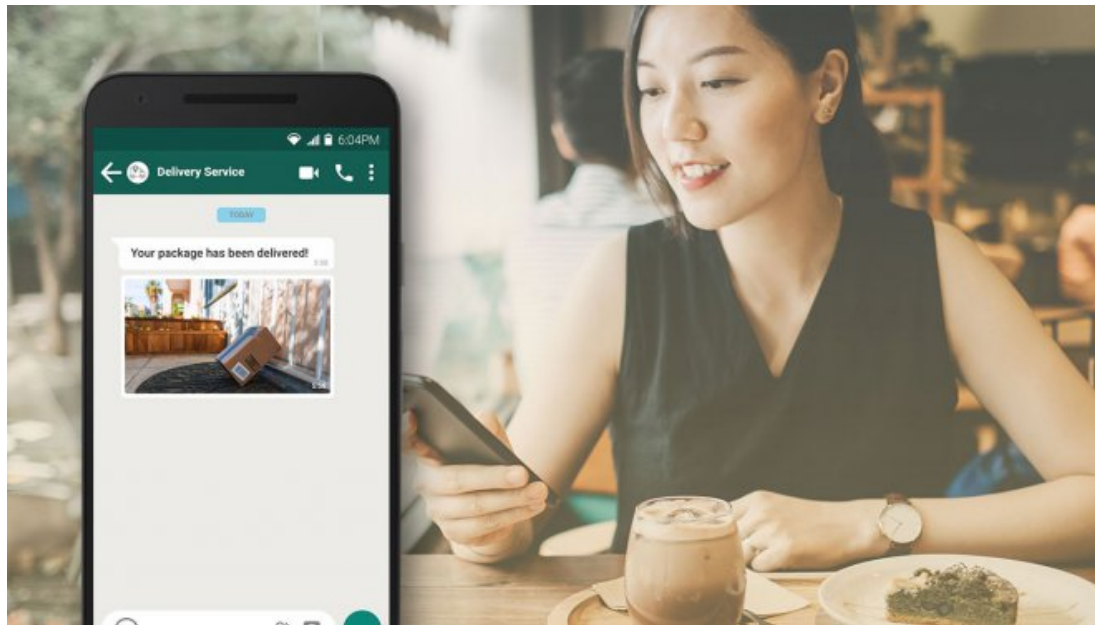


WhatsApp Business API Revisited



By HUGH HOPKINS - Messaging Product Manager

WhatsApp has 1.5 billion users. That's one fifth of the world's population. In fact, WhatsApp is so widespread that, in some countries, it is as good as ubiquitous.



So, since WhatsApp announced the WhatsApp Business API in 2018, what has been the impact to customer communication? In this post, we'll dive into:

- what the WhatsApp Business API and other OTT messaging platforms mean for omnichannel
- their role in delivering conversational interfaces
- the ways that business messaging might evolve over the coming years.

But first, let's look at some more numbers that show just why WhatsApp is such an important channel.

Why WhatsApp?

We already know that WhatsApp has 1.5 billion users worldwide. In India alone, WhatsApp has more than 200 million users.

It's not just about user numbers, though. WhatsApp is powerful. 65 billion messages are sent using the platform each day; three times the number sent via SMS. And, just like SMS, those messages get read. Depending on where you look, open rates are anywhere from 70% to

98%.

Perhaps most importantly, Nielsen reports that 67% of mobile messaging users expect to use chat apps to communicate with businesses more in the next two years.

So, it's a given that WhatsApp must be part of your customer messaging strategy but, beyond the sheer penetration, what makes WhatsApp such a great fit?

WhatsApp Business API as a Part of an Omnichannel Strategy

The omnichannel customer experience is all about meeting customers where they are. And the numbers show that WhatsApp is where they are. But there are product reasons, as well, that make the WhatsApp Business API an essential part of your customer communication roadmap.

Top of the list is that the WhatsApp Business API is designed specifically to handle the messages that your customers value most: customer service inquiries that they initiate and service updates that they choose to receive. And that's no surprise. WhatsApp, as a platform, is all about connecting with friends and family. As a brand, the experience you deliver through WhatsApp must be just like that of chatting with a trusted friend or family member. So, that means no promotional messages.

Next is privacy. WhatsApp messages are encrypted end to end, meaning that the conversations you have over WhatsApp could include account details and similar information that you might not want to send by email. This means that WhatsApp can be a primary medium within your omnichannel strategy. As we know, millennials tend to prefer messaging over voice calls. Encrypted messaging through WhatsApp means that you can serve customers, like those millennials, who'd prefer to communicate exclusively through text, as well as delivering rich voice experiences to other segments of your customer base.

Lastly, the WhatsApp Business API is a modern and evolving solution that was built from the ground up for rich messaging. Imagine a delivery company whose drivers could send a photograph via the WhatsApp Business API of the safe place where they left a package. Thanks to WhatsApp's engagement levels, the package recipient is more likely to see the image than if it were sent by email.

At Nexmo, the Vonage API Platform, we're already working with customers who are using our Messages API to send rich service updates directly to their customers via WhatsApp, Viber, Facebook Messenger, MMS and, when necessary, falling back to SMS.

But what role does the WhatsApp Business API have to play beyond traditional customer service?

WhatsApp in the Conversational Interface

Messaging platforms are unlike any previous customer communication channel. They're informal. People carry them in their pockets. And they're ongoing.

Think about the old ways. Letters, phone calls, even emails. They're one-off events. They're distinct.

Now think about a message in WhatsApp. It's presented as part of a conversation. Through the WhatsApp Business API, your customer service becomes an ongoing engagement. Not only does that make it more immediate and personal, but it places your brand in the same context as your customer's personal conversations.

The good news is that the Nexmo Messages API hands you control of your WhatsApp Business API interactions. That might mean feeding them into your existing customer communication tools. But it also opens opportunities for automating parts of your customer communication with virtual assistants.

If you’re not sure about the fundamentals of virtual assistants you can read up in our primer. The key point, though, is that virtual assistants are less about replacing humans and more about enhancing the service you offer. What if your customer could receive alerts about suspicious activity on their accounts, get an update on their order status, or send a picture of a damaged item to a support agent—all from their WhatsApp chat with you? Virtual assistants make that possible and allow human agents to specialize in what they do best.

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