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WhatsApp Business Platform

The Essential Guide

The WhatsApp Business Platform Need to Know Guide

Your new route to better customer interactions via the world's most popular messaging app.

There's great news for any businesses who are looking to have more engaging and higher converting interactions with their customers; WhatsApp is now available for business use!

This means that all of the features that make WhatsApp so popular for messaging between friends and family, are now available for business use too. Text, pictures, videos and audio can be easily sent directly to your customer's pockets, with the addition of branding and even bots for fully automated interactions.

With a user base of over 2 billion[1] (and growing) WhatsApp is a must have for any business that is looking to interact with customers in the place where they are most likely to respond.

We've put together this handy eBook to teach you everything you need to know about the platform, and how to get started.

We hope you find the information insightful, and our team are always here to help tailor a solution to your needs.

1. https://backlinko.com/whatsapp-users

Contents

Do customers actually have an appetite to use WhatsApp for engaging with brands?

This is a question we get asked a lot. So we've pulled together a few statistics to show you how customers are moving away from traditional channels (like email, post and calls) and are instead embracing WhatsApp as a place to not only chat with friends and family, but also businesses too.

Mobile devices are checked on average

58 times per day

(The Guardian)

66%
of consumers now prefer to have 2-way conversations with businesses through messaging apps *(TechCrunch)*

86%
of calls from businesses are ignored by customers *(Martech Today)*

The average UK consumer spends

3hrs 15minutes

looking at their mobile devices every single day *(The Guardian)*

Consumers are now increasingly demanding richer content (as opposed to plain text) in return for their engagement

The continued development of smartphones, home phones and apps has seen functionality which can block calls from businesses

What business challenges does WhatsApp solve?

When working with brands to implement WhatsApp into their communications strategy, we've seen some commonly recurring challenges sought to be solved. Here are just some of them:

Conversations with customers take too long

Average response time for a direct mail is 2.5 days compared to digital channels at **90 seconds** *(Esendex)*

Low engagement through traditional channels

Email has a 21% open rate. Direct mail is 75%. Mobile focused channels like WhatsApp boast **95%** *(Esendex)*

Interactions with customers currently cost too much

Depending on the use case, businesses implementing WhatsApp for customer comms can expect to see significant cost reductions compared with traditional channels.

Traditional channels have low conversions

Email has a 3.2% conversion rate and direct mail 5.1% compared with a digital channel which has **32%** *(Esendex)*

What exactly is the WhatsApp Business Platform? And what can it do?

The WhatsApp Business Platform is a way to supply rich, personalised, interactive and engaging conversations via WhatsApp, in a simple, secure and reliable way.

Some of the features that the API includes are – the ability for you to communicate with your customers at scale, automated responses, real time monitoring of conversations, conversion analytics, customisable message templates, and an unprecedented level of security with end to end encryption and data privacy.

Customers first of all have to opt-in to WhatsApp communications (more on this later), and then customers will receive either a one way message, or they can start to have interactions with a live agent, or even a chat bot.

And how is the solution deployed? Well businesses can choose from one of two options. The first is via remotely accessible online portals, or the business can choose to implement an API, which will add WhatsApp functionality directly into a business's existing CRM system.

Image, video and audio support

Cross OS support

Send Google Maps locations

Read receipts of messages

What are the features businesses can lean on when sending messages through WhatsApp?
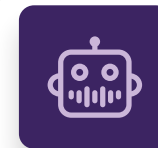
All of the features that customers love when chatting with friends and family through WhatsApp are available, but just to refresh your memory...

Two-way chat interactions

Branded business profile

Bot integration for process automations

What are the ways that businesses can use WhatsApp?

There are 4 types of messages that businesses can send through WhatsApp. These are:

Marketing

Examples include:

- Adverts
- Personalised product recommendations
- Upsell/cross sell opportunities
- Supply discount codes via QR/ Barcodes

Rich notifications

Examples include:

- Order confirmations
- Delivery updates
- Appointment reminders (with links to rescheduling tools)
- Event invitations
- Payment reminders
- Service interruptions (*E.g. utilities*)
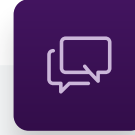
Two-way customer chats

Examples include:

- Payment processing
- Order queries
- Contract/policy updates
- FAQs

Alerts

Examples include:

- Travel updates with links to rescheduling tools
- Facility closures (*E.g. schools, and healthcare facilities*)
- IT outage alerts
- Security breaches
- Account updates (*E.g. banking, council-tax statements*)

Understanding the two types of WhatsApp Conversations

When implementing a WhatsApp customer comms strategy, it's important for businesses to understand the fundamental differences between these two types of conversations:

User Initiated Conversations

This is a conversation that is initiated in response to a user message, whenever a business replies to the customer within the 24 hour customer service window.

The conversation begins when a business responds to a user that has sent them a message. This is a typical customer service conversation.

