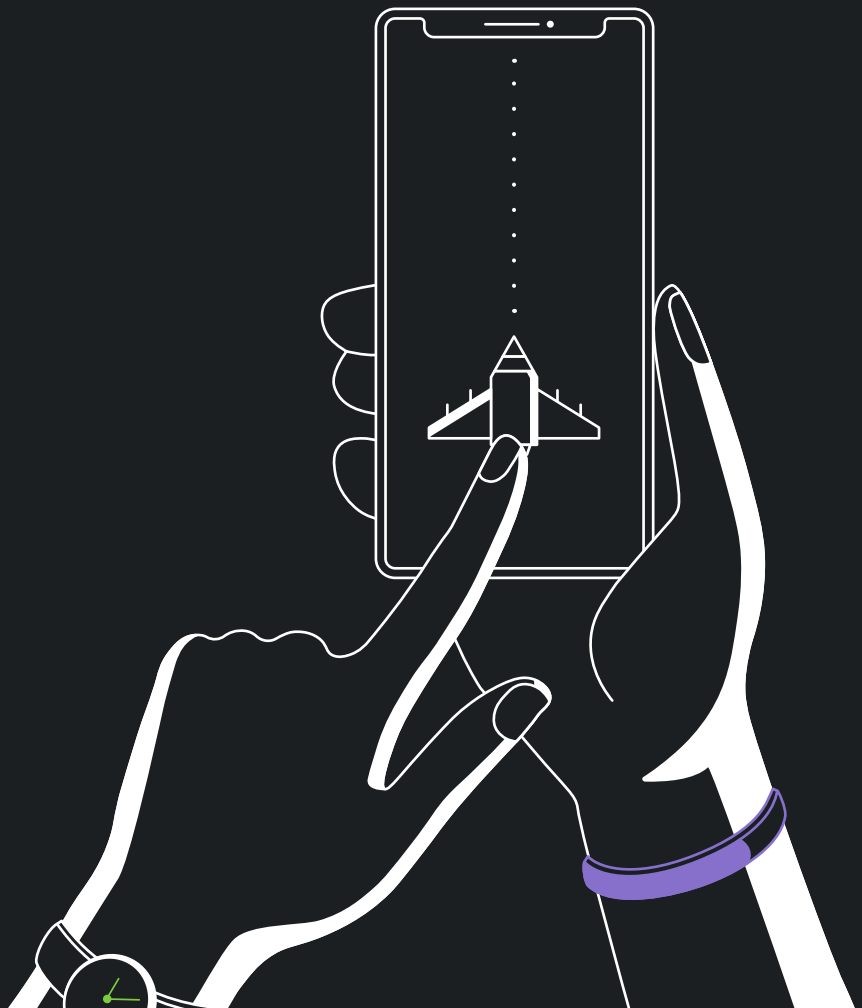


BENCHMARK REPORT

The Player Support Benchmark Report 2020

Comparing results for mobile
gaming companies using digital
customer support solutions



helpshift

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Foreword

Dear Reader,

The gaming industry has seen many evolutions in recent years, broadening its appeal and audience beyond those playing on dedicated consoles to anyone with a smartphone. With this, has come unprecedented growth and increased pressure on gaming brands to support players in more efficient ways. Consumers have become used to services delivered in an instant, and the same expectations apply to player support.

Players now demand more from gaming companies, quickly switching to another game if the first one doesn't engage with them. This extends to support and troubleshooting. Fail to find the right solution for them in their expected timeframe and they'll leave.

But our mobile-first society has also delivered a silver lining. It's now easier to engage with players through many different channels including in-app messaging. Doing this in a seamless way, where players are empowered with easier access to a player support team, can become a clear competitive differentiator.

This is especially true when brands also use automation to manage the manual and time-intensive aspects of player support. A combination of digital tools, namely asynchronous messaging, AI, and chatbots, is needed to meet the rising expectations of today's players. It also alleviates the need for live agents to be always-on, 24/7, to field inquiries.

Using technology in a smart way will pay off in your KPIs and bottom-line. As this report will highlight, CSAT scores, TFR and TTR all benefit when gaming brands invest in the right tools. The results show how leading gaming brands are combining AI and automation with asynchronous messaging to drive the best results, for players and agents alike — because the player experience consists of more than what happens in-game.

I hope you find these insights useful as you look to bring digital tools into your player support function.



