



THE HOTELIER'S GUIDE TO TEXT AND CHAT:

How to use modern messaging to increase
guest satisfaction and direct bookings.

By
 **helloshift**

THE WORLD IS SHIFTING TO TEXT AND CHAT



Messaging has changed the way people communicate.

Instead of just using their phones to make calls, Americans increasingly message with text and chat (Informato). A growing majority prefer texting to voice support options (OneReach). And website visitors are most satisfied when they get their questions answered via chat (Zendesk).

Given this transformation, it's not a matter of if hotels will adopt messaging, but when and at what cost. Simple and affordable software as a service (SaaS) messaging solutions offer hotels the chance to close the gap OTAs created between guests and hotels during the last big technological shift.

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

56%

SAY THEY EXPECT TO USE MESSAGING
MORE IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS
(FACEBOOK-NIELSEN)

WHY DO TRAVELERS PREFER MESSAGING?

Travelers always have questions, whether they are planning, booking, or in-stay. They don't want to step out of a meeting or other activity to make a call and wait on hold, or wait at the front desk. And they definitely don't want to wait for replies to emails or web forms that may never arrive. Travelers increasingly prefer messaging because it is fast, easy, and familiar.

63%

OF MILLENNIALS
PREFER TEXTING
TO "DISRUPTIVE"
PHONE CALLS
(OPENMARKET)



WOW YOUR GUESTS WITH MESSAGING

- 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.
- 2 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.
- 3 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.
- 4 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!

"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 PRODUCT INNOVATION, HILTON WORLDWIDE

(SKIFT)

5 REASONS HOTELS ARE EMBRACING MESSAGING

- 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.** Already a 24/7 operation with knowledgeable staff skilled in customer service and trained to make reservations, 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.

"On the day of arrival, we use HelloShift to send guests a text asking if we can do anything for them. The responses are overwhelmingly positive, and this advance communication also makes check-in a breeze. Throughout the guest's stay, communicating with the front desk is simple. The guest just replies to the text thread and anyone at the front desk can respond."

ELIZABETH BROOKE
INNKEEPER
THE PROVINCETOWN
HOTEL AT GABRIEL'S

MESSAGING IS A GAME-CHANGER

- Chat has the highest satisfaction levels of any customer service channel, including email, social media, and the telephone (Spark Central).
- 79% of people say they prefer chat because they can get their question answered quickly (eConsultancy).
- 37% of people say they would use chat on a property's website if they had a question during the booking process (Fuel Marketing).

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

(REVIEWPRO)



8 TIPS FOR DELIVERING EXCELLENT SERVICE WITH MESSAGING

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. 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.

THE CHAT UNIVERSE

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.
- ❑ Until this technology improves, hotels can deliver the best service by having real humans respond.

USE CHAT TO ASSIST DIRECT BOOKINGS

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 visitors away. Train your staff to never direct visitors to an OTA (it happens!), send links to content buried on a web page, tell visitors to email your team, or insist they fill out a contact us form to get their questions answered. If another member of the team needs to follow up, gather the visitor's contact information and send that information to the appropriate team member.

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.



**Say goodbye to logbooks, forms,
and miscommunication**



**Say hello to modern messaging
with HelloShift**

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.

Hoteliers named HelloShift #1 in the 2018 HotelTechAwards, with perfect 100/100 scores for staff collaboration and guest messaging.

Start a free trial at www.HelloShift.com.

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