



The Ultimate WhatsApp Chatbot Distribution Strategy



Table of Contents

> Introduction	2
> WhatsApp Chatbot: Next-gen Engagement Platform	3
> What is a chatbot?	3
> Why WhatsApp?	4
> Why WhatsApp Chatbot?	4
> WhatsApp Chatbot: How does it work?	5
> WhatsApp Business App	5
> WhatsApp Business API	6
> Rules of WhatsApp Chatbot Messaging	6
> WhatsApp Chatbot: How does it help?	7
> Benefits	7
> Possible Use Cases	9
> WhatsApp Chatbot: Marketing Strategies	10
> Two Engagement Types	10
> Actionable Marketing Strategies	11
> WhatsApp Chatbot: Setting it up	16
> WhatsApp Chatbot: Final Considerations	19
1. Research	
2. Involve	
3. Collaborate	
> Conclusion	20

Social media's thunder stealer, the [WhatsApp Chatbot](#), is in a position to become the next-gen customer support and digital marketing tool.

This report sets up the premise of WhatsApp for Business and outlines key strategies for brands to level up.

Introduction

If one travels back to the 1990s, the word marketing draws a picture of people in formal suits, carrying a briefcase or bag, and selling their products. Later, telemarketing emerged, owing to the extensive use of telephone and television (TV). The process of marketing seemed like a relatively easy task with minimal steps involved. Create, advertise and sell a product. The channels were limited, too.

Come the 21st Century, and it's all about technology. Marketing in this era combines conventional and digital mediums. Modern, digitised marketing facilitates a two-way interactive street between businesses and customers. Some channels also allow real-time communication. **The internet has transformed marketing into an agile and well-oiled machine.**

While marketing techniques may have changed over the years, its central principle – generating interest for a product or service and encouraging people to purchase it – still holds weight.

Today, social media applications are particularly popular for this purpose. This online medium hasn't reached its peak yet, and it probably never will. With newer platforms and business services emerging in the space every few years, there is always something new for marketers to explore. To understand the popularity of social media, here's some numerical information – [4.2 billion](#) or 51% of the world's population. That's the number of people active on this channel as of February 2021.



It's interesting to note that out of 4.2 billion, 4.15 billion or 98% are active social media users on mobile. It implies that social media is quickly growing as a mobile-first online channel. Digital advancement further gives a varied range of social media applications to choose from. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and Pinterest are popular choices. But there's one application that has been around for over a decade and is probably used by everyone every single day. One that is now emerging as a highly effective and interactive marketing channel.

It's WhatsApp.

WhatsApp Chatbot: Next-gen Engagement Platform

Interactive marketing doesn't get better than a chatbot – engaging with a customer in real-time, advertising a product, and resolving queries.

Chatbots have been around for a while. Facebook started its Messenger chatbot in April 2016, considered revolutionary and changing how brands engage with customers. And it's WhatsApp today that has immense potential in becoming the ultimate chatbot platform.

Before moving into more details about **WhatsApp chatbot for business**, here are three essential questions that any marketer may have.



What is a chatbot?

2020 is considered a landmark year in changing consumer behaviour and digital transformation in business. Unique challenges propelled the adoption of rising technologies such as [Artificial Intelligence](#) (AI) and [Natural Language Processing](#) (NLP). Brands resorted to unique ways of staying connected with the customer digitally. One of them being chatbots.

A chatbot is a [conversational AI](#) tool that mimics natural human language to communicate between two or more entities. It may be text or voice-based, depending on its purpose and functionality. Chatbots aim to engage with customers and resolve queries without the need for human interference.



WhatsApp chatbots, powered by WhatsApp Business API, can conduct automated conversations with customers by mimicking human language and interactions.

Why WhatsApp?

The right question to ask is, why not WhatsApp?

- > WhatsApp is the [most popular messaging tool](#) (1.6 billion users) and the [third most popular social media](#) platform (2 billion users).
- > It's operational in over [180 countries and 60 languages](#).
- > It's secure, fast, simple, and intuitive.
- > It helps people connect with friends and families across the globe, anytime.
- > It's personalised and more intimate than other social media networks.
- > It protects the privacy of consumers, thus, facilitating trust.
- > It's free for users and doesn't need a technical setup.
- > There are very few messaging applications like WhatsApp, and newer platforms aren't as effective or far-reaching.

