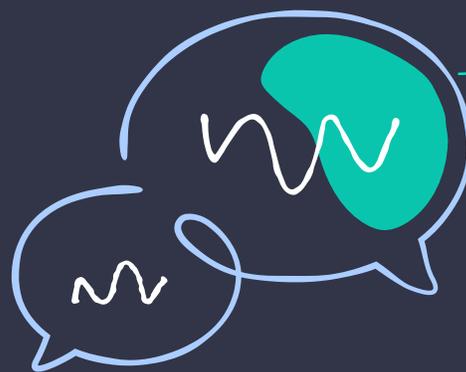# The Social Messaging Advantage:

Messenger as a
Disruptive Digital Care Opportunity

Conversocial

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Introduction: The New Messaging Normal

The Era of Social Messaging is Upon Us!

The fundamentals of delivering a good customer experience over social, mobile channels are as consistent in 2018 as they were in 2017. Customers still expect convenient in-channel resolutions that take little effort on their behalf. The difference, however, is that customers now reach out on private Messaging channels in preference to public social channels.

This maturation in customer expectations has been brought about by their own unquenchable demands for ease and the platforms that facilitate this ease. Today's consumers, the "always-on" generation, are more mobile and digitally driven than ever before.

For one Conversocial enterprise partner, who are using the new Messenger Customer Chat plugin on their site, over 50% of all of their service volume (including phone and email) is now coming through Social Messaging.

Welcome Messenger to the Age of Digital Customer Service

Imagine this: You're on a work trip. Your flight was delayed, you're tired and you are walking through the airport, about to book an Uber to your hotel. You open the confirmation email to get the hotel address and see that there's been an error you're booked to stay tomorrow, not today nightmare.
You're going to have to phone them, wait on hold, repeat to the agent all of your booking details from the email while you're on the phone all while trying to walk, flustered and tired, through the airport.

It would be different if you were a Hyatt Gold customer. On all of its contact pages website, email, mobile application there's a direct link to start a chat with its agents over Messenger. You can just send Hyatt a simple message saying that you've been booked to stay tomorrow instead of tonight the company doesn't need to ask you for any other details, and it will get back to you in minutes.

That's an incredible experience, and completely effortless. And it's possible because Hyatt has leaned into the power of Messenger.

Why Messenger?

Boasting **1.3 billion monthly users** and growing - with 8 billion messages exchanged every month between consumers and businesses - Messenger is at the forefront of digital customer care. The platform offers customers a continuous thread of conversations with real-time, personal interactions that span every point in the customer journey.

As many social customers now prefer private conversations, the format has changed from mass venting sessions on social to meaningful one-to-one engagements that drive customer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

What's more, the Messenger team continues to innovate in the digital care space. In November 2017, Messenger announced the launch of **Messenger Customer Chat**, allowing brands to initiate customer conversations on brand properties and creating a single, seamless and continuous conversation over Messenger, thereby enabling brands to handle broader customer inquiries while maintaining best in class customer service.

Customer Chat joins a breadth of website **plugins** from Facebook designed to combine a Customers Messenger and web experience (achieved by sending customers information into the Messenger platform directly). These plugins make the Messenger experience meaningful even before any customer care is required.

Gartner predicts that by 2019, requests for customer support through consumer messaging apps will exceed requests for customer support through public social media. Messenger Customer Chat directly reflects this trend, offering an invaluable resource for brands catering to the next generation of consumers.

Messenger Customer Chat is particularly valuable for customer-service teams, enabling them for the first time to provide consumers with a single, seamless experience across devices. Unlike traditional web chat, which lives only on a business's website, consumers can now chat with a business on its website and in

Messenger (across the web, mobile or tablet) and transition back and forth seamlessly without losing the conversation's history and context.

Messaging combines full live-chat functionality with persistent identity and mobile notifications merging all of the best elements of the traditional digital care channels, purposebuilt for the mobile era:

- **Real-time and Asynchronous:** Consumers can switch between real-time, and non-real time conversations, depending on the priority and severity of the case.
- **Persistent:** Customers can go away and continue the conversation later at their convenience, returning to the same conversation thread.
- **Identity:** Brands can easily link the inquiry to a customer record and maintain that connection.
- **Device Agnostic:** Consumers can move from one device to the other seamlessly (a conversation can start on desktop and move to mobile with ease).

