

THE HOTELIER'S GUIDE TO TEXT AND CHAT

HOW TO USE TEXT AND CHAT TO ADAPT AND
THRIVE IN A TIME OF DRASTIC CHANGE



by

helloshift

TABLE OF **CONTENTS**

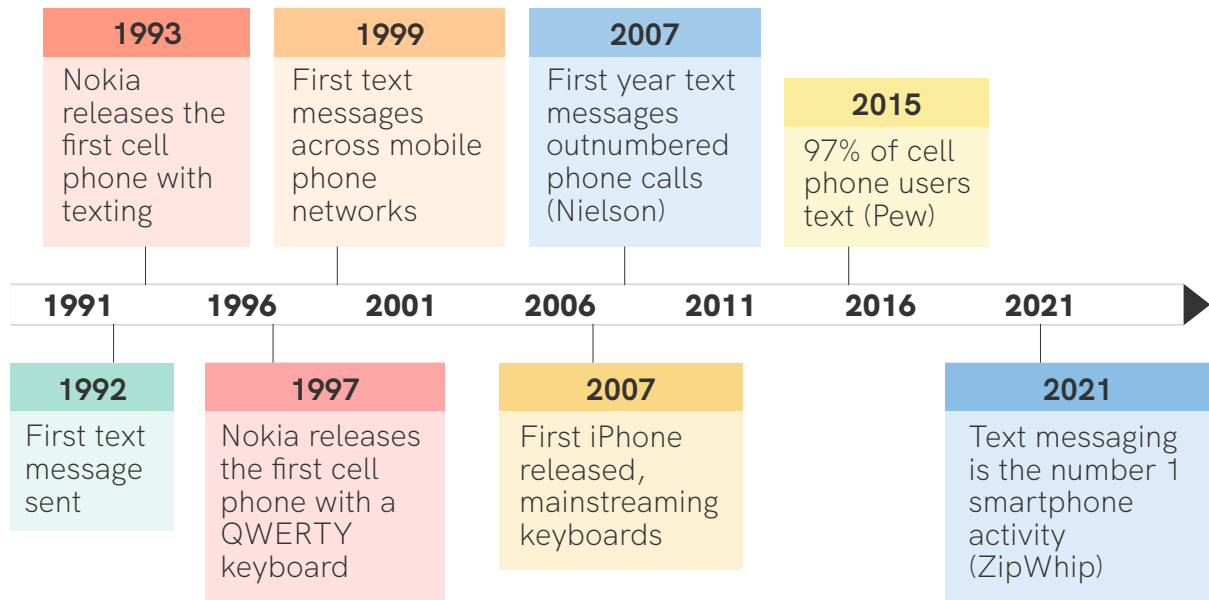
1. INTRO TO MESSAGING	3
2. TRENDS	4
3. BENEFITS	5
4. PERSONALIZED AUTOMATION	6
5. INTRO TO CHAT	7
6. CHAT OPTIONS	8
7. CHAT GUIDE	9
8. BEST PRACTICES	10
9. ABOUT AUTHOR	12

This guide gives hoteliers foundational knowledge, tools, and confidence to use modern messaging to increase guest satisfaction and direct bookings.

1. INTRO TO MESSAGING

How did messaging become so important?

HISTORY OF MESSAGING



The COVID 19 pandemic changed everything for hoteliers. When guests and hoteliers needed to distance, messaging with guests went from novelty to necessity. Two major trends drove this enduring shift.

First, widespread staffing shortages have made pre-pandemic staff-rich service delivery impossible to continue. Hotels are getting by with less staff than before the pandemic began. It's no longer efficient for staff to take phone calls one at a time with 100% of their focus. Instead, front desk staff interact with multiple guests at a time over text and chat.

Second, messaging the now most commonly used communication method. No longer the new kid on the block, Messaging is the #1 activity on cell phones activity today. A majority now say that messaging is the easiest way to reach them (ZipWhip).

Messaging with guests is now no longer a niche offering, it is a basic requirement for servicing today's guests.

2. TRENDS

Three reasons texting is essential for today's guest.