Jeff Saenger

Jeff Saenger, VP of Customer Success, *Helpshift*



Introduction

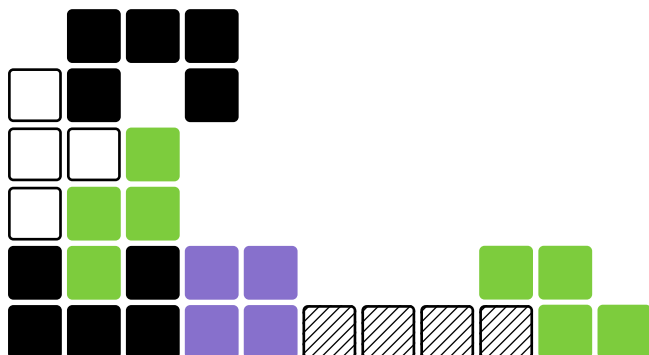
Mobile gaming has taken the world by storm, capturing the public's imagination with dynamic graphics, engaging storylines, and challenging levels. The market has grown rapidly, attracting gamers of all backgrounds and ages, and is worth a reported [\\$68.5 billion in 2019](#). But with this growth, comes challenges. Notably, in making sure that gamers get the best experience in-game and when dealing with gaming brands. In short, gaming brands need to level-up their player support to meet the needs and expectations of their lucrative audience.

However, in doing so, gaming brands must address challenges that uniquely impact the sector.

Retention is a notable issue for many brands, as players are quick to leave games that fail to engage them. That negatively impacts the bottom-line, especially when brands rely on the free-to-play model to attract players. This makes retaining VIP players even more vital as they often spend more in-game. Brands must find innovative ways to attract and keep such players.

Likewise, given the rapid growth and sudden popularity of games like Candy Crush, brands must find ways to scale their support to rapid upturns. They must also tailor their support to different regions and audiences who have differing needs depending on where they are located in the world — and also VIP players who are prioritized due to their lifetime value and purchases.

Today's consumers are empowered by technology and expect to get what they want, when and how they want it. This causes greater pressure on player support teams as many players aren't prepared to wait long for a response. More than [half of all consumers](#) now expect a customer service response within one hour, at all times of the day, not just business hours. World of Warcraft is one of the most-subscribed massive-multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG) ever. Players spend, on average, over [22 hours a week](#) on the game. If something goes wrong, like the game crashing in the middle of a raid, those players will want to get help. Fast.



Key challenges for player support



66%

66 percent of online adults in the U.S. state that the most important thing a brand can do for them is to value their time by providing a good online customer experience.



32%

32 percent of customers will stop doing business with a brand after just one bad customer service experience.



77%

Up to 77% of consumers will pay more to a company when they receive good customer support.



6/10

6 in 10 customers need to contact a customer service team multiple times before their issue is resolved.

1. Churn

If you fail to meet their expectations, your players will feel undervalued. [66 percent](#) of online adults in the U.S. state that the most important thing a brand can do for them is to value their time by providing a good online customer experience. Despite this, brands across all industries are falling short. 1 in 3 customers report difficulty in reaching customer service, and 6 in 10 need to contact a customer service team multiple times before their issue is resolved. For mobile gaming brands, this translates into churn. Players won't have the time or patience to wait for a resolution or interact multiple times to resolve a problem. One poor player support experience could lead a player to leave. [32 percent](#) of customers will stop doing business with a brand after just one bad customer service experience.

But if you get it right, your player support will translate into higher revenue. [Up to 77%](#) of consumers will pay more to a company when they receive good customer support. Retention is critical for mobile gaming brands as it correlates with revenue. The longer you convince a player to engage with your game, the more likely they are to spend money with your brand. If your game involves microtransactions, the longer they remain, the more payments they will make.

Hence why mobile gaming brands are going to great lengths to retain players. Mobile gaming is well-known for having a high churn rate, with less than 15 percent of gaming apps retaining [35 percent](#) of their players after day one. Brands are combatting this by streamlining their onboarding, continuous product improvements, building online communities and VIP programs for regular and high-level players.



