

Financial Services Smart Guide

Tips for delivering smarter customer experiences



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Foreword

The financial services industry is in the midst of a major digital revolution.

Fintechs are disrupting the market with new ways for people to bank, invest and manage their money. But incumbent firms are quietly catching up, undergoing extensive digital transformations to retain their customers and long-held market share.

In this highly competitive market, customer experience has become a key differentiator. Customers are no longer choosing firms based on price and product alone, but on their commitment to providing exceptional customer service and support that meets their individual needs.

In October 2021, we conducted a survey of 1,000 UK consumers to find out more about these needs and how the industry is performing in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. In this guide, you can read our key findings and tips for improving your customer care.

State of the industry

The Covid-19 pandemic has radically changed how people live, work, and manage their money. It's accelerated the decline of cash and adoption of digital banking. It's driven higher demand for sustainable investments. And it's forced financial firms to re-evaluate how they operate and become more agile.



Digital transformation, new technologies and regulatory compliance will be the top three challenges for financial firms over the next five years.

Source: [PwC](#)



4,300 bank and building society branches have closed in the UK since January 2015, at a rate of around 50 every month.

Source: [Which?](#)



More than 70% of insurance firms expect to increase their spending in artificial intelligence, cloud computing and data privacy in 2022.

Source: [Gartner](#)

11%

Only 11% of financial institutions globally say their organisations have fully modernised their core systems and processes.

Source: [Deloitte](#)



The pandemic accelerated the decline of cash and adoption of electronic and e-commerce transaction methods, creating new opportunities for payment companies.

Source: [McKinsey](#)



Baby boomers are focused on building their wealth and businesses. But younger generations are prioritising their purpose in life, driving more demand for Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) products.

Source: [Capgemini](#)

Customer habits and expectations around customer service have also changed. Puzzel's survey of 1,000 UK consumers conducted in October 2021 revealed:

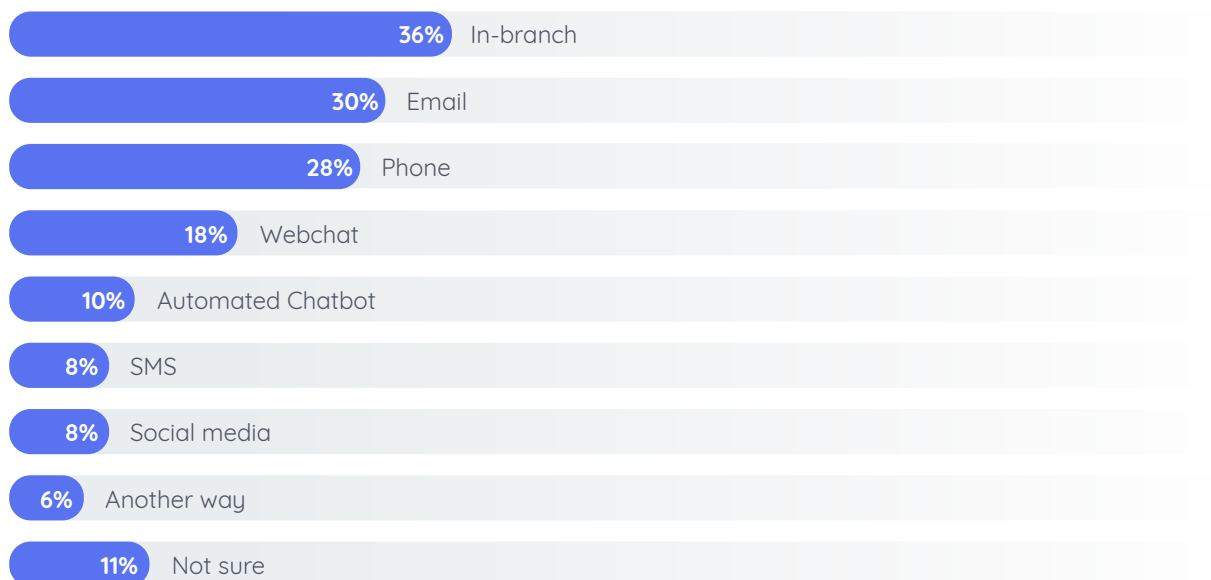
Consumers still value in-branch support, but human experiences are vital for building trust

Forty per cent of British consumers said they visited their bank or insurance provider in-branch in 2021. That's despite Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions limiting travel in the first half of the year.