Text messaging has changed the way people communicate. A growing majority prefer texting. Unlike the last big tech transformation - the Internet and rise of OTAs - messaging brings hoteliers and guests together while distanced. Simple and affordable software as a service (SaaS) messaging solutions make it easy to add texting with guests. Here's three statistics that show how texting is now an essential guest service.

1- Most guests want to text

As texting has surpassed talking on the phone in popularity, most consumers prefer texting at least some of the time. Just as hotels had to answer phone calls from guests by the 1930s, hoteliers today need to be available by text. Guests these days don't like being forced to stop everything and pick-up the phone to call or go to the front desk. They want the option to text when it's easier.

56%
WANT TO TEXT
A BUSINESSES,
NOT CALL THEM
(NIELSON)

2- Texting is the fastest way to reach guests

Guests like getting a text from the hotel because they don't have to stop everything to reply. They can reply to a work email, check in on a parent, pack for a day of adventure, watch their toddler, and still notice your text. Texting puts less pressure on guests because they can read while going about their busy day and only reply if they need help.

58%
SAY TEXTING IS
THE FASTEST WAY
TO REACH THEM
(ZIPWHIP)

3- Guests increasingly prefer phone calls

The younger generations in particular are becoming more insistent about having the option to text. Just like nobody would send a telegram in the 1990s when they could pick up the phone, today's younger adults have shifted to a new form of communication and prefer texting.

75%
OF MILLENNIALS
PREFER TEXTING
TO PHONE CALLS
(OPENMARKET)

3. BENEFITS

How messaging solutions promote operational efficiency.

1- Ease of Use

No complex, expensive technology for employees and guests to learn and avoid. Chat and text are tools people already love to use every day.

2- Efficiency

Employees can manage multiple guest messages at the same time and multi-task between messages.

3- Convenience

The hotel front desk is perfectly positioned to support messaging.

4- Mobility

Monitor and support messaging from anywhere on property or off.

5- Accountability

All messages and activities are stored in a centralized platform for easy reference and follow-up, so there are no missed messages or miscommunications.



Messaging, especially messaging done right at scale, is really going to be a big game changer for the hotels.

JOSHUA SLOSER

Vice President of Digital Production Innovation,
Hilton Worldwide



4. PERSONALIZED AUTOMATION

Use automated messages to wow guests.

Automated messaging connects with guests when they need you most. If guests need personalized support at any point, they can just hit reply and immediately connect with guest service.

Here's a way to connect with guests at key points in the guest life-cycle. Guests can reply quickly if they have needs at these essential points in their stay.

1- PRE-BOOKING:

Ms. Jones visits a hotel's website while shopping for a room and uses the chat widget to confirm the property's pet policy before booking.

4- PRE-ARRIVAL:

The day before arrival, Ms. Jones receives a text from the hotel asking if she has any requests. She requests and confirms early check-in.

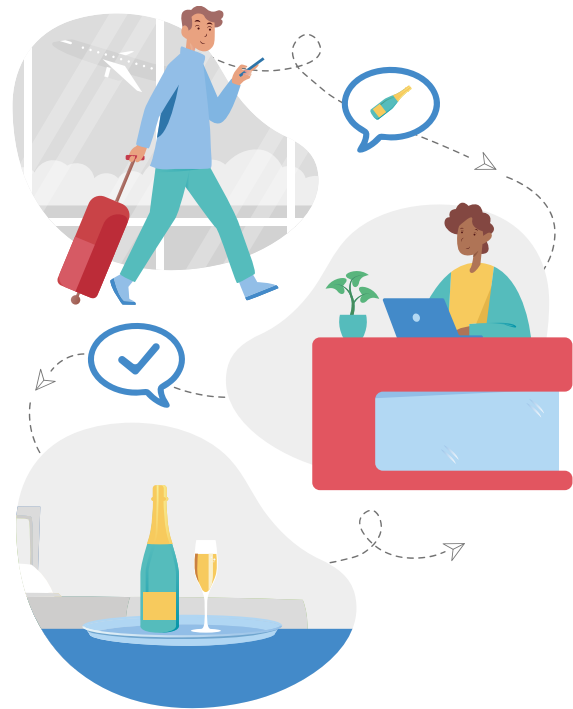
5- IN-STAY:

After check-in, Ms. Jones receives a text asking about her stay. When she describes a broken thermostat, the front desk agent apologizes and dispatches an engineer to fix it right away.