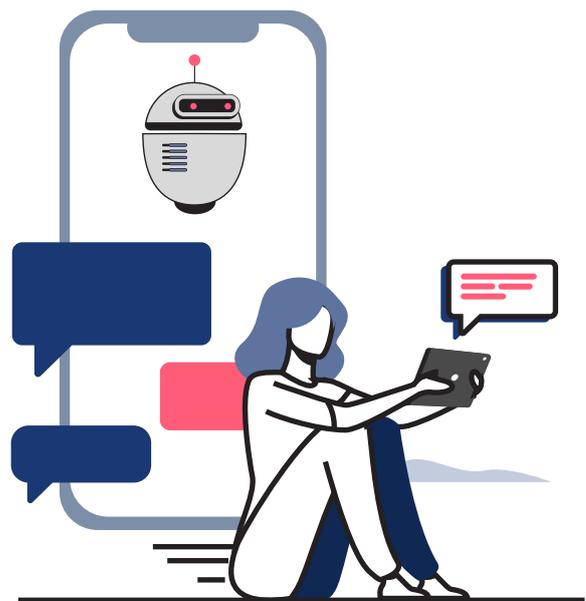
Why WhatsApp Chatbot?

A study by [Oracle](#) concluded that more than 50% of customers expected a business to operate twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. And 65% preferred using a messaging application to contact businesses.

[Markets Insider](#) reported that the global chatbot market would rise to \$9.4 billion by 2024.

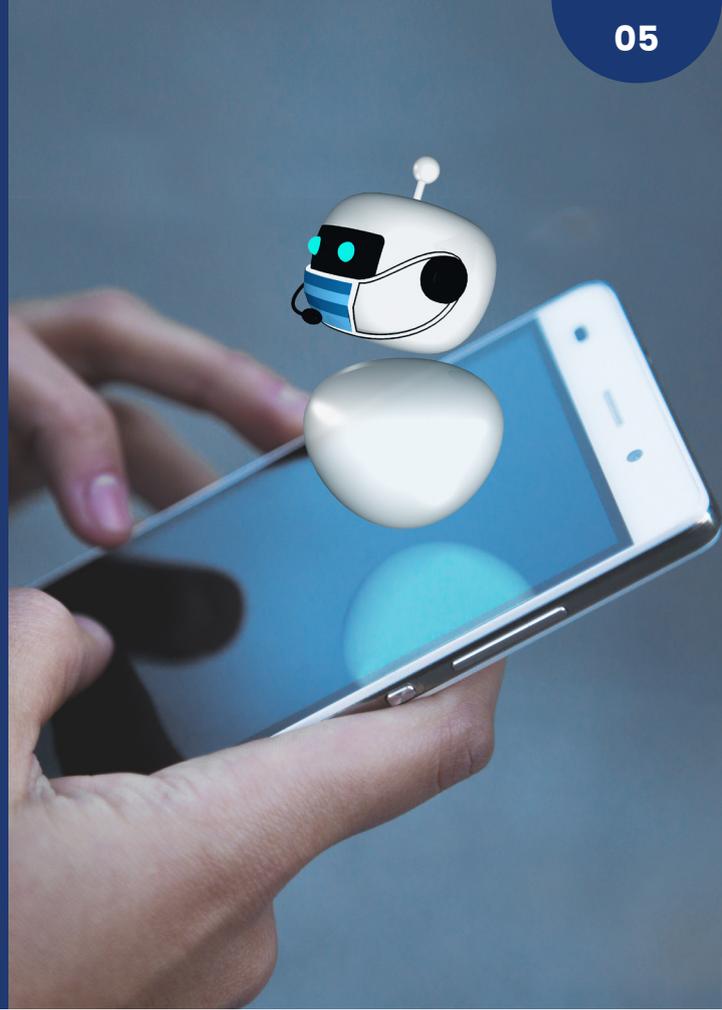
[Gartner](#)'s recent research showed that 74% of leaders want to move 5% of their employees to remote working permanently after COVID19. At the same time, 25% will shift 10% of their workforce to remote working permanently.

All of the above statistics throw light on the state of business today. More brands are turning towards intelligent digital solutions to serve their customers quickly and effectively. A chatbot satisfies these needs. And if that chatbot is integrated with a messaging application that a significant chunk of the audience uses and is familiar with, chances are they'll stick with it. That's where a WhatsApp messenger chatbot comes in.



WhatsApp Chatbot: How does it work?

WhatsApp has two chatbot offerings for businesses depending on their scale of operations and needs – WhatsApp Business App and WhatsApp Business API.