And it works, allowing brands to measure the strength of their customer relationships. Instead of striving for just "good" customer service, the bar has been raised. Brands know that because of the human, empathetic element of social, they have to deliver exceptional digital customer care. Measuring CSAT (customer satisfaction) and NPS (Net Promoter Score) via Messenger provides:

- **Higher response rates:** Brands can see three times the response rate of traditional channels. Customers can go away and continue the conversation later.
- **Comparison:** Brands have the ability to make a digital to traditional service comparison on customer satisfaction.
- **Actionable business insight:** CSAT gives a clear customer feedback loop on potential service improvements.

There are certain interactions that customers can find painful. Messenger-based customer care removes the effort from your customer relationships, decreases frustration and allows your brand to shine.
In this briefing we'll look at how you can harness the power of Facebook Messenger to deliver customer care at scale.

Facebook's Digital Care Focus: Messenger Customer Chat

In 2015, at their annual developer conference F8, Facebook officially launched "Messenger for Business," opening up a live-chat API with a group of select partners (Hyatt Hotels, a Conversocial partner, was one of the first partners to launch live-chat over Messenger). At F8 in 2016, Facebook expanded on Messenger functionality, adding the ability to handle interactive transactions and to use various types of bots to assist with transactions and support.

In the years following this announcement, dozens, then hundreds, then thousands of major brands began using Messenger to deliver customer service. This thirst for platform innovation has shown no signs of slowing, with Messenger continuing to roll out customer-centric changes.

In November of 2017 Conversocial were among the first to gain early access to the closed beta of Facebook Messenger Customer Chat, a newly released capability that enables people to talk with businesses across web and Messenger. Among the select Conversocial clients invited to pilot Messenger Customer Chat were UK retailer Argos and Latin American airline Volaris, both of which have launched seamless chat with customers in-app and web via Messenger.

Argos, the UK's third largest retailer with over 800 stores across the UK and a website that serves nearly 1 billion visitors annually, has made a serious commitment to Facebook Messenger as a customer service channel over the course of 2017. Volaris' roll-out of Messenger Chat has also been a huge success. After 6 months, the Mexican airline has seen a 29% reduction in handling time because one agent can now manage 5 interactions simultaneously versus only one while using phone calls and webchat. Messaging now makes up a majority of all their inbound service volume (including phone and email).

"Our customers clearly prefer using personal messaging apps like Facebook Messenger to reach out to us for assistance. Messenger Customer Chat supplements existing live chat and gives our customers a familiar and convenient way to contact us, while allowing Argos to further promote private messaging as a channel, reducing instances of public complaints while increasing customer satisfaction and convenience.

The increase in messaging volume is allowing us to address broader types of issues without hampering our ability to deliver good service. Conversocial's intelligence, automation and workflow truly enables us to meet our SLA benchmarks while handling increased messaging volume."

Chris Tomlinson, Digital Product Owner,
Customer Management Centre at Argos

Will Messenger Customer Chat Replace Live Chat and Email?

Yes. There is a strong case to say that it will. Messenger is a fusion of both real-time chat (and all of the accompanying functionalities such as typing indicators) as well as asynchronous messages with notifications.

Asynchronicity is one of the key factors that makes Messenger so convenient and powerful. Customers can start a conversation with brands, do something else more important and then pick up the same conversation right where they left off 30 minutes later. Gone are the days of being 100% engaged in a webchat and nothing else. Now you can order a coffee, talk to a friend, and have your service issue resolved all at the same time.

At the same time, the open rate of messages over Social Messaging apps is around 70%. Opposed to single digit open rates (on good days) for email.

Messenger offers a unique opportunity for brands that are willing to embrace it as a scalable care channel. However, while the 1:1 private nature of messaging is in some ways very similar to live chat, there are a few key ways it is different and this has an impact on workflow, KPIs, and agent training.

- The asynchronous nature means that conversations can pause and resume between messages. Agents need to be able to have a real-time conversation while the customer is present, but be able to seamlessly shift to the next conversation if they are waiting on the customer.

- Waiting on the customer can sometimes take days. This means the agent picking up that conversation needs to be able to quickly read up on the background of the conversation and continue where it was left off.