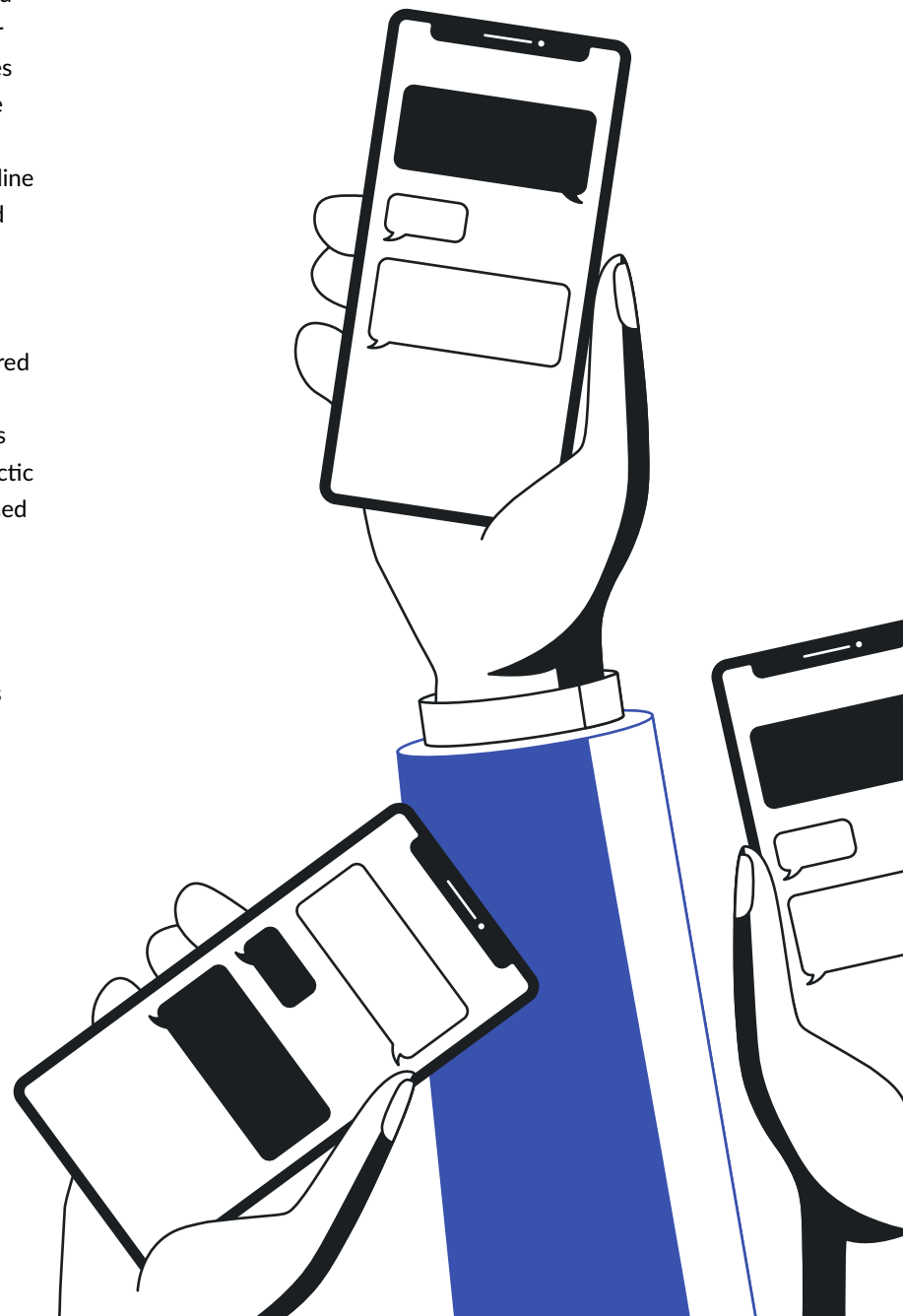
2. Scale

Once a game attracts and retains a high number of players, a brand's next challenge is likely to be scale. When a game becomes popular, there are more players to support. Plus, when launching a new game, there may be multiple regions involved that require localized support. The app stores may also feature a game, leading to greater downloads and a significant increase in the player base in a short amount of time, increasing the need for support.

Player support teams can quickly become overwhelmed with a high ticket volume, leaving many unanswered or increasing the time to first response (TTFR). This causes a rise in customer dissatisfaction, which can contribute to churn early-on, and those players may never return. Furthermore, those dissatisfied players may take to online communities and social media to complain which could impact your brand's reputation.

In mobile gaming, the emotional intensity can be high, so players must feel that their questions will be answered quickly. Having a one-to-one player support approach might work in the early days, but after a game launches to the mainstream public and becomes popular, this tactic will falter. Because of this, many brands have streamlined their player support using searchable FAQs and automation (more on this later).

Plus, games that enable in-app communication often have higher CSAT scores and retention rates as players don't have to leave the game to get help.



72%

72 percent of players who have support in their own language feel more satisfied with the experience and are more loyal to the gaming brand.

66%

Only 66 percent of brands have formal support options in non-English languages.

New York City

TIME ZONE: (GMT-4)
ENGLISH

New Delhi

TIME ZONE: (GMT+5:30)
HINDI

3. Localization

Mobile gaming is a global phenomenon which makes the job of a player support team more complex. Diverse and geographically dispersed players have different support preferences and needs. To build a global fanbase, brands must learn how to tailor their support to these different requirements, whether that's empowering players to self-serve or communicating with them on many different channels.

The customer experience must also remain consistent across geographies and channels. Someone interacting with your team from Singapore must get the same quality of support, expertise, and timings as someone in the U.S. Depending on the location, your brand may also have to consider cultural nuances, a country's history, language differences, time zones, and local customs. Ticket requests from a certain country, for instance, may peak during national holidays. Understanding this in advance and ensuring there are enough agents (who speak the language) will make all the difference on game day.

Indeed, [72 percent](#) of players who have support in their own language feel more satisfied with the experience and are more loyal to the gaming brand. Despite this, only 66 percent of brands have formal support options in non-English languages.