WhatsApp Business App

The WhatsApp Business app was launched in 2018 as a version of the messaging app for businesses. Brands can interact with customers through WhatsApp itself, and users don't need to download a separate application or visit another website.

It's a free app aimed towards small and medium businesses which operate on a smaller scale and have limited needs. The WhatsApp Business app's features enable quick sorting and resolution of queries with the kind of agility customers would expect from small and medium businesses.

Key Features:

- > Business Profile highlighting relevant information about the business.
- > Smart replies to resolve customer queries faster.
- > Away messages when the brand isn't online.
- > Labels that help categorise customers.
- > Messaging statistics to analyse and improve performance.
- > WhatsApp Web functionality to enable the business account on browsers of desktops and laptops.

WhatsApp Business API

The first thing to note is that WhatsApp Business API isn't an application. It's a [WhatsApp chatbot builder](#) and an extensively technical setup designed for medium to large businesses. It allows brands to reach customers across larger geographic areas at scale by integrating the WhatsApp Business profile with existing systems. Being an API (Application Program Interface), it doesn't have a front-end or application to download.

Here's where its technology gets more interesting. WhatsApp chatbots, powered by WhatsApp Business API, can conduct automated conversations with customers by mimicking human language and interactions. NLP algorithms are trained to understand and reflect human behaviour to make the customer experience seamless and richer.

Key Features:

- > Business Profile highlighting relevant information about the business.
- > Engaging in personalised conversations with customers.
- > Sharing essential business updates and notifications.
- > Sharing product information.
- > Automated messaging that mimics the human language.
- > Ads that keep customers engaged.

Rules of WhatsApp Chatbot Messaging

Keeping the free-flowing nature of the app in mind, WhatsApp doesn't let businesses send messages or notifications to anyone at random. There are specific rules businesses need to know:

1. For a business chatbot to engage with a user, the user has to opt-in for or allow communication the first time.
2. If the user starts the conversation with the business chatbot, it comes under Customer Care.
3. If the chatbot initiates the conversation with the user, it comes under WhatsApp Message Templates or WhatsApp Notifications.
4. Every time a user sends a message to the chatbot, WhatsApp provides a 24-hour window to engage with the customer without limitations. This window reopens each time a user sends a message.
5. Messages within the 24-hour window are called Session Messages.

WhatsApp Chatbot: How does it help?

WhatsApp Business app and WhatsApp Business API let businesses carry out complex customer engagement tasks with ease. It benefits various stakeholders such as clients, business owners, marketers, sales teams, and customer support.



Benefits

These are some benefits for:

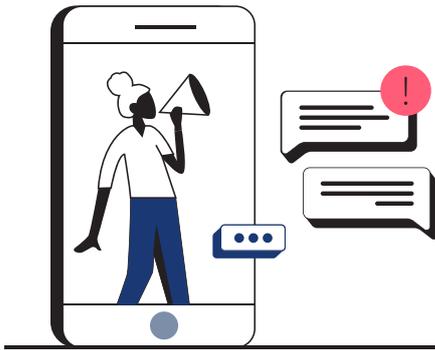
Clients

- > Responding quickly to enable two-way communication.
- > 24*7 support leading to higher satisfaction.
- > Personalised and quality conversations.
- > End-to-end encryption, two-factor authentication, and verified business accounts offering protection.
- > Engaging on a pre-existing app and not a different one that needs to be downloaded.



Business Owner

- > Availability for all types of businesses – small, medium, large.
- > WhatsApp Business API gives a richer and more seamless experience.
- > Customer engagement builds brand awareness.
- > Aid for omnichannel marketing.
- > Facilitating conversation on a familiar and interactive platform.

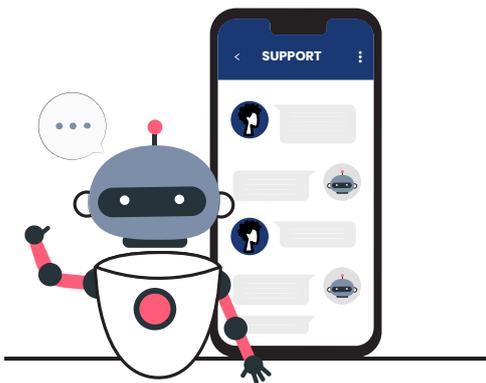
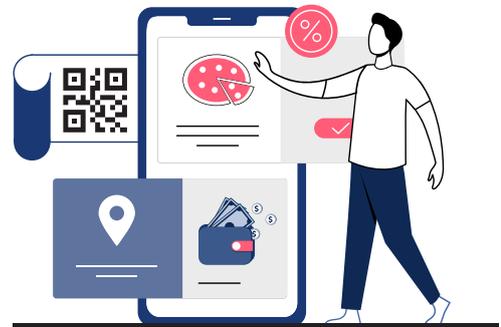


