer support data)?

Agree **98.2%**

Disagree **1.8%**

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What's the biggest difficulty you face in analysing customer support data?

Manual tagging of tickets taking too long and too many tags to extract meaningful insights — **63.1%**

Outdated or limited tools and methods to prioritise the most problematic support tickets — **33.6%**

Too much unstructured data to analyse at scale — **25.1%**

Getting the full picture of customer experience to communicate insights to stakeholders — **20.4%**

Not able to understand the root cause of negative CSAT scores — **2.4%**

NB: Survey question is multiple choice

What is your top areas of investment for 2022?

Moving from a reactive to a proactive approach in customer support — **50.0%**

Increasing workflow efficiencies — **42.3%**

Improve automation in customer support (e.g. chatbot implementation) — **7.7%**

NB: Survey question is multiple choice

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PART 4

Technological Challenges and Solutions

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To meet today's Customer Support challenges, the right technology needs to be employed – particularly if we want better scale, insights, and efficiencies.

As mentioned in previous chapters, 88% of leaders believe their current tech stack holds them back from achieving their Customer Support goals.

This is an eye-wateringly large number considering the importance of Customer Support, and the sheer scale of options for Customer Support and Customer Experience technology. And perhaps this is part of the problem. 88.1% of leaders in our survey said they are slowed down on a daily or weekly basis by siloed tools.

To move to a more proactive, insight-led Customer Support strategy, we don't need to invest in endless new technologies. We just need to buy technology that unifies, rather than adds to an ever-increasing data pile. We need tech that analyses unstructured customer data and scale, unifies data from across our existing Customer Support and Customer Feedback tech stack, creates meaningful insights, and presents insights in dashboards that don't take months to decipher.

Having such technology on hand will enable teams to proactively deliver Customer Support experiences that delight, rather than detract from customers' experience of our business. Only then can harness the growth that exceptional Customer Support can deliver.

One solution is a unified Customer Experience analytics tool like Chattermill. Chattermill is a platform that integrates with your existing tech stack, uses artificial intelligence to analyse data from every customer interaction, and unifies the data to provide meaningful insights for you and your customer-facing teams in a single, accessible view.

"Chattermill is a key partner in helping us listen to our customer feedback and support conversations at scale. Every employee now has access to actionable intelligence with just a few clicks, and our decisions are more customer-obsessed than ever. This allows us to create the finance solution all businesses love!"

– Mathieu Le Roux, Voice of the Customer Expert, Qonto

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While there are clear and obvious challenges we all face in achieving exceptional Customer Support experiences, there are solutions. But we need to ensure the solutions unify what we have, rather than add noise to an already deafening cacophony of customer data.

Key Points:

If leaders want to have a tech stack that doesn't hold them back and breaks through existing siloes, they need to invest in tools that unify data from their existing tech stack and provide real, meaningful insights in an accessible, actionable way.

Do you believe your current tech stack holds you back from achieving your goals?

Yes	88.0%
No	12.0%

Are you slowed down by daily or weekly siloed tools?

Yes	88.1%
No	11.9%

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Conclusion: How To Get Ahead in 2022

For all the complexities of Customer Support, we are now in an age where leaders can genuinely achieve their strategic goals – but only if they have the right technology in place.

Getting Customer Support right has never been more important. Customers demand more from brands than ever before and are more likely to publicly share their experiences when things go wrong. The data from our survey also tells us that exceptional Customer Support leads to higher growth, higher customer satisfaction, and higher levels of customer loyalty.

But to get to a place where we can delight our customers in this way, deliver on our strategic goals, and harvest the business benefits, we first need to clear some hurdles.

Most importantly, we need to not be one of the 88% of leaders who are held back by their existing tech stack. To do so, we need to invest in new technology that unifies the extensive customer data we already have and delivers meaningful insights that help us actively improve our customer support experience.

It's only by investing in such unifying technological solutions that we can ultimately overcome the challenges discussed in chapters three and four of this report, and deliver the business success discussed in chapter one.

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To Sum Up:

Customer support is now strategically important to business success – almost every leader agrees with this fact.

Leaders are aligned in the metrics used to measure their operations overall, and their Customer Support teams. These metrics are related to revenue far more than they are traditional Customer Support metrics.

Leaders know they need to use more data sources to improve their Customer Support. But at present, 80% are held back by technology that can't effectively analyse this data, which ultimately restricts their ability to meet their strategic goal of creating a more proactive Customer Support strategy led by real, meaningful customer insights.

If leaders want to have a tech stack that doesn't hold them back and breaks through existing siloes, they need to invest in tools that unify data from their existing tech stack and provide real, meaningful insights in an accessible, actionable way.