6- POST-STAY

Ms. Jones receives a text thanking her for her stay and inviting her to write a review. She writes a 5-star review and says "They showered me with care and attention! I can't wait to return!"

By staying in close contact with Ms. Jones in a non-obtrusive manner, the hotel fulfilled her needs, resolved an issue, earned a 5-star review, and won her loyalty. All this without one phone call, email, or visit to the front desk!



5. INTRO TO CHAT

▶ How does chat turn website visitors into future guests?



Many future guests who visit your website want to book as soon as they can get their questions answered. By the time they find you they have probably scoured multiple OTA sites and other hotel sites. Website chat makes it easy for guests to identify your hotel as the right destination.

When website visitors see a phone number, some immediately call but many can't or won't stop everything to call you. Even if calling is possible, many consumers increasingly avoid making phone calls. They don't have patience for phone trees and waiting on hold. Using contact us forms and emails can feel like being asked to send a message in a bottle - there's so much uncertainty about followup.

By adding website chat, you remove barriers to information future guests want. Each visitor has their own questions, like pet policy, information about specific amenities, group bookings, private events, etc. Hospitality website chat solutions make it easy to get that information to guests quickly and help take the load off by getting the conversation started, answering simple questions using AI, and giving staff snippets they can use to reply to commonly asked questions. The personal touch matters - When front desk and front office staff have a moment to reply, they can. They can even send a holding message if they are in the middle of something to let the future guest know a real person is there and available to help. Responding to a chat is way less distracting and disruptive for staff than fielding a phone call.

After placing a chat widget on the Antanara Hotels website, staff performed over 20,000 chats and generated U.S. \$1 million in incremental revenue in only nine months.

MARCOS CADENA

Vice President Digital,
E-Commerce and Distribution Minor Hotels
(Review Pro)

6. CHAT OPTIONS

Out of the many options, what's the best website chat for hoteliers and guests?

Hoteliers have options when it comes to implementing website chat for each property. Choose what works best for your staffing. Be wary of only providing chatbots - benefits come from personal connections as hoteliers answer future guest questions and help with bookings.

Real-time Chat

- Website visitors initiate real-time chat and can continue conversations over text and email based on the traveler's preferences.
- The traveler and hotel representative respond when it is convenient to them, allowing the natural multi-tasking that occurs with online behavior.
- With 24/7 front desk staffing, hotels are well-positioned to excel with real-time chat.

Live Chat

- Each live chat is a session with a distinct start and end point, like a phone call.
- Due to the intensive resource requirements of live chat, it is usually not available 24/7.
- Limited availability of live chat can create frustrating user experiences, especially if hours are not clearly marked.

Chatbots

- Chatbots are artificial intelligence solutions that automatically respond to traveler inquiries.
- Chatbot technology is still in its infancy. Limitations create unsatisfactory user experiences similar to a phone trees that don't ever quite answer your question.
- 60% would rather wait for an agent than chat with a bot (Userlike).

7. CHAT GUIDE

How to book future guests using website chat.

Visitors to hotel websites are highly targeted. Over 70% of chats are booking-related (HelloShift). Hotels doing search engine marketing (SEM) without chat are not only wasting precious marketing dollars but are also underutilizing knowledgeable front desk staff.

With their aggressive tactics, OTAs have come to dominate booking conversations with shoppers. The emergence of conversational chat widgets means hotel front desks again have a central role in bookings. Here are some tips to use chat to assist direct bookings.

- 1. Reply quickly, preferably within 5 minutes.** If nothing else, send a placeholder message letting the website visitor know you will get right back to them. Otherwise they will think “nobody is home” and move on.
- 2. Segment incoming chats into “pre-booking” and “others”.** Nurture every pre-booking question as a sales opportunity. Make sure you understand the intent behind pre-booking chats. Don’t just answer questions - use each interaction to as a chance to win the booking.
- 3. Deliver great service by providing individual attention.** Use message templates and FAQs to quickly reply to common questions, but always customize responses to the visitor’s needs and interests.
- 4. Don’t send future guests away when they want to chat with you.** Train your staff to never redirect future guests who want to chat to OTA websites, long FAQ pages on your website, contact us forms, insist the future guest send an email, etc. The future guest wants to chat, so keep it on chat! Hotelier chat solutions let staff collaborate behind the scene to answer questions and close bookings / sales.
- 5. Provide compelling rates.** Make sure your front desk agents are knowledgeable about rates, promotions, and discounts. As a private channel, chat is not governed by OTA rate parity restrictions. Consider offering promo codes during chats.