Marketers

- > Helping with publicising products and repeated marketing.
- > Doubling up as a lead generation channel.
- > Navigating customers through the marketing funnel by meeting specific needs.
- > [Conversational messaging](#) with customers through the buying journey.
- > Disseminating offers and discounts through personalised, human-like conversations.

Sales

- > Navigating customers through the sales funnel.
- > Aiding the sales process by providing relevant information.
- > Providing customers with choices and giving them more control during sales.
- > Updating about order processing and delivery.
- > Announcing deals and discounts.



Customer Support

- > Programmed to deal with FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions).
- > Instant responses for better customer care.
- > Two-way, human-like conversation facilitating brand awareness and loyalty.
- > Handling complex queries with the ease of automation.
- > Sharing important notifications at different order processing stages.
- > Staying connected on a platform that makes users feel comfortable.

Possible Use Cases

WhatsApp chatbot marketing lets businesses connect with consumers in various ways and share multiple media – text, images, and videos.



One-on-one Customer Support

Brands can connect with customers directly and instantly. WhatsApp chatbots facilitate interactive and two-way conversations through human-like language, text messages, voice notes, images, and videos. Customers can have all their queries answered on products and services.



Order Processing

Businesses can use a WhatsApp chatbot to provide support after order placement. Customers get regular order updates, delivery status tracking, or information about billing and payments.



Broadcast Information

Through the broadcast feature, brands can send out important notifications such as changes in business policies or new services. It follows a concept similar to the BCC feature used in emails. Any responses from customers will be visible to the sender and not others. Broadcast lists come with an upper limit of [256 people](#).



Community Building

WhatsApp Business allows creating a group (the limit stays at 256 people) that acts as a brand community. Businesses can share crucial information in various content formats and encourage members to contribute.



Online Transactions

WhatsApp Business API facilitates purchases and bookings through the chatbot. Another option is to provide a third-party payment link at the time of the transaction.



Discovery

Through [conversational AI](#), WhatsApp Business API understands the customer's message and helps them discover more about the relevant products or services..



Data Collection

WhatsApp Business app and WhatsApp Business API provide analytics that is a goldmine of customer buying behaviour. Brands can analyse this information and seek more specific information by asking customers to fill out a form. They can input the data collected into the CRM system.

WhatsApp Chatbot: Marketing Strategies

The information so far provides an in-depth understanding of WhatsApp chatbots and why they should be a part of a brand's marketing channel. The question that arises now is 'how brands can deploy them. This section provides detailed insights into the usability of the [WhatsApp chatbot for eCommerce](#).



Two Engagement Types

WhatsApp Chatbots can offer [two types of engagement](#) with customers. The chatbot chosen depends on the marketing objectives and end goals.

1

Declarative or Informational

This type resolves customer queries by discovering valuable and relevant information. It offers instant resolution with templated responses to FAQs. Declarative chatbots serve customer care through highly specialised and structured engagement using NLP.

2

Conversational

A class above, Conversational chatbots combine AI, NLP, and Machine Learning (ML) to study customer interactions. They gather detailed insights and program responses based on the conversation. The direction in which each conversation proceeds may be different based on buying intent. Conversational chatbots are contextually aware and, therefore, more powerful. They are used by businesses looking to develop more prosperous and loyal relationships with customers. These chatbots can be built using the WhatsApp Business API.

Actionable Marketing Strategies

There's no one particular WhatsApp chatbot marketing strategy that works for all businesses. The platform is one of the most versatile **distribution channels** and fulfils different business goals for different scales of operation.

Discussed below are varied marketing objectives that a WhatsApp Chatbot can achieve with real-world examples and actionable strategies that will take a business to the next level.

Lead Generation

Nykaa allows users to register via the mobile number on their application. If users haven't made a purchase or shared their email with Nykaa yet, the brand's WhatsApp Chatbot encourages them to register their email for more updates.