In fact, 14% say they now visit their bank or insurer more often than they did before the pandemic.

Thirty-six per cent said going in-branch would continue to be their preferred way of getting support post-pandemic. This was followed by 30% who said they'd prefer to interact over email and 28% who said they'd prefer to speak over the phone.

How UK consumers would prefer to interact with their financial services provider post-pandemic



Almost three-quarters (72%) of respondents described the customer service provided in-branch by their bank or insurance provider as good or excellent. This dropped to 63% for web or mobile-based customer service.

Consumers' biggest concerns with online customer services were:

- Not being able to speak to a real person to solve issues (37%)
- Being passed through various channels before getting a resolution (31%)
- Not being able to properly explain a query (31%)
- Security and privacy of their personal information (31%)

More than half of the respondents (52%) said they trusted in-branch/in-person customer services more than those provided elsewhere.

But confidence is growing in digital-first banking, especially among young adults

Forty-three per cent of British consumers said they now banked with a neobank, such as Monzo, Starling or Revolut. An additional 14% said they were considering opening one of these accounts.

This shift to digital-first banking is being driven by young adults, with 28% of 18-24-year-olds saying they now bank with a neobank exclusively, compared to just 6% of people aged 65 and over.

Usage of neobanks in the UK

Percentage of UK consumers by age group



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Convenience, speed, and usability were the top three reasons people cited for banking and seeking customer service online.

More people are also getting used to using digital customer service channels, such as social media, web chat and chatbots. Thirty-eight per cent of respondents said they were comfortable using an automated chatbot to resolve customer service queries.