- Conversations on Messenger can be closely intertwined with a public social presence on Facebook. In those cases, conversations can switch between public and private posts so agents need to be able to track conversations as they switch, and understand how to respond differently in the public vs private spheres.

- Messaging channels were built with automation in mind. The result is that they are much more productive than the traditional channels in intertwining human and bot interactions. But agents must be aware of this sometimes complex workflow.

As Messenger continues to 'steal' volumes from traditional channels, including live chat, companies need to adapt and scale their approach internally, potentially looking to bots to help supplement the ever increasing volumes.

Hyperscale Productivity: Bots and Automation

The era of the bot is upon us. But while the launch of the bot platforms in 2016 caused a lot of hype (and introduced a lot of bots that turned out to not be very useful at all) we're now starting to see brands figure out how to use the bot platforms to add real value for customers.

Previously, in the customer service domain, it was much harder to automate full conversations there are just too many variables for what a customer could ask. But Messenger is different. Humans and automation can sit side by side in a way that's never been possible before.

Done right, the social messaging advantage for bot-augmented interactions has clear business impact:

Bots help brands drive a higher customer experience

Optimization for common inquiries results in quicker response times and faster time to resolution for the customer.

## Bots help brands drive a lower cost-to-serve

Bot-ready platforms that combine both bot and agent assisted service result in fewer inquiries needing a human response.

But we are still in the infancy of bot-augmented service interactions.

Interactive Menu Response systems, such as conversocials Navigator, are being implemented by brands today on Messenger, for example, Conversocial client Argos (see below). When you send a message over Messenger, an automated message begins triaging your request. Then, depending on the type of issue you select from a menu (such as Home Related Inquiry), the Navigator functionality automatically asks you for the relevant information needed to solve the issue. Once that information is sent, a human agent responds.

In any service conversation, the first few messages are generally used to identify the type of issue the customer is facing, and then to collect relevant information needed to resolve the issue.

Generally, this routing and data collection is incredibly simple to automate, without needing to make use of any natural language processing that could go wrong.
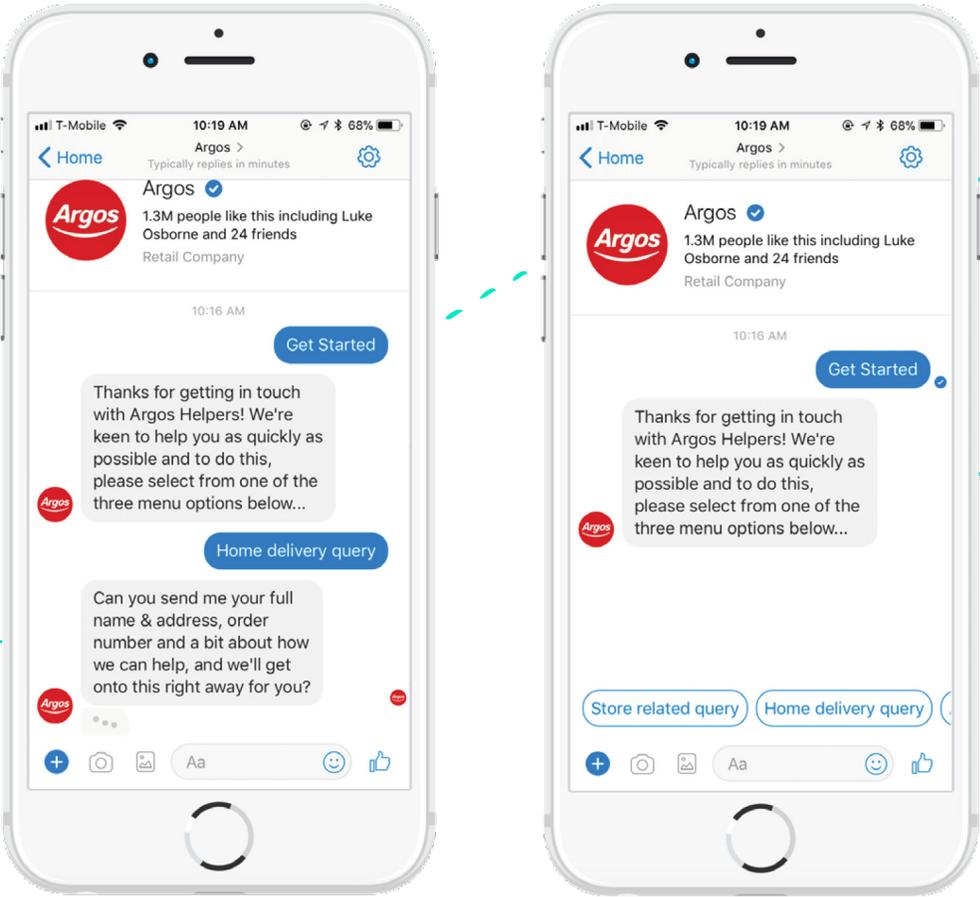
Messenger enables brands to have automated welcome messages with button navigation options (instead of a keyboard). This functionality can be used to discover what kind of issue the customer has, then ask them for relevant information and only then take them to an agent. A Navigator like the one above can immediately save 15-20% of messaging volumes a huge saving in agent time while improving routing accuracy, and accelerating resolution time for the customer.