Source: [Verloop](#)

Why This Works



Lead generation is perhaps the most important outcome of any marketing activity. If a marketing strategy can generate leads, it has achieved the gold standard of successful marketing. It's one of the most widely used chatbot strategies as well. Unlike website pop-ups that sometimes adversely disrupt the user experience, a lead generation request arising from WhatsApp can seem less intrusive.

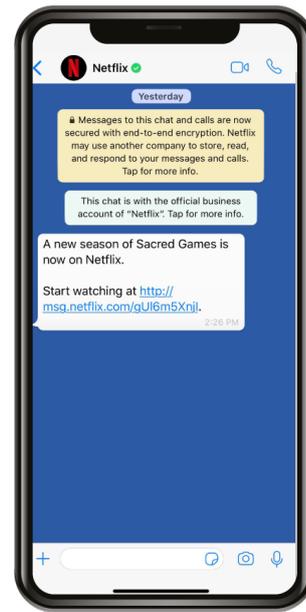
Actionable Strategies



Brands can share a simple 'click to chat' link with the customer. They can post brand or product-related information on other social media platforms and link WhatsApp chatbot in the post or bio. Once users click on the link, brands receive their name and phone number. But they shouldn't let it end there. They can hook the user with an attractive offering – it could be sharing weekly updates about the products or a limited period offer. Providing relevant information will encourage users to make a purchase.

Recommendation & Reminders

Netflix has a tab for upcoming releases on the mobile app. If a user selects get notified for any releases, Netflix asks if they'd like to get notified on WhatsApp. Once the user opts in for WhatsApp notifications, Netflix recommends watching the show or film when it's out on the app.



Source: [Reddit](#)

Why This Works



Netflix knows that the user opted in because they found the content interesting. The brand also knows that its users are busy and only come to the app for entertainment. Chances are they can't keep up with the release dates of selected shows or films. Through their WhatsApp chatbot, Netflix answers a unique customer problem by sending reminders and recommendations. It ensures customers keep coming back for more.

Actionable Strategies



Customers come to a brand because they find its products useful. They choose to opt-in or send that first message to get in touch with the business to find more valuable solutions to their problems. By sharing recommendations, businesses let them know that they can provide solutions for various needs through their products.

Order Processing

Lee Cooper used the WhatsApp chatbot to make a quick sale, keeping in mind the free-flowing nature of the platform and limiting suggestions. It also makes the chatbot easier to deploy. Users can also use WhatsApp chatbots at other stages of order processing, such as tracking delivery and requesting a refund. LensKart used the tracking order feature to service customer queries regarding shipment.



Source: [Verloop](#)

Why This Works



A customer placing an order is a big win for any business. For those customers who don't browse through the entire product catalogue on the website, WhatsApp makes it easier by limiting choices tailor-made for buyer intent. Further, adding a tracking order feature encapsulates the order process in a single channel.

Actionable Strategies

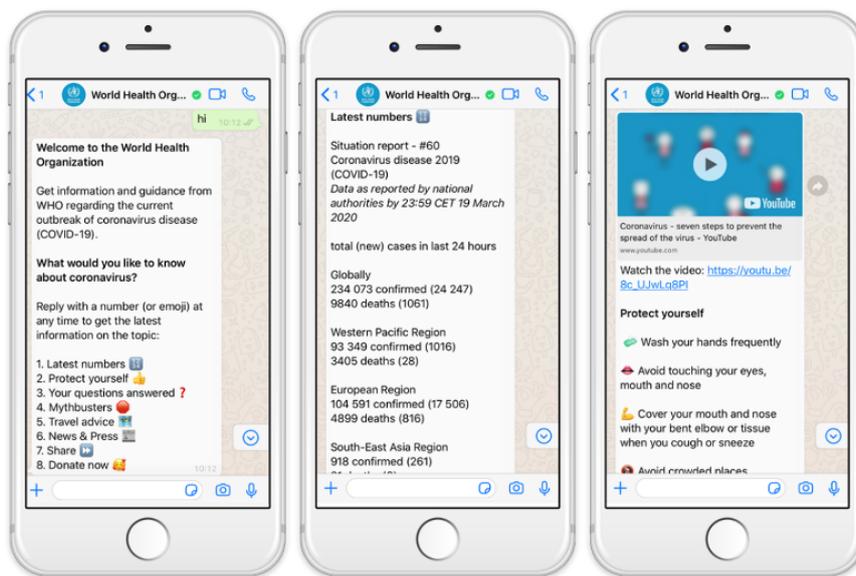


The buying process is more straightforward when limited to one channel. It also increases the probability of sales. Brands can set up a product catalogue within WhatsApp to share specific products whenever a buyer query pops up. They can also set up a payment gateway to make the transaction quick.