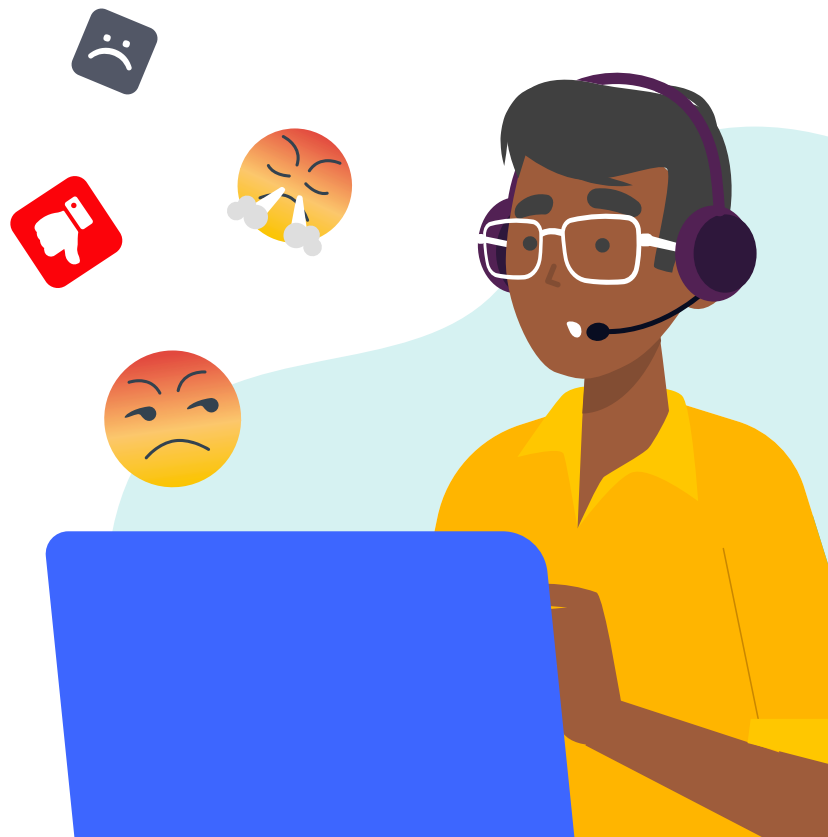
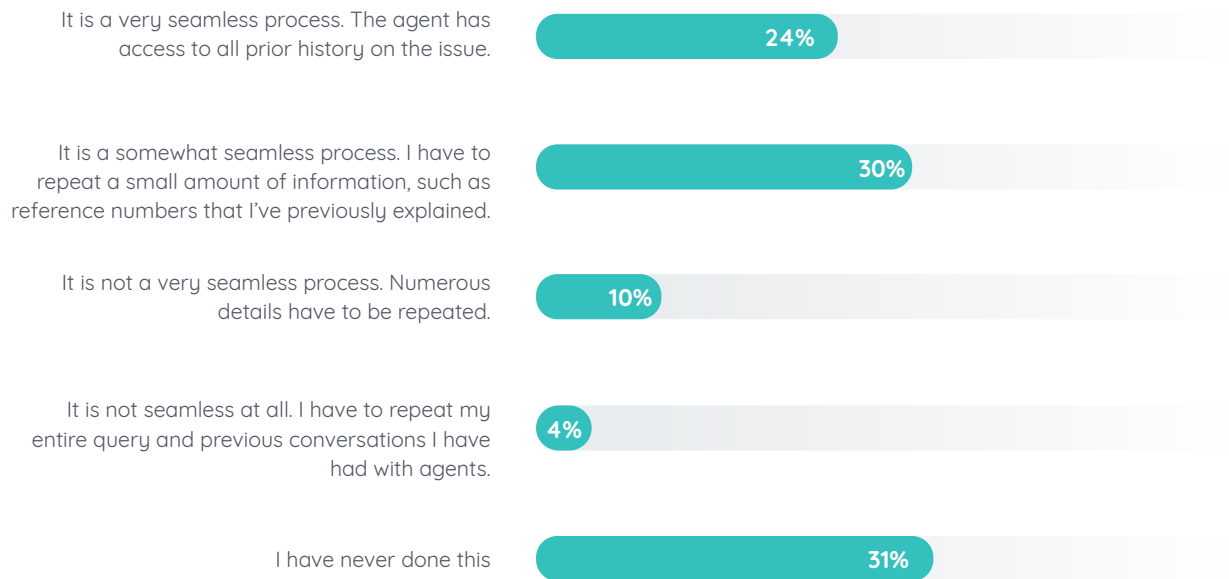
Delivering quality customer service online remains a key challenge for financial firms

While 63% of respondents rated their bank's web/mobile experience as good or excellent, nearly one-third (30%) of 18-24-year-olds rated their bank's as poor or very poor. Twenty-nine per cent said the same about their bank's web chat experience.

Forty-one per cent of all respondents said their bank did not offer web chat.

When asked about their bank or insurance provider's ability to deliver seamless, personalised customer service online or over the phone, most consumers said they often had to repeat information when getting in contact about a previous query.

How UK consumers describe interacting with their bank about a previous query



Improving your digital customer experience

In this new digital world, customers want fast, easy and personalised customer support available across all channels, all the time. Here are our top tips for improving your digital customer experience based on what's worked for our customers.

1. Try a Digital Engagement platform

A digital engagement platform can help you deliver more proactive and personalised customer service online. They work by building a visitor profile of every customer who visits your website based on their browsing behaviour and interactions. With this information, you can then anticipate their needs and offer the right assistance, at the right moment, and via the most efficient channel. For example, you may automatically offer an online video consultation to customers who linger on your bereavement webpage. If a customer logs into your website, their visitor profile can also be enriched with data from your CRM (Customer Relationship Management), ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) or billing platform, enabling you to deliver even more targeted assistance.

