

What to look for shopping for fully-managed chat & text

If you decide to use a fully managed chat vendor, be sure to look at industry-specific providers. A chat provider doing computer support, real estate, and a horoscope at the same time may not provide the experience your shoppers deserve.

Another key even handling your own conversations is ensure your provider has a Google score of 100 (or very close) to protect your website's organic search ranking.

You also want to make sure your provider uses A/B split tested processes, scripted answers and website elements

(buttons), for lead yield and shopper satisfaction. Both managed chat operators or your in-store operators should use proven scripted answers.

A good provider will track satisfaction of the chat conversations and make that information available to the dealer.

Data security is paramount. Look for a certification of compliance (such as TRUSTe) for the handling of your data (and that of your customers).

Finally, make sure your provider can translate other



languages and allows you to pass files and even play video in the chat.

Success tips during and after chat or text conversations

During the chat or text conversation, include specials and interesting information about your store.

Give your chat provider links to webs pages related to new boat specials, promotions, or boating events. For anything special that you offer, like boat club, value-added packages, fuel, or services, make a web page about it and give it to your chat provider to share with website shoppers.

Once you receive the lead from a chat or text conversation, there are several things you should do with the information.

- ◆ **Route the lead quickly** to the appropriate contact person from sales, service, parts, or events.
- ◆ **Include details from the conversation** (off the chat / text transcript) in the email or phone follow-up with the shopper. This will make them feel heard and also not frustrated that they wasted their time chatting. For example, "I see from your chat with our operator that you are looking for a

26' Craft and have a wonderful 24' to trade (we can really use it) and are concerned with interest rate (we have some exceptional programs now)."

Don't simply look at lead info and leave a canned message or template email.

- ◆ **Respond in minutes.** Although quality of response is important, speed of answer often determines the odds of selling a vessel.
- ◆ **Confirm ALL appointments.** Although the chat operator may be able to get the shopper to commit to a date and time, the show rate is dismal if the dealer doesn't confirm the appointment and very high when appointments are confirmed. Dealers report appointment show rates as high as 80 percent when someone contacts buyers to confirm.



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2016 Marine Dealer Conference & Expo
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- What is live chat / text?
- Reasons to use it
- Dealer feelings about chat / text
- Tips that turn chats into sales
- Proven chat success keys

Live chat and text on dealer websites can boost sales. The technology has evolved into a valuable tool that can boost form lead counts by as much as 50% or more. As with all your marketing tools, there are three possible outcomes: help sales, hurt sales, or have no effect. Here are some basics of website live chat and text, from tips for picking a third-party chat partner for full-support to details about what it takes to manage it successfully in-house.



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What are live chat & text?

Live chat, and now text, are a communication tool that allows dealers to communicate directly with website shoppers through either a chat box or via SMS text.

In both cases, rather than just hope that potential boat buyers or service customers will fill out a form, dealers can essentially reach out and greet visitors and start a conversation, just like they would in the showroom. It takes a passive website and makes it an active communication tool.

Why use it?

For most dealers, 70 percent of website visitors will never return, and only two percent (on a good day) will actually fill out a form to contact the store or marina about a purchase. Properly implemented, live chat and text on boat dealer websites can add as much as 50 percent or more to existing form lead counts—and boost sales. Poorly implemented, it can alienate customers and cost deals.

As digital marketing in the marine industry continues to carve out bigger chunks of dealer and marina marketing budgets, the potential of live chat and text is too significant to ignore.

Three feelings about live chat

When companies are asked about their experiences with live chat or text on their website, they typically have three different responses if they have worked with it before.

Have it and love it – whether they use chat software for self-managed chat or opt for a managed chat provider, they are very pleased with the experience

Using it and it's satisfactory – they have a live chat option and it is basically OK.

Tried it and it stunk – it's like talking to someone who got sick from bad sushi. Getting them to reconsider is quite the challenge.

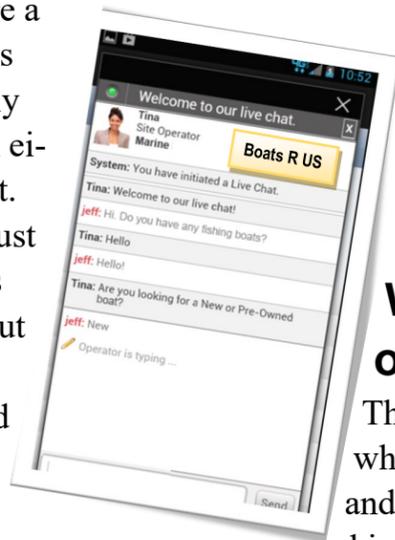
Who will be your chat or text operators?

There are several things to consider when deciding who will handle chat and text conversations for your dealership. There are typically three different ways to structure your operators.

Self-managed—the dealership uses in-house staff to monitor the computer or phone app and respond to chat requests within 6 to 10 seconds. It is usually the lowest-priced, but results are typically poor.

Fully-managed support—the dealership uses a third party to respond to chat and text requests.

Backup support—sometimes called a 'hybrid' setup, the dealer staff takes the chat and text requests when they can and a vendor takes them when dealer operators are too busy or after hours.



How to staff for self-managed chat or text

It is critical that if a dealership is planning to use their own staff to respond to chat or text requests that they carefully consider the requirements of the role. Whoever is tasked with the responsibility needs to be able to respond to a chat request within six to 10 seconds and provide accurate information.

Dealers should choose a knowledgeable staff member or members as chat operators. An ideal candidate understands the sales, parts, service, and business office areas of the business. Shoppers will ask about all aspects of the operation.

Here are a few key operator tips:

Assign a supervisor when possible to watch all chats as they occur and when necessary,

'whisper' what to say when an in-house chat operator gets stuck, over their head or off-track.

Read every chat transcript,

whether it's a lead or not. Have coaching sessions with all chat staff and one-on-ones for special cases.

Create custom scripts

for your store and share them with your team and/or your provider, if you use a managed service.

KEY BENEFITS OF LIVE CHAT & TEXT

- ◆ Generate leads for the sales and service departments
- ◆ Provide an alternate communication channel for past, present, and future marine customers
- ◆ Have a live operator available 24-hours a day, seven days a week (with BoatChat)
- ◆ Address customer service issues with their watercraft or the dealership
- ◆ Sell more boats & yachts

Rules for an effective website interface

There are several important configuration settings for the website that can make a significant difference in chat or text performance. Some can make a big difference in the shopper experience and perception of your store:

- ◆ Use a proactive (popup) invitation on the landing page—but not on every page. Your chat provider should be able to advise you on the most effective setup.
- ◆ Don't require any extra information up front before the conversation starts. Asking for names and phone numbers (except for texting) up front is proven to increase bounce and discourage shoppers.
- ◆ Be sure your chat interface is optimized for mobile and doesn't hurt page load speeds.