Buyers also don't need to visit the brand's eCommerce app or website separately to track order status. Simply putting in one query and getting a prompt response saves time and has a seamless buying experience. Businesses can use the same strategy for booking or scheduling services.

Customer Support

WHO (World Health Organisation) recognised the rapid spread of misinformation and decided to use WhatsApp as the fastest and most secure channel to communicate with people. All users had to do was send a 'Hi' to the official number. WHO then shared a list of FAQs that provided up-to-date and authentic information.



Source: [Messenger People](#)

Why This Works



Customer support chatbots are informational or declarative in nature. The goal is to provide easy access to answers to user queries. Users may have questions at any point of the pre-purchase, purchase, or post-purchase process. Responding promptly to these questions improves the purchase decision and user experience.

Actionable Strategies



Businesses can include FAQs in the WhatsApp chatbot strategy to boost conversion rates and reduce escalations on support queries. Happy customers transition into loyal customers. By offering immediate solutions, customers don't have to browse through an entire website or app, waste time, and lose interest. Brands can also include images and videos for added value and in-depth solutions.

Content Marketing

Lecker, a food magazine, used its WhatsApp chatbot to share inspiration and instant content with users. They even incorporated hashtag-related queries in their platform. Similarly, Saffola helped people work against cravings via positive reinforcements, puzzles, rap songs and ended it with a CTA to purchase a healthier product.



Source: [Messenger People](#)

Why This Works



The objective today is shifting from promoting products to providing value. Both Lecker and Saffola provided value to the customer by going above and beyond the regular expectations of selling the product. Brands are increasingly shifting to value, and benefits over want satisfaction.

