

ARE YOU SPEAKING THE CUSTOMER'S LANGUAGE?

LANGUAGE BARRIERS, SUPPORT
BOTTLENECKS, AND THE CASE
FOR LIVE CHAT TRANSLATION





In a globalised market, only supporting English-speaking customers is limiting. Your product can be brilliant; your team can be the best; your profit margins can be healthy.

But with English the lone language in which you can do business, your success can only ever be played out on a confined stage. Communication barriers cost your company money.

Differences in language might seem unexceptional; even unavoidable. In truth, they're increasingly damaging. They thwart growth ambitions, driving a wedge between your business and its potential customers.

And, on an ethical level, any perceived exclusivity or inaccessibility is damaging to your brand reputation as well as your bottom line. That unintentional language bias leads to customer inequality.

So, in this climate, multilingualism is emerging as a key competitive battleground for businesses. But how can you break language barriers without breaking the bank?

This white paper explores the impact of support bottlenecks, the need to speak the customer's language, and the real value of real-time live chat translation.

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The headline stats

The ability to compete in a multilingual and culturally diverse marketplace is essential for today's businesses. Without multilingualism, brands will struggle to foster international connections. More simply, they will also struggle to provide equal support to all their customers.

But data speaks louder than conjecture. So, here are just some statistics that highlight the demand for – and value of – multilingual customer support.

Diversity

There are roughly
6500
languages spoken today

In the US,
1 in 5
people speak a language other than English at home

In the UK,
8%
of the population has a primary language other than English

3/4
of internet users already speak a language other than English

Over 40%
of UK contact centres already support languages other than English

Mandarin
speaking consumers make up the world's leading ecommerce market

Workplace

66%

of call centre agents become frustrated with language barriers

86%

of contact centres receive non-English calls

Employer satisfaction with school and college leavers' language skills stands at a low of

34%

69%

of contact centre leaders believe their non-English contact volume will increase over the next five years

More than
1/3

of centre leaders cite bilingual recruiting difficulties as a barrier to multilingual support

62%

of agents are concerned about information being misinterpreted when a bilingual agent or interpreter is not available

Close to
25%

of the UK economy is based on exports, with after-sales support increasing in importance

Nearly half

of senior executives said that misunderstandings and "messages lost in translation" have stalled major international business deals

Language barriers are the biggest challenge for SMEs looking to develop markets overseas, with a majority vote of

15%

Sales

72%

of consumers are more likely to buy with help/information in their own language

58%

of contact centre leaders say translation increases loyalty to the brand

60%

of executives said that poor communication skills have negatively affected their plans to expand internationally

Future thinking

Half

of customers for U.S. businesses will come from overseas by 2025

Arabic

now ranks as the second most important 'language of the future'

According to the British Council, Spanish is 'useful' for **34%** of UK businesses

Deficient language skills and the presumption that international business partners will speak English is costing the UK economy about

3.5% of GDP

The UK's language services industry – worth over **1 billion** – is highly dependent on native speaker linguists from other EU countries whose expertise may be more difficult to access after Brexit

The proportion of businesses citing Arabic as important to their business is increasing, now at **26%**



WITHOUT MULTILINGUALISM, BRANDS WILL STRUGGLE TO FOSTER INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS.



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Multilingualism: the benefits for the customer

The numbers show that multilingualism makes a difference to your customers. It is, perhaps, obvious why. Customers enjoy a better experience when you can speak their language. They feel better supported, better considered, and simply better compatible with your company. So, why does multilingualism matter so much from a customer perspective?

Accessibility

Accessibility in customer service is all about being easy to contact and easy to communicate with. It's about being open and available to your customers.

Multilingualism means that you become accessible to more customers – not just the subset that speak English. Naturally, customers value easier access to support.

Inclusiveness

There is also a subtler emotional impact that comes with being cut off from customer service on language grounds. Those customers not catered to can feel excluded and unconsidered.

They might feel like a nuisance; or an undesirable; even someone facing discrimination. So, multilingual customer support is important in creating a more inclusive and welcoming culture.

Speed of service

Language barriers delay your customers. They create confusion, crossed wires, and overly laborious conversations. Plus, language barriers decimate the convenience that today's customers crave.

With a multilingual support capacity, you give your customers faster service, and a faster resolution. Plus, you give them this speedy convenience on their terms – not yours.

Smoother customer journey

Language barriers don't just cause delay. They also lead to multiple disruptions. For example, the customer is often transferred, directed elsewhere, or forced to switch language.