In many cases, gaming brands have turned to local teams to assist with understanding the country they are localizing in. This helps avoid crucial missteps and offense. It also enables 24/7 coverage by placing support agents in the same time zone as players.

Digital tools to modernize player support in gaming

Handily, there are digital tools that are modernizing player support and helping teams meet the above challenges. More brands are prioritizing their customer experience using digital tools, with nearly [90 percent](#) of business leaders stating that it's a competitive differentiator.

At the same time, more customers are moving to online channels when interacting with a brand. Due to this, Gartner estimates that [85 percent](#) of all customer interactions will be managed without a human by the end of 2020. This player support revolution will be powered by three digital tools that gaming companies can use to improve operations: asynchronous messaging, AI (artificial intelligence), and bots.

Asynchronous messaging for seamless communication

Asynchronous messaging is ground-breaking for mobile gaming brands, giving support teams the ability to have a fluid and ongoing conversation with players that isn't dependent on real-time responses.

Gamers, along with most people, are accustomed to using messaging both for synchronous communication (real-time) and asynchronous communication (time-lapsed). Much of our daily communication is asynchronous: we respond to a group text after getting home from work or we answer Slack messages after finishing an important project. Messaging allows gaming brands to do the same with player support: they can move fluidly between engaging in real-time, and exiting the conversation until they are pulled back in with a push or email notification. This model follows the same structure as iMessage, WeChat, or any other messaging platform that customers are familiar with using in their daily lives.



96%

96 percent of consumers find it important to be able to return to a support conversation.

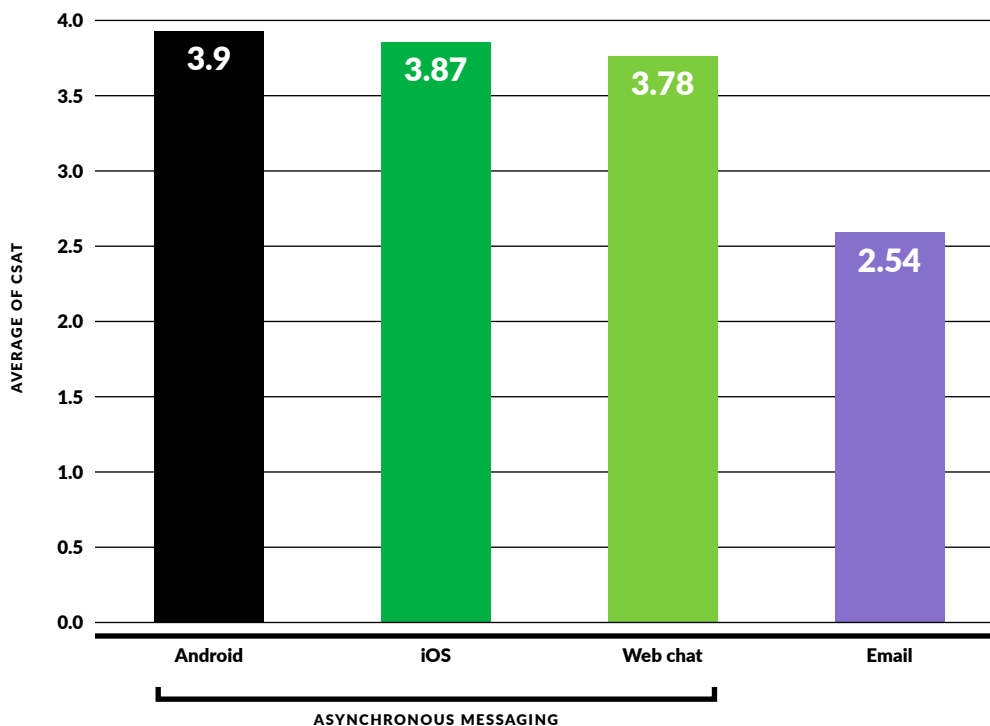
This directly meets the expectations of players, with Helpshift research discovering that [96 percent](#) of consumers find it important to be able to return to a support conversation. This proportion of consumers is also rising, going from 92 percent in 2018, to 96 percent in 2019 and we expect it to increase again in 2020.

For gaming brands, asynchronous messaging is invaluable in providing a seamless communication experience in-app. Urgency is often high when a player contacts a gaming brand, especially when an issue is disrupting gameplay. Therefore, providing a frictionless way to contact player support within a game is crucial.

Indeed, asynchronous messaging delivers higher CSAT scores for gaming brands consistently. Helpshift data over a six month period reflects this, with CSAT scores of 3.9 (out of 5) for Android and 3.87 for iOS, compared to a much lower score of 2.54 for email.

Asynchronous messaging also enables greater automation which impacts scalability. Agent productivity is boosted with bots reducing the number of average agent-sent messages per interaction within asynchronous messaging. This frees up agent time to work on more value-added and critical issues like building rapport with players and sharing tips for better gameplay. According to [Helpshift data](#), gaming brands that use automation and asynchronous messaging in combination, along with self-service tools like FAQs, achieve the strongest KPIs.