Actionable Strategies

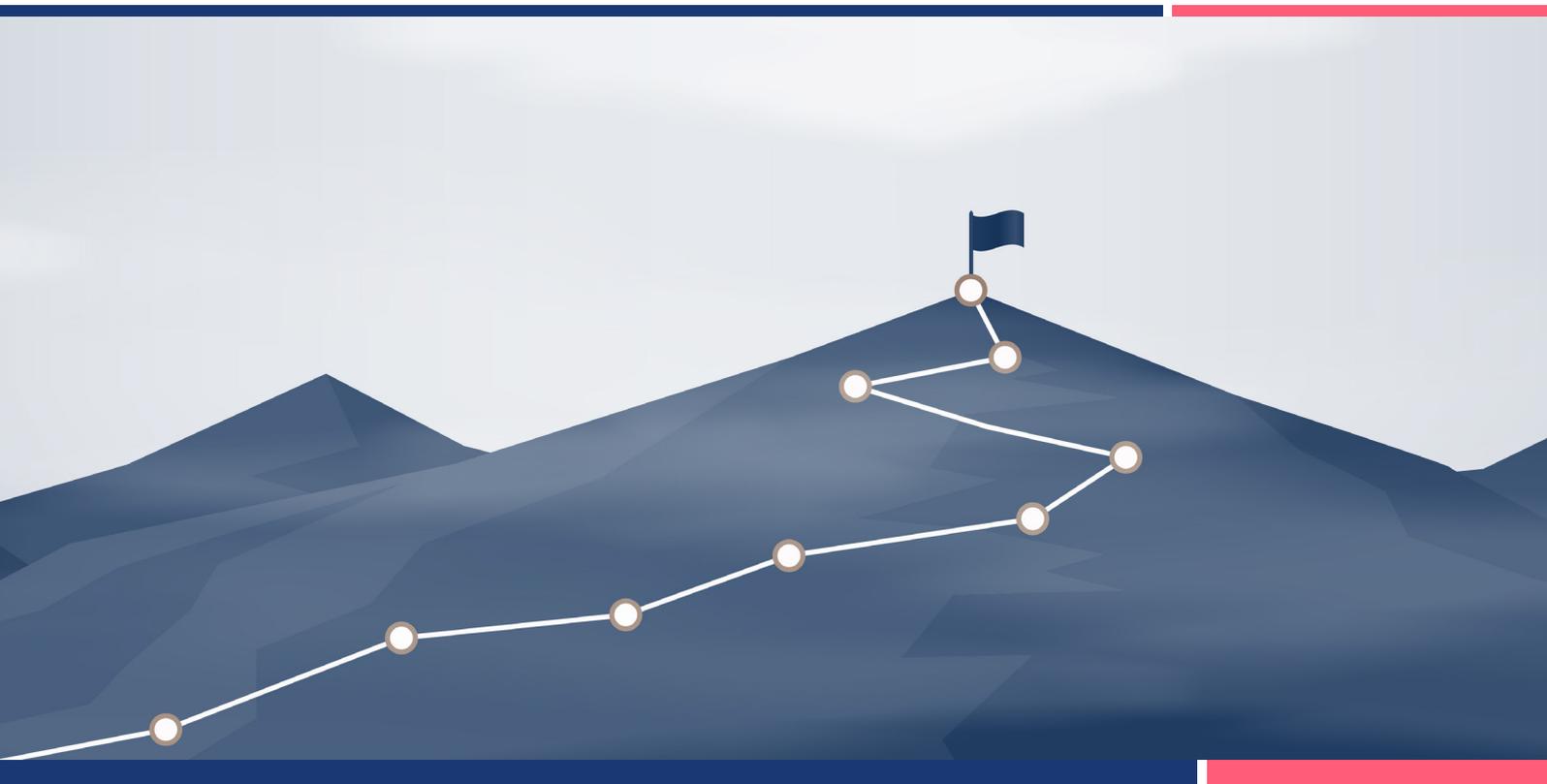


Value trumps promotion of product features. Customers are looking for goods or services from brands that go the extra mile. This unique way of connecting with customers over the digital medium will gain more momentum in the post-pandemic phase. Brands shouldn't forget the CTA. It gives customers precise direction on the next steps and induces purchase.

WhatsApp chatbots encourage richer one-on-one connections with users by providing value and CTA (call to action) to solve specific customer problems.

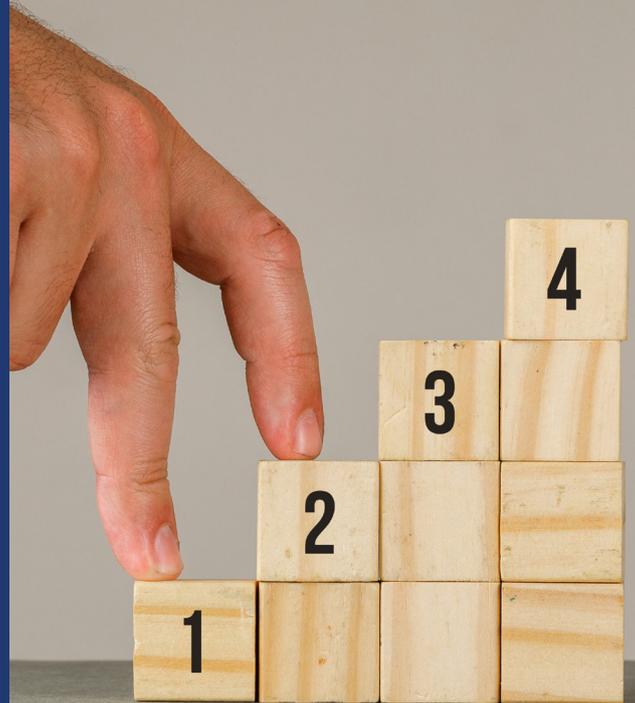
The real examples and tips mentioned above are only five of the various ways for strategy WhatsApp marketing. There are several more such as:

1. Sending special offers or discount codes and tracking them via special UTM links.
2. Accepting the new channel and sending chatbot newsletters instead of email newsletters.
3. Asking customers to fill surveys with gratification at the end.
4. Hosting contests and giveaways.
5. Running loyalty programs.
6. Providing on-site services such as WiFi password, menu list, timetable, and more.
7. Hosting online events and managing the community.



WhatsApp Chatbot: Setting it up

This section offers a step-by-step guide to setting up a WhatsApp chatbot.



Apply for WhatsApp Business API

The first step to create a WhatsApp chatbot is applying for a WhatsApp Business API. The business needs to apply with a set of details, including company name, location, website URL, and company representative information. Once the application is reviewed by WhatsApp and approved, the company receives authorisation to operate the chatbot.

It's recommended that companies work with a business solutions provider such as Gupshup to avoid confusion about how to make a WhatsApp chatbot. If they do so, the chances of the application getting approved are higher and the waiting time lower. Moreover, they get to work with experts who will guide them every step along the way.