Business Initiated Conversations

These are conversations that are triggered by a business sending a pre-configured, yet personalised message to their customers with the intention to start a conversation. The messages that initiate a business initiated conversation require a message template. Before receiving these messages, potential recipients must explicitly opt-in to WhatsApp communications. A great example of a business initiated conversation would be a promotional offer that then results in a two way conversation.

How do customers opt-in to WhatsApp communications?

A business cannot send WhatsApp messages to a customer without first getting permission from that person to do so. Here's how to go about getting that permission:

Customer must explicitly opt-in to WhatsApp communications (I.e. email comms, an app, the business's website, via a WhatsApp Thread, in person or on paper).

Opt-in can come from outside WhatsApp or from within a user-initiated conversation

Advertisements that when clicked, open WhatsApp are not permitted to gain opt-ins.

Opt-in must be triggered by a customer action, E.g. ticking a box.

Clear and obvious language must be used to gain opt-in. E.g. I agree to receive <detail> from <business name> on <customer number>.

How can I use WhatsApp in my industry?

WhatsApp can be used to improve just about any customer interaction, but here are just some of the main ways that we've helped our customers adopt the platform.

Financial services

Two-way customer service interactions, payment processing, finance applications, claim handling, payment reminders, Income and expenditure assessments, links to payment platforms like Mobile Collections.

Retail

Two-way customer service interactions, order confirmations, rich delivery updates, sale event invitations, payment reminders, appointment reminders.

Local Government

Two-way customer service chats, links to payment platforms, resident satisfaction surveys, major incident notifications.

Logistics

Order queries, delivery notifications, delivery receipts.

Utility providers

Two-way customer service chats, request/supply meter readings, automation of customer service interactions, links to secure payment environments, debt recovery, secure supply of contract information, manage engineer appointments/repairs.

Healthcare providers

Two-way chats with admin teams and healthcare professionals, remote diagnosis, rich appointment reminders, send Google Maps locations for appointment location, links to online healthcare advice, secure delivery of test results.

Travel

Ticketing (via bar/QR codes), travel promotions and marketing, links to payment platforms, travel updates.

What if I'm already using mobile as part of my comms strategy?

We think that the secret to a successful communications strategy is to give the customers the chance to communicate with brands in the ways that they're most comfortable. This creates a win-win situation for all parties. The customer can converse in the ways they prefer, and the brands stand a higher chance of their audience completing processes.

Digital

Where you are:
You still rely on email.

What's new:
Start to explore the possibilities of SMS.

Mobile

Where you are:
You're already using SMS.

What's new:
Understand how your journeys can be enhanced through rich messaging via channels like WhatsApp

Interactive

Where you are:
You're already using rich messaging channels.

What's new:
Start to provide all your comms across different mobile channels.

Integrated

Where you are:
You're already offering all your comms across different mobile channels

What's new:
Track, measure and optimise your comms approach.

Optimise

Where you are:
You have already optimised your mobile comms strategies.

What's new:
Continue to drive comms performance by exploring new rich and interactive messaging channels.

So if your brand already has (for example) an SMS or email strategy in place, but you'd like to give WhatsApp a try too – great! We'll help and advise you on how to get those channels singing together, helping you to create a true omnichannel communications strategy.

We do however, realise that every brand that we speak to is at a different stage of their customer comms journey. To help, we've put together this diagram to help you understand firstly the stage you're currently at, and then what the next steps could look like.

3 key questions to consider when implementing WhatsApp into your customer comms strategy

It's easy to get excited about WhatsApp given all cool functionality and reach that it offers, but to really make the most out of the platform, we'd recommend you consider these 3 main questions first:

Question 1

In my existing customer journey, where are the pain points or points that could be made better?

Grab yourself a pen and paper and draw out your entire customer journey, start to finish, highlighting all of the customer touch points. Consider not just your own, but also your customer's perspective. Ask yourself how each message you send could be more engaging for your customers, and offer quicker access to more services. Simultaneously, think about how the process could work better for your business. Are your support agents spending too much time on the phone for instance?

Question 2

What are the key use cases you want to use WhatsApp for?

Now that you know where you want to use WhatsApp, you can start to think about the individual use cases where you can use it. This is where you'll see real business benefits, and be able to flesh out ways to reduce costs and increase conversions.

A great example would be for agent based customer service interactions, which are expensive for businesses to supply and a real hassle for customers who don't like being on hold. How about a bot-driven WhatsApp alternative which provides instant service, and allows your agents to focus on more complex tasks.

Question 3

Where should we start off with WhatsApp?