By giving them support in their own language, the customer can enjoy a smoother journey with fewer hiccoughs and stumbling blocks. Instead, they get fluid, fluent access to help.

Reduced frustration

Stunted communication takes its toll on the customer's frustration levels. Being faced with a wall of incomprehension is disempowering as well as hugely exasperating.

So, customers are likely to feel angrier, more impatient, and less satisfied with your service if they are unable to chat effectively.

Improved customer experience

All this leads to one overarching benefit for the customer: their experience improves when you speak their language. Multilingual support makes their life easier, and makes room for them at the table.

Not only does their time and effort feel more valued, but also their value as a non-English speaking customer feels upheld.

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Multilingualism: the benefits for the business

It's not only customers who benefit from a multilingual support function. Your business, too, has much to gain in embracing multilingualism – from breaking bottlenecks, to brand reputation, to your bottom line. Here's a look at the benefits you stand to enjoy.

Faster business

Multilingual customer support will speed up your business. Language barriers eat up time and hamper productivity. That's not to mention the employee irritation they birth.

So, removing those language barriers helps your service wheels run a little smoother. Your customer department becomes that bit more efficient, that bit more productive, and that bit more well-oiled.

Customer service consistency

Part of offering well-oiled customer service is consistency. Unfortunately, that can be hard to ensure without a multilingual customer support offering.

Being able to communicate in languages beyond English helps you dodge conflict. You avoid misunderstanding, and create a more uniform, universal customer service front.

Bottom line boost

If customers can get support in their own language from a competitor, but not from you, who do you think they'll be more inclined to use?

Providing multilingual customer support is just good sales sense. If you can speak to more prospects, you can sell to more prospects.

Bigger global footprint

This leads to the next point: a multilingual customer support function extends your global footprint. It allows you to grow – and better serve – an international customer base.

Plus, multilingual capacity means you can target high-growth areas. By speaking the customer's language, you can extend into lucrative foreign markets such as China and the Middle East.

Enhanced brand reputation

Money aside, providing multilingual customer support is great for your brand reputation. It's easy to ship products and services online. But supporting those international customers after the sale can be trickier.

So, multilingual customer support shows a commitment to the customer and their post-sale aftercare. In turn, you build a reputation as a trusted brand that cares.

A competitive edge

The ability to offer multilingual customer support is a key differentiator. Only a minority of businesses are currently doing so.

This presents a huge opportunity for early adopters to shine – leading the way in the UK as well as becoming more of a contender in the global marketplace.



IT'S NOT ONLY CUSTOMERS WHO BENEFIT FROM A MULTILINGUAL SUPPORT FUNCTION. YOUR BUSINESS, TOO, HAS MUCH TO GAIN IN EMBRACING MULTILINGUALISM

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Current translation techniques

So, the numbers back the need for business multilingualism. The customer benefits from multilingualism. And, most importantly, your business can only benefit from multilingualism too. But creating a multilingual customer service front is easier said than done. So, what methods are businesses currently using?

Multilingual agents

Typically, contact centres continually recruit for multilingual customer service agents to meet their translation needs. A multilingual agent – as you'd expect – is able to give support to customers in languages outside of English. Importantly, they can do so accurately and with emotional context.

But they're also costly and hard to find. For all their skills, multilingual agents can still only handle one conversation at a time. Plus, they're usually limited in terms of language range.

Offshore call centres

Offshore call centres can be a great option for companies who sell much of their product or service internationally. A UK company selling in bulk overseas still needs to provide post-sales support to their global customers. They may struggle to find the necessary range of multilingual customer service reps on their home turf.

So, setting up a dedicated offshore call centre in their chief countries of trade helps businesses better serve their customer base. This option, however, is an expensive one. It might be achievable for the huge international enterprise, but it's not feasible for smaller companies with limited resource.

Telephone interpreters

A telephone interpreter is another (slightly less common) method of offering multilingual support. They work in the middle of the business and the customer, interpreting both sides of the conversation over the phone.

This is usually a third-party service provided by a specialist provider. Telephone interpreters ensure great levels of accuracy, but can feel a little clunky due to the constant delay of interpreting and repeating information over the course of a call.

Translation technology

New technology is displacing the status quo of human methods of translation. Translation tech comes in many shapes and sizes: from online web translation, to machine translation, to mobile apps and even wearables.

In the contact centre, however, there is one particular example of translation technology that offers great, real-time results. It's flexible, affordable, and accessible. As you might have guessed from the premise of this white paper, that technology is wrapped within live chat software.