Select a Service Provider

Businesses need a service provider to:

- > Get the chatbot's associated phone number
- > Filter incoming messages by integrating or connecting the number to the chatbot
- > Connect the provider and application through API key to facilitate real-time updates

Several service providers or chatbot platforms help set up and integrate the application with the API.

Define the WhatsApp Chatbot

Having a WhatsApp chatbot is good for business, but having one with a unique persona is better. It can become a mascot of the business and, therefore, it should reflect the brand personality. Once the brand has defined the chatbot persona, further considerations include making it conversational or crisp, friendly or professional, and type of content.

Before creating a conversation system, the business needs to set objectives for the chatbot. Essential questions to be answered are:

- > What purpose does the chatbot serve?
- > What are the areas it will operate in?
- > What systems does it need integration with?
- > What should its tonality be?
- > Should the dialogue be free or guided?
- > What languages can it offer?
- > If it doesn't have an answer for a question, how will it respond?
- > Does it have the required security features?

Define the Conversational Path

The next step is defining the conversation path. Specific conversational patterns come into play when designing this path.

Planned Paths are a simple and effective chatbot option. The conversation path consists of a question and a predetermined response. The answers provide a clear direction and set of next steps to the user throughout their interaction with the chatbot. For instance, a planned path may look like this –

Which room would you like to book?

1. Deluxe
2. Suite
3. Premier Suite

5:18 PM

1

5:20 PM



Here are the facilities available <list of facilities>. The ongoing price is <rate of room>. If you're satisfied, please respond with Yes, and we'll make a booking for you.

If this isn't the one for you, reply with No, and we'll be happy to take you through other options.

5:20 PM

On the other hand, **NLP (Natural Language Processing)** uses Machine Learning to set up a more complex and technical chatbot system. It extensively employs AI for a contextual understanding of a user's text. NLP allows for greater personalisation of messages. The chatbot will mimic human language and evolve its response based on the user's message.

However, NLP is far more intricate than Planned Paths and needs expertise, better resources, and technical know-how to operate.

Test the WhatsApp Chatbot

Before deploying a strategy or product, it's checked for discrepancies. In the same vein, WhatsApp chatbots need to be tested for better functionality when they go live. This process helps identify any unforeseen issues and rectify errors for a smooth user experience.



WhatsApp Chatbot: Final Considerations

Here are some points to ruminate over before diving into the world of a WhatsApp chatbot for retail.



Research

Brands should not jump on the bandwagon without completely knowing a WhatsApp chatbot's functionality and how it'll benefit the business. They must determine which type of chatbot works best for their marketing objectives and gives the highest returns.

At the execution level, conducting customer research alone will not provide holistic insights. Successful organisations know that employees who are in touch with customers also have an understanding of consumer behaviour. Involving their inputs or opinions will help build a more effective conversation path.



Involve

It's important to understand that it won't be a single person or just the customer support team involved in the process. Other teams such as sales, advertising, marketing analytics, digital marketing, finance will also have a stake in the process. Keeping these teams in the loop will lead to tremendous success.

The future brings a greater alliance between man and machine. AI, ML, and data science are already seeing a spurt in funding and deployment. In 2021, companies are expected to increase AI usage and create [\\$2.9 trillion of business value](#). As AI becomes more pervasive, its effectiveness will be characterised by how well it works with an organisation's human resources.



Collaborate

In research by [Accenture](#), 54% of those in support of chatbots preferred to collaborate with external vendors to set up conversational messaging solutions. A significant reason is that not all companies have the capabilities and technical know-how to develop chatbots in-house.

Collaboration brings with it expertise and lesser strain on internal resources. Brands can consider partnering with a WhatsApp chatbot service provider like [Gupshup](#). Service providers offer unique solutions for each client, handle the process end-to-end and provide guidance throughout the project. In the world of emerging technologies, collaboration is a powerful tool to grow businesses.



Conclusion

A WhatsApp chatbot, when deployed correctly, will improve business functioning by saving the team's time and effort. It comes into play at crucial times, such as the Covid19 pandemic that caused large-scale disruption of business.

The pandemic brought forth key growth considerations. Brands realised the need to be resilient, agile, and scale quickly. Chatbots combine technology and customer needs to pave the way for brands to focus on core competencies while providing delightful user experiences and renewed organisation development.

Brands can take customer service to the ultimate level with a WhatsApp chatbot, facilitating greater success and preparedness for the future of marketing.

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