Average CSAT by Platform



Gaming brands that deliver support experiences using asynchronous messaging receive higher customer satisfaction scores than those who deliver support via email.

Smart self-service with answer bot

Many players want a speedy solution to their problem, regardless of whether it comes from a live agent or bot. [45 percent](#) of consumers don't care if they interact with an agent or bot, as long as the solution is quick and effective.

Because of this, many gaming brands are using an answer bot to direct people to resources like FAQs and knowledge bases. It empowers players to find the solution to their issues without an agent's intervention, encouraging more self-service and freeing up agents to focus on the most urgent and complex problems while also reducing their backlog. The answer bot can perfectly complement a well-fleshed out knowledge base and FAQ resources by suggesting relevant articles and offering players an immediate response.

An AI-powered answer bot can also improve player support in other regions by directing players to resources in their language or agents who understand their unique needs. For example, [Helpshift's answer bot](#) supports up to 20 languages using a machine-learning algorithm to identify a player's language. It can then suggest relevant FAQ resources in the same language as the player.

Many of our gaming customers leverage Helpshift's searchable in-app FAQs for deflection so that players can find answers on their own before submitting an issue. Among our customers who use our in-app FAQs, we see an average deflection rate of 90%. To drive further self service, some customers choose to use answer bot, and in those cases, they can achieve on average an additional 5.41 percent deflection, rising as high as 15 percent in some cases. For the customers we compared, almost 2 million cases have been successfully deflected using Helpshift's answer bot.

Answer bot performance across top 30 gaming customers



Total deflections

1,910,840



Average additional deflection

+5.41%

Answer bot results for top 30 gaming companies based on total number of ticket deflections. Typical results show an average increase of 5.41% in the deflection rate for those customers using answer bot, resulting in nearly 2 million total deflections.

Streamline workflows with custom chatbots

Consumers are increasingly trusting of chatbots, according to [research](#) Helpshift conducted last year. Across all Helpshift customers, monthly issues handled by chatbots (both answer bots and custom bots) rose more than 20% over the six month period analyzed, and 30% of respondents reported that they are willing to engage with chatbots, double the number in 2018.

Custom bots can be created for different workflows depending on your brand's requirements. They can collect information to streamline interactions between agents and players, to prevent players from having to repeat information, and to direct inquiries to the right team and/or resource. These customizable, decision-tree-based bots are able to respond to players immediately and can even resolve issues in certain categories without the need for agent intervention.

As a result, agents can save time and focus on more urgent issues and tasks that require more human skills. Custom bots can be used to gather information from players, as well as metadata, to present to agents so they can resolve issues more quickly.

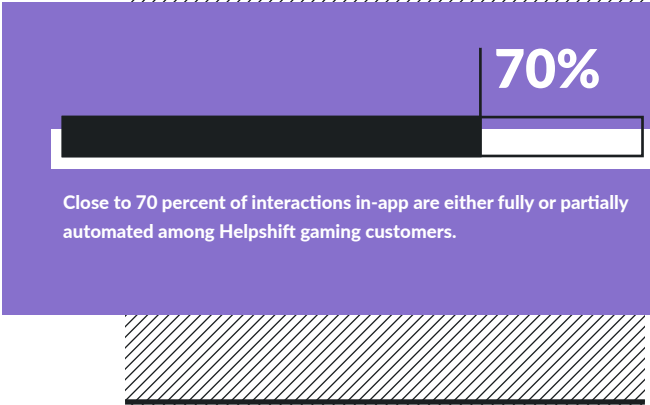
When looking at how player issues are automated, we consider three categories:

Fully manual means that agents handle the issue entirely — this might happen for difficult problems, urgent or VIP issues.

Partially automated means that agents and bots work together on an issue. Bots augment the work of agents for greater efficiency.

