

How Chatbots Fit into Your Omnichannel Strategy

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“Omnichannel” is not a term the financial services industry can push off as a buzzword—it’s a business necessity for traditional institutions aiming to survive the digital disruption.

An effective omnichannel strategy provides customers with a consistent experience across all physical and digital channels—seamless access to financial products and services wherever, whenever, and however customers want to engage.

Financial institutions know they need to adapt to the omnichannel reality. A 2015 [survey conducted by Backbase and EFMA](#) shows that 61% of banks believe it is extremely important to create a seamless omnichannel experience. Yet delivering on the omnichannel promise has proven challenging. [Recent PWC research](#) indicates that only 17% of financial institutions feel “very prepared” for a move towards customer-centric, omnichannel business models.

And just as banks and other financial service providers are starting to wrap their arms around the dynamics of multichannel delivery, they must now go a step further as the channel landscape continues to evolve and expand.

Chatbots Are Quickly Emerging as a Preferred Engagement Channel

2016 seems to be the [year of chatbots](#), as major players such as Facebook, Microsoft, Google, and Apple have opened up their platforms for third party developers. The rise of the bot is fueled by two trends moving in opposite directions:

- For consumers, app fatigue is setting in, reaching a point where [close to a quarter of downloaded apps are abandoned](#) after just one use. Most users have just a handful of applications they use on a regular basis.
- At the same time, the instant messaging space is expanding rapidly—as many as 2.5 billion people have at least one messaging app installed and 3.6 billion are expected to have one in the next couple of years. Time spent on messaging apps has surpassed usage of social networks, averaging hundreds of minutes per week.

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There Are Good Reasons to Like Chatbots

Chatbots are casual yet useful—just what millennials seem to like. There's no need to download a new app for every service. You can chat with your friends, order food, get a ride with Uber, and transfer money, all without leaving your favorite messaging app.

Chatbots are conversational, so you don't have to learn a new interface or navigate hidden menus. And they are always available to serve millions of customers at the same time—a perfect fit for our instant gratification consumer culture and corporate cost-cutting drive.

As customers move more fluidly between channels in the digital world, chatbots will become an integral piece of a larger omnichannel strategy. Its importance is indisputable, as engagement over messaging apps is rapidly rising while engagement over other channels begins to plateau.

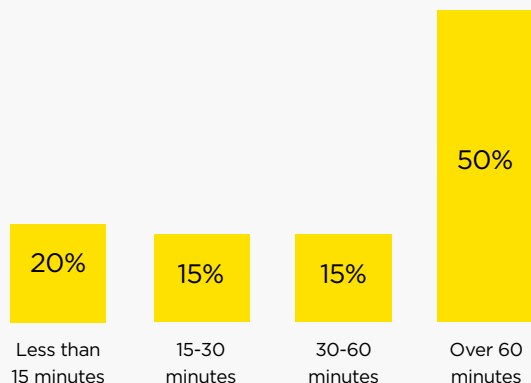
Initial Chatbot Experiences Fall Short of Expectations

At the same time, it would be a mistake for financial services to rush a chatbot solution as a standalone experience. As attractive as the chatbot may be for consumers, the experience will quickly sour if it becomes yet another silo disconnected from other digital and non-digital channels.

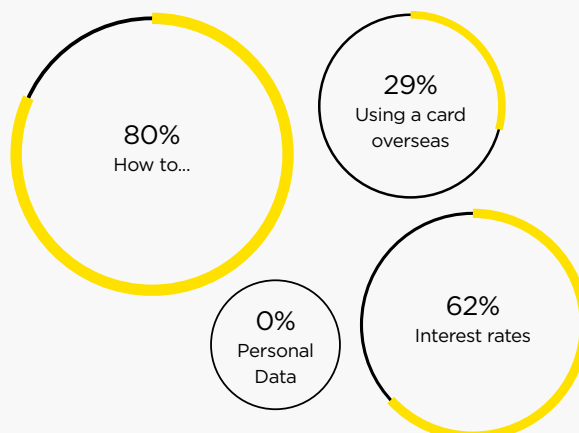
Unfortunately for many banks, their initial foray into the messaging channel failed to provide the responsiveness and level of service consumers expect.

Customers that are currently attempting to communicate with their bank through Facebook Messenger all too often encounter responses that fall short of basic expectations. Response time is less than adequate for many, and the quality of responses leaves a lot to be desired.

How quickly do banks respond on Messenger today?



% of complete and accurate responses



Sample responses from banks:

“Please note we’re not set up to respond to customer service request.”

“You will need to call one of our locations in order to discuss details of any of our offerings.”

“We’re sorry but the app doesn’t allow of address updating.”

“I am sorry, I am unable to confirm your credit limit.”

“Unfortunately, we don’t have access to interest rates. Please contact our call center for any questions regarding rate information.”

6 Things Your Bot Should Do to Support Your Omnichannel Strategies

Omnichannel strategies are all about delivering smoother, more consistent customer experiences across all channels. Here are a few things your bot should do to deliver on this promise:

- 1. Work seamlessly across channels:** Customers expect a consistent experience across the digital landscape—online, mobile app, Facebook Messenger, Amazon’s Alexa, etc. A conversation may start in Facebook Messenger, move to Amazon’s Alexa, and continue in the bank’s online or mobile app.
- 2. Engage in personalized conversations:** If all the information is generic, it will be shallow and unengaging. A smart bot is able to understand each customer’s individual situation and needs.
- 3. Access real-time customer data:** If the data is not consistent across channels, the customer will not trust the experience.
- 4. Access existing content (e.g. webpages, FAQs):** The bot channel should be at least as knowledgeable as existing channels, and it’s impractical to create new content for each channel.
- 5. Be useful:** If all the bot can do is deliver a customer balance, it’s not going to increase engagement. The bot must have deep enough knowledge to carry an intelligent conversation, at least on some specific topics (e.g. help save more, manage rewards, etc.).
- 6. Learn quickly:** The bot has to be able to keep up with new information and adjust to personal preferences over time.

Are you ready for the bot channel?

To learn more about the Personetics Anywhere chatbot and how it can improve your omnichannel strategy, [contact us today for a free demo](#).