What's next? AI and Deep Learning.

Whereas Navigator makes use of the bot functionality available in Messenger to automate a certain number of predefined questions and messages, adding AI means using Deep Learning (and other advanced machine learning techniques) to train a system on a database of customer questions and agent responses in order to automate a much larger percentage of queries. This enables the development of a system that can automatically respond to unstructured, free text questions it may not have seen in that exact way before; a system that is constantly being trained by agents to be more accurate and to be able to answer more questions confidently.

A system like this, for example, would be able to learn from historical conversations how to respond to all the different types of situations when someone may ask for a refund without needing to have those rules written programmatically in advance.

A customer service system that combines all of these elements will be able to automate a constantly increasing percentage of service inquiries, without ever compromising the customer experience. Answers will only be fully automated when the AI system is completely confident the answer is right; in all other cases, the answer will either be human approved or human written. In turn, this will enable a smaller and smaller pool of agents to service customers in an increasingly faster and more effortless way. It will revolutionize the customer service model. This revolution is in its infancy right now but all the relevant elements are in place to make it take off.

However, in the near future, empathic human support is still customer preference

59% of respondents in Conversocial's recently published **'State of Digital Care 2018'** report, still feel it is "very important" to have a human handle their digital care inquiry, as compared to 35% who say it's "somewhat important" and 6% who feel it's "not important". This shows a clear consumer mistrust in the ongoing role bots will play in customer service.

However many customers, unknowingly in many cases it seems, interact with a chatbot in some form. The issues arise in the bot-to-agent handoff. If this can be managed through seamless workflow integrations, many customers will be none the wiser although brands should not hide the fact that consumers may be interacting with a service bot.

But brands can go further. In this new bot-driven service world a few more tricks are needed than just high IQ and EQ. Jack Ma, self-made Chinese billionaire, coins "LQ" as the future brand differentiator (LQ, which stands for "love quotient," is the next iteration in our societal obsession with benchmarking ourselves and an attempt at fleshing out our advantage over the machines).

Take for example, a traveler who complains about a hair in his or her coffee. It takes IQ to surmise that they want a new cup of coffee, but as any human can tell you, that's likely not enough. It requires EQ to take that next step to understand the customer is also seeking emotional validation for his or her experience.
Yet even a machine capable of that much is unlikely to find the right words to satiate their desire.

No, what that customer needs at this point is an escalation. An escalation past the colossal AI intelligence that's broad and energetic enough to monitor Messenger and past the deep emotional intelligence that's sensitive enough to register emotion and cough out appropriate answers straight to a human agent.
And that human can apologize and make it all right because they have LQ.
They care they can make a real connection.

LQ needs be at the forefront of all brands' service infrastructure in the coming age of automation.
Jack argues that LQ will be what separates successful brands from the machine driven ones which, although highly intelligent and endlessly emotional, will completely miss the point.

The era of Social Messaging is upon us, but will remain human with bots working in.

Preparing for the Messaging Era

At F8 2018, Facebook announced that there are 8 billion messages being sent between consumers and businesses every month on Messenger (whether the businesses answer back is another story). What is clear is that your business needs to be ready to offer Messenger as a Social Messaging channel. It's business critical in 2018 for brands to embrace Messenger within their customer support stack.