With your list of use cases in hand, you can begin to think about implementation. We'd recommend starting with the use cases where you'll see the biggest impact so that you can gain confidence in the platform. Also think about the specific features that WhatsApp provides you with at this stage. Sending a straight-forward text based message? How about enriching that with an image or a video to really give your message some added punch?
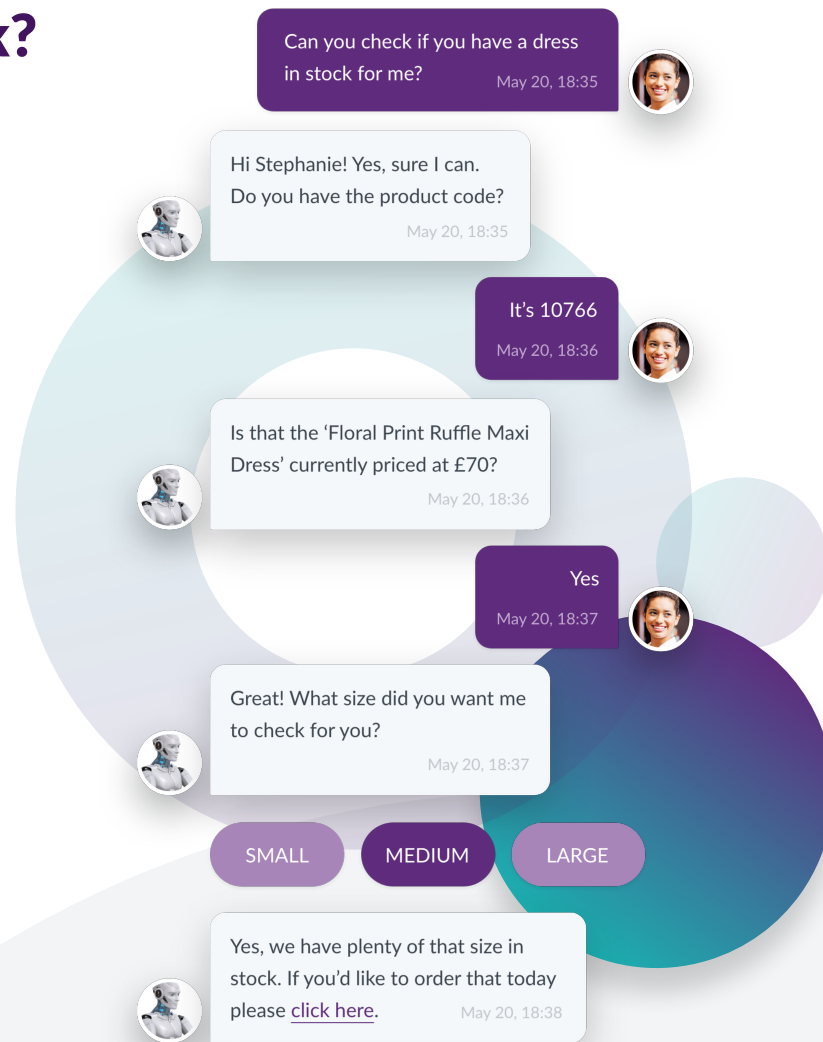
WhatsApp and Bots. How does that work?

Nearly every customer facing business that we speak to, will have at least a few tasks that they have to repeat numerous times during a day. This could be anything from answering a frequently asked question or arranging an appointment, to order queries and payment processing. Unfortunately when handling these tasks through live agents, it's a drawn out, and expensive process.

WhatsApp offers a solution to this challenge by being bot compatible. This means that customers have the power to serve themselves at any time of the day, without having to wait on hold to speak to an agent.

All of this functionality can then be hooked up to your existing CRM system so that the flow of information is completely seamless, and automated.

Can you check if you have a dress in stock for me?
May 20, 18:35

Hi Stephanie! Yes, sure I can. Do you have the product code?
May 20, 18:35

It's 10766
May 20, 18:36

Is that the 'Floral Print Ruffle Maxi Dress' currently priced at £70?
May 20, 18:36

Yes
May 20, 18:37

Great! What size did you want me to check for you?
May 20, 18:37

SMALL   MEDIUM   LARGE

Yes, we have plenty of that size in stock. If you'd like to order that today please click here.
May 20, 18:38

Why should you choose Esendex as your WhatsApp Business Platform provider?

We have been implementing mobile focused communication strategies for customers for over 20 years — so you're in safe hands.

We are learning and investing about future developments in business messaging — so you don't have to. In short, you'll be the first to know about any future developments to the platform, to help you steal a march on your competition.

Our solutions are stable and resilient.

Our template builder for Whatsapp enables you to create rich content template messages to engage your customers.

Our messaging studio app allows two-way communication creating a true omnichannel experience with the use of multiple communication channels from a centralised location.

We take the time to understand your business, your challenges and goals, so that we can implement WhatsApp in the most effective way for you.

Our WhatsApp solutions are implemented quickly and easily.

If you want to use WhatsApp with a combination of other communication channels (including mobile focused ones), that's great! We can show you how to combine communication channels to deliver a result/business benefit.

Designed bespoke solutions/integrations to meet your exact needs.

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