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About Chattermill

Chattermill uses cutting edge artificial intelligence to analyse customer feedback and customer support interactions across customer touchpoints for organisations to harness customer insights at scale, boost customer loyalty and brand advocacy.

We combine machine learning with a deep understanding of a company and its customers, seamlessly integrating with any system used to collect feedback and customer support interactions. We then deliver precise, actionable analytics and insights that enable our partners to have a complete, objective understanding of their customers every day.
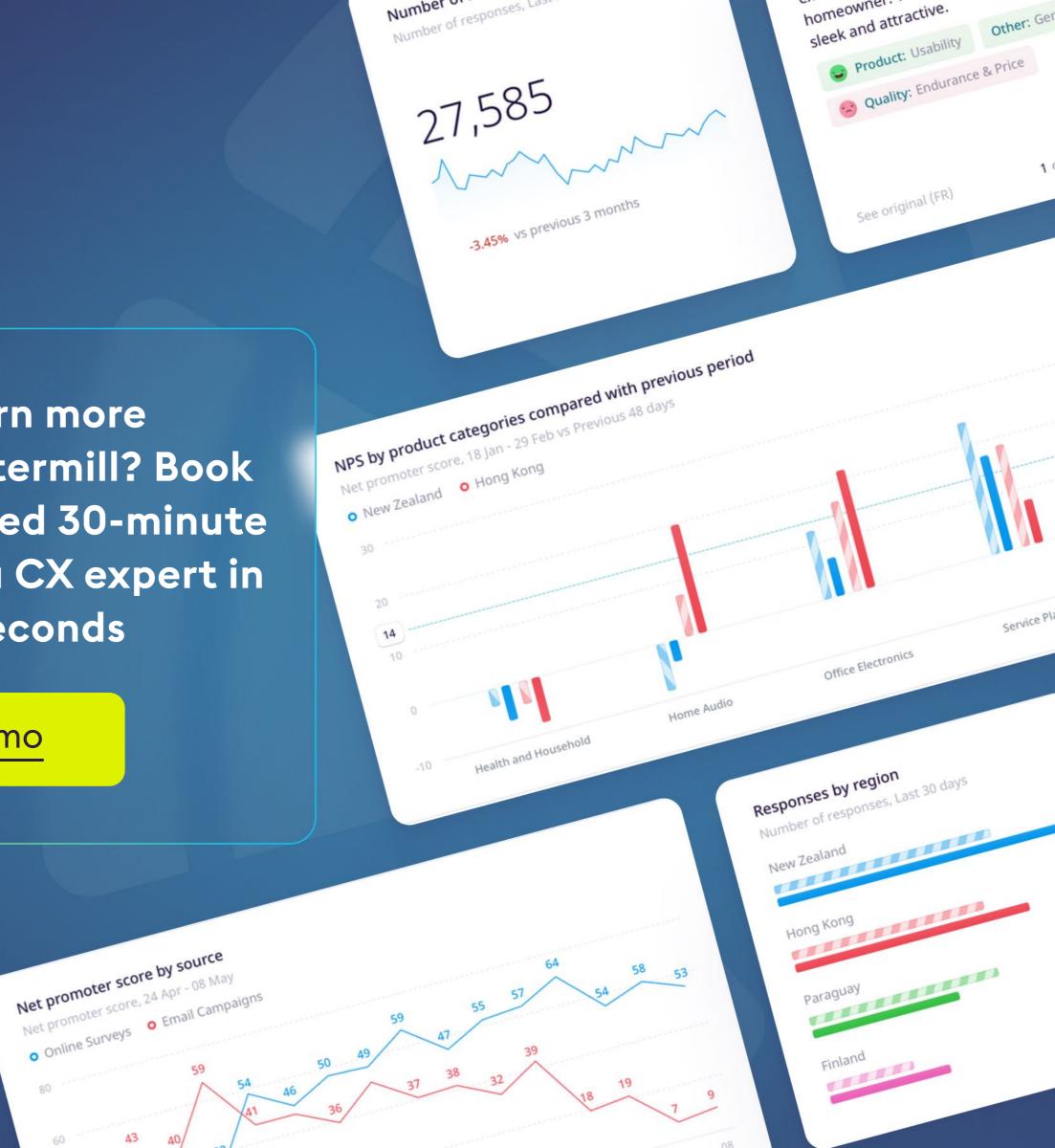
We work with Customer Experience pioneers from a wide range of industries including HelloFresh, Just Eat Takeaway.com, Wise, Spotify and Uber.

Want to learn more about Chattermill? Book a personalised 30-minute demo with a CX expert in just a few seconds

Book a demo

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