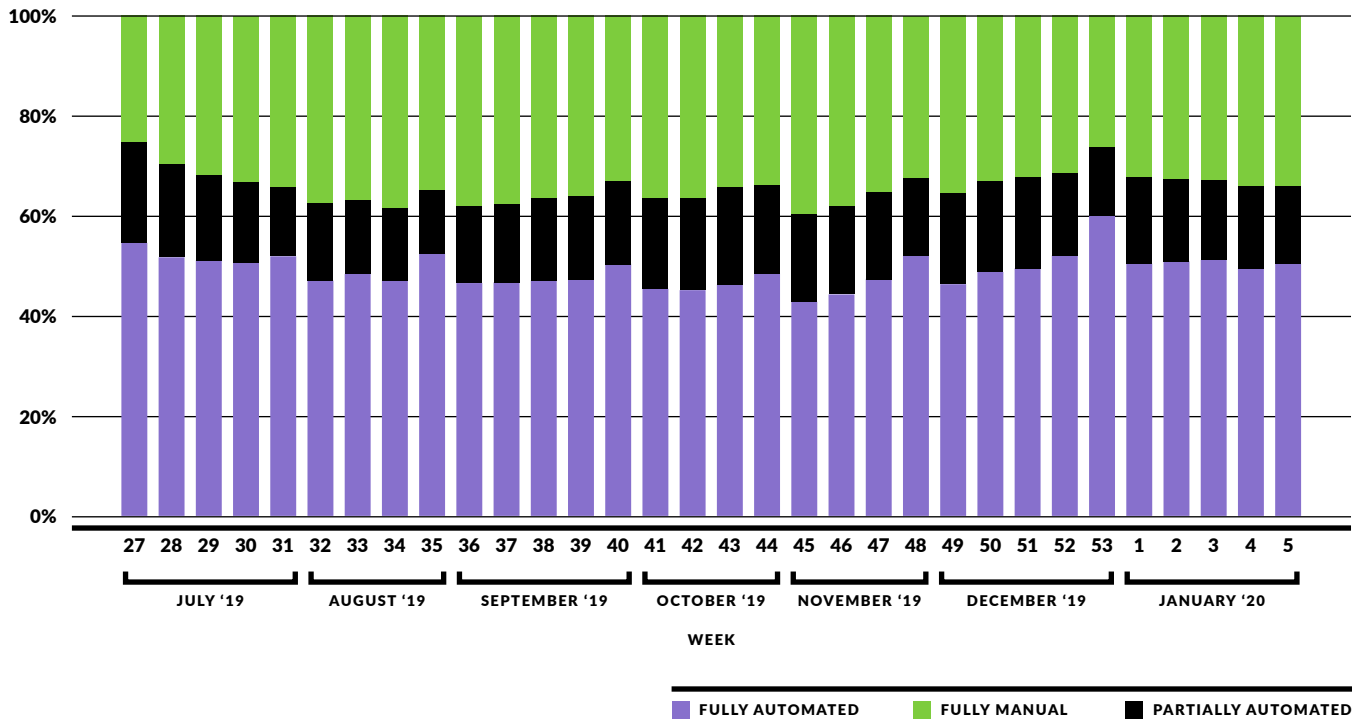
Fully automated means that bots are able to handle the entire issue, so it never reaches an agent.

As more gaming brands move towards in-app messaging, the likelihood of automation increases along with all of the efficiencies that brings. Among Helpshift gaming customers, close to 70 percent of interactions in-app are either fully or partially automated. This demonstrates how in-app communication facilitates greater automation because asynchronous messaging is more conducive to automation. Players are getting their issues resolved more efficiently and quickly with the combination of custom bots and asynchronous messaging.



Analyzing issues over time by the share of issues handled by automation shows that in-app messaging facilitates greater automation.

Issues by Automation Category (in-app only)