[> Learn more](#)

2. Use a chatbot to handle simple enquiries

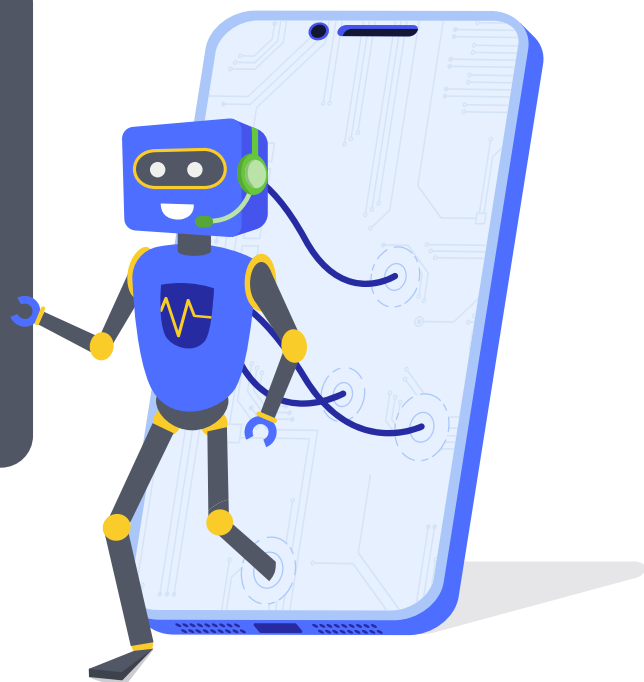
Chatbots provide customers with a quick and easy way to self-serve around the clock. They can answer simple customer enquiries at all hours of the day, freeing customer service teams to focus on higher value tasks. Advanced AI-powered bots can also handle basic service tasks, such as helping a customer to log in, check their bank balance, or process a payment. If an enquiry becomes too complex, customers can be seamlessly transferred to live agents with a full handover including the customer's profile, behaviour and interaction history. This ensures the agent is instantly up to speed and able to provide valuable assistance straight away.

[> Learn more](#)



Customer experience is our highest priority at If because we want to be the most caring insurance company in the Nordics. By implementing a chatbot in 2018, our agents have been able to deliver highly personalised, empathetic service at scale and in real-time – whether they're working from home or the office. They can now focus on the complex issues that require their individual expertise and empathy to resolve, while AI-powered chatbots together with RPA robots do most of the simplest tasks (like chat, e-tasks and simple processes).

Peter Valjakka
Head of Business Development, If CCES Finland



3. Enable screen sharing for agents and customers

Screen sharing enables you to share web sessions with customers to assist them with complex tasks. For example, if a customer became lost or stuck on your website, an agent could share their screen to help them find the product or information they're looking for. Agents could also help customers fill out web forms or make transactions, with all sensitive details such as passwords or payment details obscured for their security.

[> Learn more](#)

4. Improve your Agent Experience

With so much attention placed on customer experience these days, the needs of agents can often get overlooked. But the happier your agents are, the more motivated and empowered they'll feel to deliver exceptional service for your customers.

One of the biggest challenges financial firms face when it comes to providing a great agent experience is poor workflows. In the race to digitise and innovate, firms can easily accumulate multiple systems for chatbots, interaction analytics, digital engagement, email handling, ticketing and so on. However, having multiple fragmented systems can slow down agents, create silos, and frustrate customers. For example, a [survey](#) of more than 2,000 contact centre agents conducted by Gartner in 2018 found agents used an average of 8.2 different systems and tools every day to resolve customer enquiries. Not surprisingly, just 16 per cent said this mix of tools actually helped them handle customer issues. Instead, financial firms should invest in one core customer service solution that can provide everything agents need in one unified and easy-to-use application.

[> Learn more](#)



Building trust

Delivering secure and efficient customer service is key to building trust in your firm. So here are our top tips for securing your contact centre and improving your workflows.

1. Ensure your contact centre meets ISO standards

If you use a cloud contact centre solution to manage your customer interactions, ensure that it meets both ISO 27001 and ISO 9001 standards. Solutions that meet these standards can be trusted to deliver the highest quality service for customers and manage the information security and privacy of their data. It's also important to consider the security standards of any third-party integrations you might use.

[> Learn more](#)

2. Implement skills-based routing

If your customer service team manages multiple channels, skills-based routing can help you ensure every enquiry is distributed to the right agent with the right expertise. That expertise may be specialist knowledge in a particular product, policy or investment type. This will reduce the need to transfer customers between multiple teams and improve your first contact resolution rate, helping to build trust in your service and brand.