8. BEST PRACTICES

Deliver excellent service virtually.

1- Get the word out

Let guests and website visitors know they can connect with you via chat and text on your website, in confirmation emails, and at check-in, and in printed materials such as directories and room key envelopes. Send pre-arrival texts to welcome guests and establish a connection.

2- Reply promptly

People expect quick replies to text and chat - never wait longer than 5 minutes to reply. Use auto-replies to advise of average wait times and messages templates to instantly reply to common questions and requests.

3- Be professional

Use friendly, concise, respectful language. Choose a messaging solution that adds the name of the hotel and agent sending the messaging to every text, so guests know whom they are speaking with.

4- Avoid sensitive issues

If the guest is upset or the matter is sensitive or complex, offer to call or email them. As with any complaint, follow the 5 steps to service recovery: listen, empathize, apologize, offer solutions, and follow up.

5- Be helpful

Sometimes people turn to messaging when attempts to find information on other channels were unsuccessful. Don't just refer them back to your website. Instead, take the time to answer questions thoroughly, and always be on the alert for opportunities to surprise and delight

6- Don't use texting to sell

Texting is a very direct, personal connection with guests. Avoid the urge to send marketing messages. Keep each touchpoint service- and guest-centered.

7- Be safe

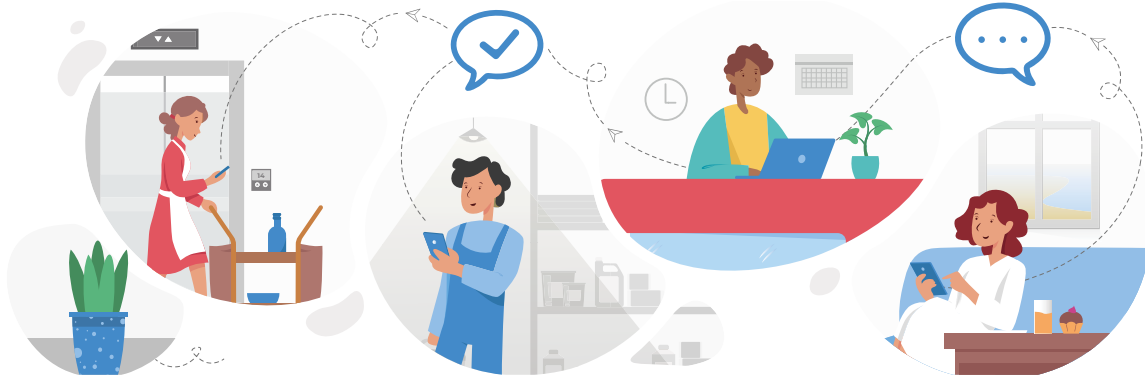
Never collect credit card data or other confidential information on messaging platforms. Send links to your booking engine or call guests to gather this information.

8- Be responsive

Now that you are connecting in real-time with guests via text and chat, make sure that your team is able to instantly work together to communicate and resolve guest issues. Consider an integrating messaging solution for guests, website visitors, and staff.

9. ABOUT AUTHOR

HelloShift is guest messaging, staff collaboration, housekeeping management, website chat, and more in one easy app.



Modern hoteliers use HelloShift's integrated messaging platform to increase operational efficiency, guest satisfaction, and direct bookings.

- Hotel guests and website visitors message the front desk 24/7 through texting and real-time chat.
- Hotel staff manage guest messages and collaborate with one another using social media features like newsfeeds, tags, and notifications.
- Managers keep their fingers on the pulse of operations and instantly message the whole team.

Top-ratings by hoteliers across the USA and around the world.



Start a free trial at:
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