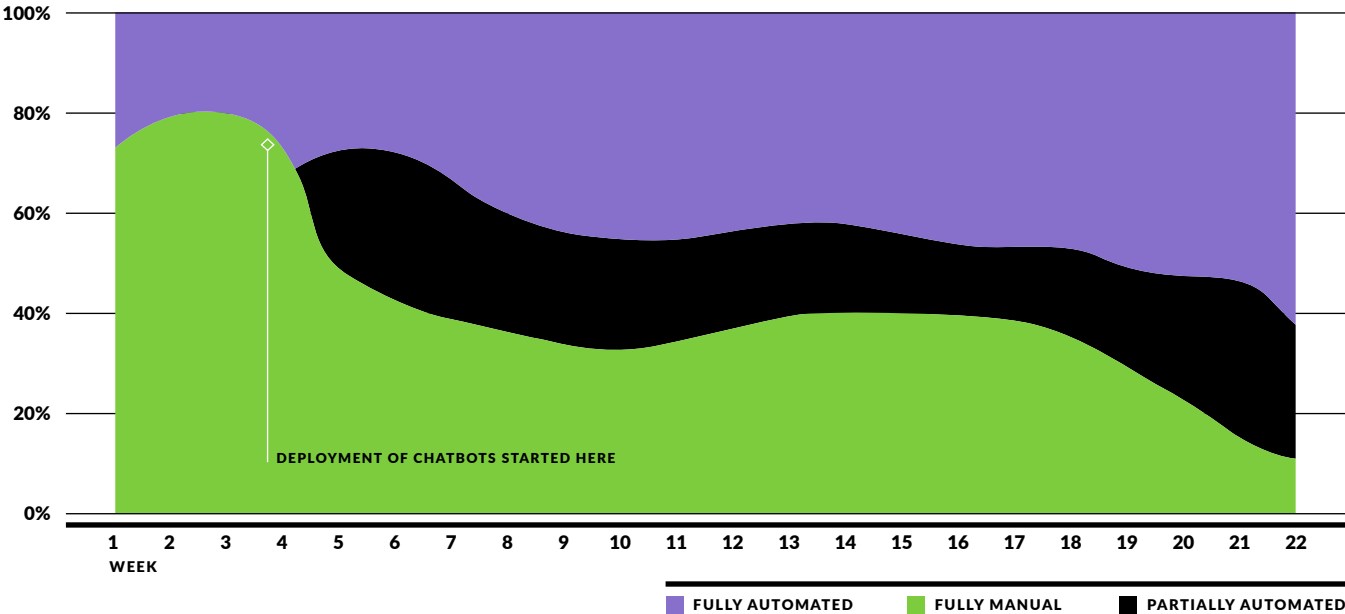


Custom bots also enable scalability, which pays-off across a game's lifecycle. Launching a new game used to necessitate an increase in agent headcount. Likewise, launching in global markets would traditionally require on-the-ground agent support and 24-hour coverage. With custom bots taking over more manual tasks such as initial information gathering and directing to relevant content, brands don't need to add significant headcount as they grow.

To that end, it's important to note that, for many brands, the journey to automation is an incremental one. Brands can start their automation journey by automating the most basic workflows, or by simply connecting their FAQs to answer bot. As a brand sees success, and as agents rely on bots to do more of their manual tasks and experience the benefits that automation can bring in their daily work, the adoption of bots (and experimentation with new customizations) will rise.

Results of one gaming customer that deployed bots shows how quickly automation can scale player support.

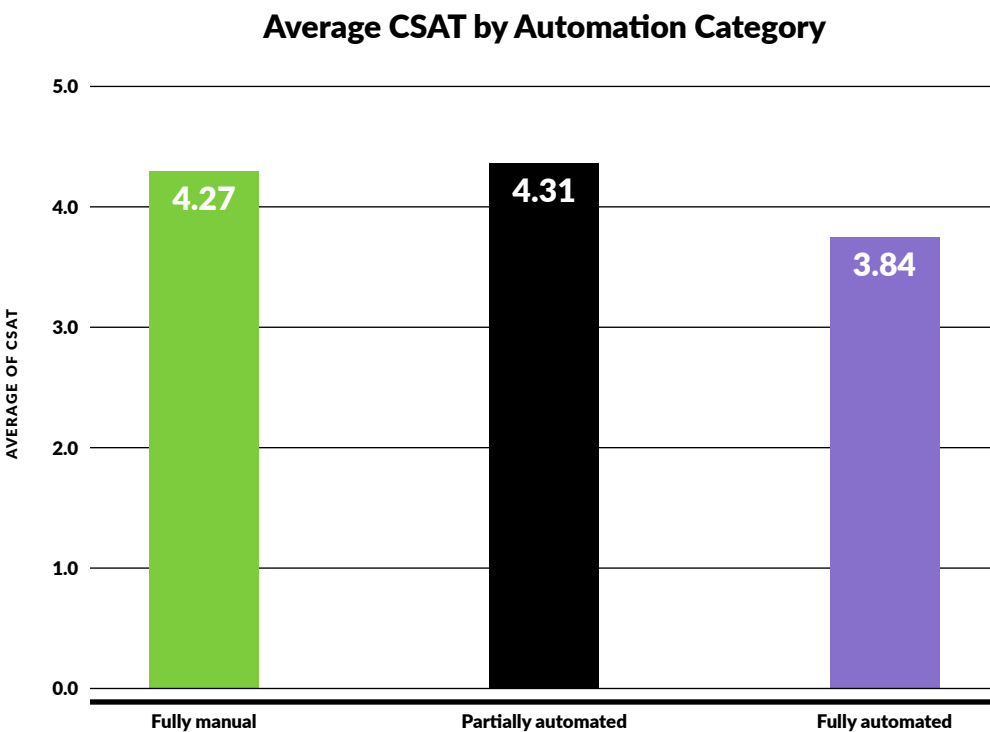
Assisted Help Volume Breakdown



Vitaly, Helpshift's data has shown that brands can automate significantly using chatbots, without compromising the customer experience. Brands that automate over 50 percent of their player support operations maintain a high CSAT, while also making their operations more efficient.

By combining automation with asynchronous messaging, brands are benefitting from consistently high CSAT scores and greater scalability.

CSAT is highest when agents and bots handle an issue together. This highlights that trust in bots is growing among customers, but that human intervention and relationship-building is still required.



Comparing CSAT by level of automation for gaming customers using automation shows that CSAT is highest when bots and agents work together.

TTR is also dramatically improved when using full or partial automation via chatbots – going from an average of nearly 17 hours over a 6 month period for fully manual issues versus instantly for full and partial automation. This is because answer bot and custom bots can respond immediately. Depending on the nature of the inquiry, a player may find a solution within minutes via FAQs and answer bot.