[> Learn more](#)

3. Use a payments solution that prioritises both security and customer experience

Banks, insurance providers, accountancy firms and wealth managers are a magnet for hackers. So you need to ensure each of your customer service channels are safe and secure, especially when it comes to taking payments. But taking secure payments while providing a compelling customer experience can be difficult. That's why we recommend using a payments solution that prioritises both security and customer experience.

For example, PCI Pal's Agent Assist solution enables contact centre agents to take card details securely over the phone without interrupting their conversation with the customer. When a payment is required, the agent simply opens the PCI Pal application and asks the customer to enter their card details using their telephone keypad. Asterisks are displayed to the agent with a counter showing the number of digits entered, and all keypad tones are masked as monotone beeps. During this process, the customer can talk freely with the agent and continue asking questions if need be. This ensures a fast, smooth, and PCI complaint transaction and a friendlier customer experience.

[> Learn more](#)



“PCI Pal provides secure payment solutions to some of the largest brands across the world. With our specialist payment technology and Puzzel's market-leading contact centre solution, you can guarantee seamless, safe and secure transactions for your customers every time.”

Tom Moores, Director – Channel Sales, PCI Pal





Empathy

Empathy is what makes your customers feel heard and understood. While easier to demonstrate in-branch and over the phone, it's not impossible to deliver online. Here are our top tips for delivering more empathetic digital customer experiences.

1. Offer video banking

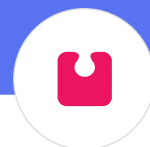
During the pandemic, millions of people used video every day to communicate with their colleagues, friends and family. Now it has become an essential communication channel for work and leisure. Already some major banks in the UK are offering 'video banking' where customers can book online video appointments to chat about their finances. NatWest customers, for example, can book appointments to chat about new account options, loans or credit cards, and financial planning. This not only provides customers with a more personalised and empathetic digital service experience, it's also extra convenient for those who cannot travel in-branch. With video, you can also serve online customers who are deaf via sign language.

[> Learn more](#)



"It's clear the future of banking and insurance will need to be powered by smart experiences that span both the physical and digital worlds. Whether it's offering video consultations with customers or providing personalised services through deep customer knowledge, firms that find ways to innovate without losing the human touch will be the ones that come out on top."

Alberta Bosco, Product Marketing Director, Puzzel



2. Speech Analytics

Speech Analytics enables you to collect valuable feedback from your customer calls. It works by transcribing and analysing 100 per cent of recorded calls to identify important keywords, phrases, categories and themes. This data can then help you to better understand your customers' needs and deliver more valuable products and services. For example, a high frequency of the keyword 'ESG' may indicate strong demand for more sustainable products. Speech Analytics can also help you spot issues before they get out of hand, such as if you see a sharp rise in the number of customers complaining about your 'mortgage calculator'.

[> Learn more](#)

3. Sentiment Analysis

Sentiment Analysis enables customer service agents to measure and track customer happiness during live web chat interactions. It analyses conversations in real-time, picking up emotional cues from the customer's natural language to determine if they are feeling positive, negative or neutral. This information is then displayed to the agent so they can better understand the customers' emotive needs and determine the next best action. This information can help agents pre-empt when an enquiry may need to be escalated to a supervisor. Sentiment Analysis scores can be recorded in a customer's interaction history so you can track their relationship with your brand over time. This can help predict if and when a customer is likely to churn and when may be a good time to offer a free financial health check or discounted rate.

> [Learn more](#)

About Puzzel

Puzzel is the leading European provider of cloud contact centre solutions. Every day, more than 1,100 organisations across 40 countries use our software to deliver smart customer experiences, blending the powers of people and technology to serve customers efficiently, effectively and with empathy. The Puzzel Platform enables organisations to create rich journeys for their customers, with a mix of live and self-service experiences that give people the freedom to choose when, where and how they get help. Artificial intelligence is harnessed at every touchpoint to automate tasks, provide insight, and personalise service and support. Puzzel also includes a suite productivity and planning tools to empower managers and agents to reach their goals and continuously improve performance. With 20+ years of experience in the industry, Puzzel is the CCaaS (Contact Centre as a Service) provider organisations trust when every moment matters.

For more information, please visit www.puzzel.com.