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Real-time live chat translation

Your customers already love live chat. It's emerging as the channel of choice in today's fast-paced, web-based world. Now, real-time translation is making live chat more accessible than ever.

What is real-time live chat translation?

Real-time live chat translation is a technological solution to language barriers. With this option, you deploy a live chat channel with an inbuilt translation service on your website. This then allows you to chat to customers in almost any language, with instant translations running back and forth.

This works via an out of the box integration of a translation service (such as Google Translate) and a live chat solution. The customer can type in their language; the agent can type back in theirs. Meanwhile, behind the conversational scenes, the live chat solution is translating two-ways to keep communication fluid and fluent.

So, your corporation becomes a multilingual customer service provider overnight. The real-time translation of live chat conversations allows contact centres to give instant, seamless customer service in over 100 languages.

What are the benefits?

Cuts customer service costs

As your business scales, the cost of global customer support rises based on employing teams and translators. So, live chat software presents an affordable avenue to provide multilingual service.

Running offshore call centres is expensive. So is hiring multilingual customer service agents. By comparison, live chat is a single, cost-effective solution that opens your support function to the world.

Flexible range

Unlike any bilingual agent, live chat software can translate in over 100 languages. It's a flexible and comprehensive translation option that puts all the world's major languages at your fingertips.

The capacity to chat in 100 languages opens your website to the world. You can test foreign markets and support new prospects – no matter where in the world they are.

Convenient to deploy

A live chat deployment is extremely low-effort. You don't have to go through a recruitment process, and you don't have to make any infrastructure changes. You just download and go.

Plus, it's something you can freely trial. If it doesn't work for you, you're not out of pocket. If it does, you have a low-barrier, easy to use answer to your translation problems.

Improves employee morale

A live chat translation service helps upskill your employees. They become multilingual communicators, with a handy new translation tool that extends their range.

Plus, translation reduces frustration for busy customer service agents. Conversations run easier without language barriers – causing less of a communication and misinterpretation headache.

Faster service delivery

Chat translation helps you handle multilingual conversations quickly. Previously, customer contact in a different language would have presented delay and confusion. You might have had to wait for an interpreter, or third-party translation.

With real-time translation, however, that same conversation becomes intelligible at once. Agents can manage the chat as comfortably, swiftly, and efficiently as they would with any other conversation.

Productivity boost

This speed and efficiency continues after the chat session has closed. Both original and translated text is stored in a chat transcript before being pushed to your CRM.

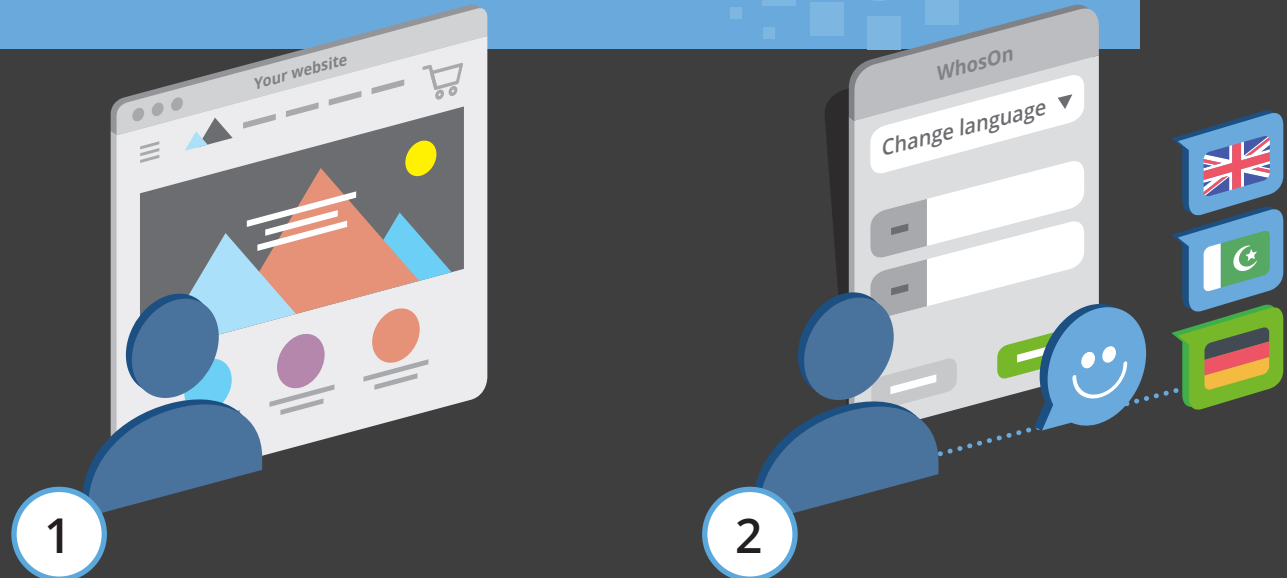
This means that your business gets clean customer records without any extra effort. So, another of the less obvious benefits of chat translation is the productivity boost it brings to customer service admin.