Time to resolve (TTR) is also improved when automation is combined with live agents, as a bot can collect and rapidly surface relevant information for agents based on a player’s responses, removing several steps in the traditional agent-player interaction. As a result, brands do not need to massively scale their agent headcount to handle higher ticket volumes. Average TTR falls from 58.3 hours for issues handled manually, to 46.7 for partially automated issues and 11.7 for fully automated.

Indeed, the combination of agents and automation results in the most efficient issue resolution, giving brands the ability to scale resources as needed to optimize operations and ensure customer and agent satisfaction.

Average TTR:

58.3

hours for issues handled manually.

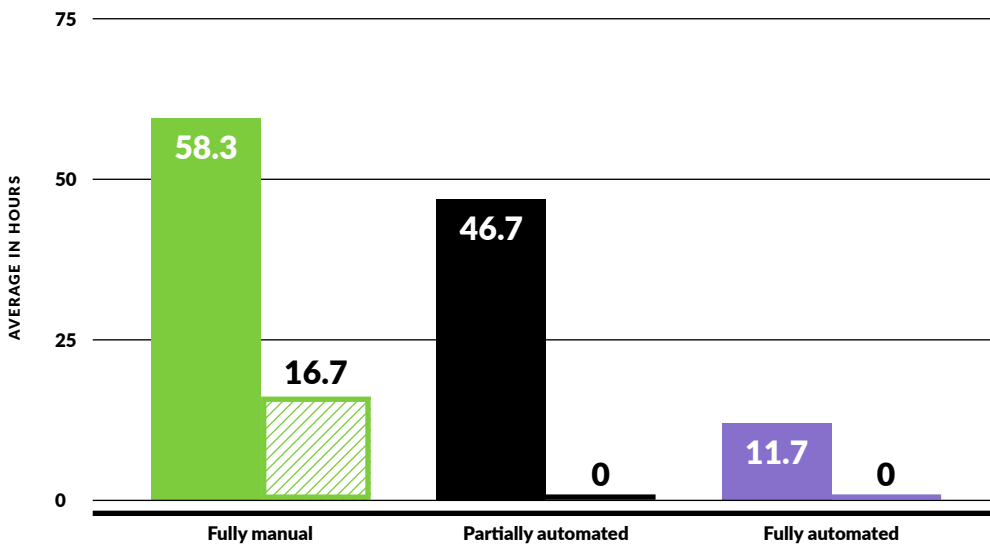
46.7

hours for partially automated issues.

11.7

hours for fully automated issues.

Average TTR & TTFR



Comparing TTR and TTFR by level of automation shows TTFR is instant and TTR is reduced with automation.





Conclusion: striking the right balance

Given the findings, what actionable insights should you take away? First, the brands that are experiencing the greatest payoff in their use of technology for player support are the ones who understand the role of humans in automation. Fully automating a player support function will achieve efficiency and scale, however, players will still wish to interact with a human agent when their issue is particularly complex (or, for that matter, emotional). Our strength as humans lies in our emotional intelligence and relationship-building, two areas that cannot be easily automated.

Therefore, the best player support teams play to the strengths of humans and automation. Bots can help teams achieve greater scale without a big increase in headcount. Answer bot and custom bots can be used to automate time-intensive and manual work, such as collecting details from a player, freeing up human agents to focus on complex inquiries and to build a relationship with players.

To achieve this, however, agents must be empowered with the right tools. Asynchronous messaging is vital to meet the expectations of today's mobile-first society. Without asynchronous messaging, agents will quickly lose track of conversations, resolutions and open tickets. They will be unable to work effectively together, collaborate across borders and quickly resolve inquiries.

Similarly, in-app messaging is needed for two reasons. First, to give players greater access to support when they need it, improving their gaming experience. Secondly, in-app messaging allows for greater automation. Which corresponds with greater efficiency and scalability.

The path for gaming brands is clear: to meet player expectations for more accessible, efficient, timely and tailored support, a combination of humans and bots is required. It's time to invest in a platform that facilitates the work of both man and machine.

You might also like:

[The State of Customer Service Automation 2019](#)

[The Ultimate Guide to Digital-First Customer Service](#)

About Helpshift

Helpshift's next-generation digital customer service software enables B2C brands to scale their support while offering differentiated experiences through phone, web, in-app, email and messenger app channels. Helpshift's innovative asynchronous messaging model across these channels gives people back their time, keeps conversations in context and allows humans and automations to work together to solve problems faster. The Helpshift platform embeds knowledge and AI to let customer service organizations best utilize a mix of automated service, self-service and human-assisted service. Serving over 450 businesses worldwide, including Xfinity Home, Microsoft, Tencent and Supercell, Helpshift is headquartered in San Francisco, with offices around the globe. To learn more about Helpshift, visit helpshift.com and follow [@helpshift](https://twitter.com/helpshift) on Twitter.



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