Improved internal comms

Looking beyond customer-agent clarity, real-time live chat translation also drives enhanced agent to agent communication.

That's because translation extends into your internal chats. This helps improve communication and collaboration, while supporting diversity infrastructure.

What does live chat translation look like via WhosOn?



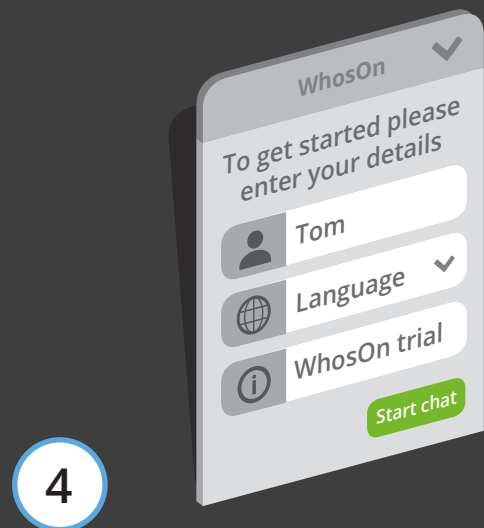
1 The visitor enters your website. WhosOn tracks this entry in real-time.



2 Next, WhosOn detects the visitor's language. It does this using the GeoIP from the visitor browser setting.



3 WhosOn can then change the chat button based on the visitor's language. So, an English-speaking visitor might see, "Click here to chat live". A visitor from Russia, meanwhile, could see, "Живой чат". This is an optional step, based on your configuration.



4 The visitor goes on to click the chat button. They are then presented with a pre-chat survey, which is customisable based on language. Here, the visitor will confirm details such as their name and reason for contact. They can also choose the chat language they'd like to proceed with.



5 After receiving the pre-chat survey, WhosOn routes the chat request to the most appropriate agent. This routing works on factors such as language, department, and skillset.



6 At this point, the translated live chat session begins in earnest. The conversation starts, and each message is translated back and forth between the agent and the visitor. This happens smoothly, in real-time. So, both parties see and send messages in their own language, with no translation delays.



7 When the chat winds to a close, the visitor exits the session. WhosOn then generates a transcript that contains both the original and translated text.



8 Next, WhosOn makes sure the chat transcript is securely stored. Depending on your setup, WhosOn can push each transcript into an onsite database or into your CRM. This step happens invisibly and automatically in the background.



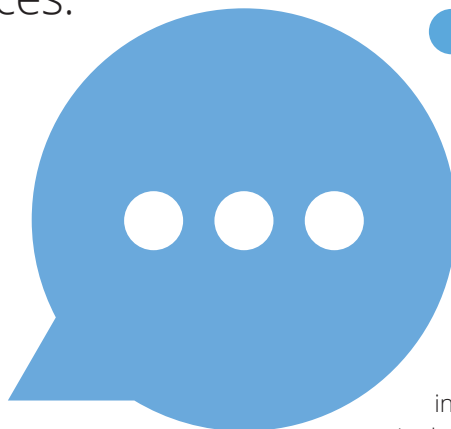
9 After closing the session, WhosOn displays a post-chat survey for the visitor to (optionally) complete. Here, they can score the agent and the service, or answer any feedback questions you might have. They can also request to receive a copy of their live chat transcript via email.



10 Finally, WhosOn calculates an overall chat sentiment score. It does this using a combination of keyword analysis and post-chat survey data. So, you can see just how well your translated live chat session went in terms of customer satisfaction.

Tap the benefits of chat translation

Language barriers aren't going anywhere. Nor is global trade and the growth of money-spinning overseas marketplaces.



In fact, as companies scale and as globalisation gains pace, language barriers are likely to become an increasing business blocker. So, becoming multilingual as early as possible puts you in a great competitive stead – both now and in the future.

It's time to think outside the box that is the English language. And the small addition of a live chat box on your website can help you do just that – quickly and cost-effectively.

To start your journey towards improved global connectivity and future prosperity, take out a free trial of WhosOn and its live chat translation functionality today.

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