Every brand is different and faces unique obstacles when incorporating a new customer contact channel. But below are five phases we here at Conversocial recommend as a starting point that can be customized based on your internal operations, challenges, agent resources, social media solution etc.

Phase one: Remediate: Initial Planning for Messenger as a Digital Care Channel

Take the basic and necessary steps to operationalize Messenger as a supported channel:

- Calculate current Facebook volumes (Public vs Private), LiveChat and email volumes and breakdown the conversation categories to better understand the types of issues/questions that are coming through these channels currently.

- Based on hourly volume data, resource appropriately when inbound messages reach certain levels. Assess what staffing levels you would need for a response time of under 5 minutes per message.

- Inquire with your social engagement solution's customer success team to get your page whitelisted by Facebook (assuming they are an official Facebook Messenger partner.

- Train your agents now in preparation for the different way to approach Messenger and the higher volumes.

Phase two: Operationalize: Soft Launch Messenger Externally

Start to promote Messenger externally as a customer service channel:

- Identify contact types best served through Messenger (e.g.: reservations, lost items) from existing legacy channels (phone, email, live chat, etc).

- Monitor inbound volume shifts, SLA performance, and customer feedback.

- Incorporate targeted promotion of Messenger for customer touch points that allow greater control of volume.

Once prepared to handle volume appropriately, it's time to let your customers know you are ready to talk.

- Embed m.me URL in email digests (delivery notifications, product updates, marketing correspondence etc).

- Analyze changes in incoming message volume as an indicator of people who would not havecontacted you previously.

- Embed one of the Messenger plugins as part of a web process that already exists (e.g sending an invoice once a transaction is completed)

Phase three: Scale: Offer Messenger as an Official Customer Contact Channel

Continue to iteratively expand promotion of Messenger to positions of greater visibility, such as prominently on the Contact Us page, promotional/informational communication, physical location signage, etc:

- Promote Messenger everywhere that is appropriate to communicate with customers including shipping collateral, alongside items on websites to help answer FAQ as customers are shopping, IVR message, and email blast alerting customers that your company is ready to talk via Messenger.

- Analyze cost-to-serve savings through Messenger support and customer satisfaction increase.

- Continue to monitor & project SLA performance against volume growth trends, and plan resourcing accordingly.

- Expect to see a drop in public comments as volume shifts to private messages.

Phase four: Innovate: Utilize Messenger Customer Chat to Your Advantage

Broaden your Messenger offering with the integration of the Messenger Customer Chat widget.

- Offer Messenger Customer Chat on certain website pages (replacing current live chat plugins). Analyze the types of service inquiries you receive, for example is a real-time response needed? Make sure internal resources are aligned appropriately to consumer expectations.

- Automate some aspects of interactions to allow customers to not only self-serve, but also be able to transfer seamlessly to an agent where needed.

- Continuously drive efficiency through customer service analytics (Average Handle Time, Response Time, Agent Breakdown, Hourly Volume Shifts etc).

- Expect a spike in inbound contacts and beginning stages of deflection away from phone and email volumes.

Phase five: Disrupt: The Social Messaging Advantage

Create a holistic customer view and immerse Messenger in your contact center stack.

- Look at getting a full 360 view of the customer, integrating with existing CRM systems, for greater efficiency whilst dealing with increased volumes.

- Measure the strength of your customer relationships and report on them through CSAT and NPS surveys via Facebook Messenger. (With Conversocial, customers are seeing a 3X response rate to CSAT and NPS surveys in Social Messaging compared to email, so they can gauge customer satisfaction and brand loyalty more accurately than ever before.)

- Analyze Messenger viability to completely replace Live Chat and email where applicable (volumes, satisfaction, and cost-to-serve). Additionally, consider the mobile capabilities of your Live Chat software and how quickly your customers are shifting away from desktop engagement.

- Utilize Messenger Customer Chat to drive sales.

The Volaris Social Messaging Advantage

Over the past six months, the effectiveness of Messenger customer chat as a customer service solution was put to the test by Conversocial customer Volaris Airlines, with incredible results. As the second largest airline in Mexico, customer inquiry volume is high. Shortly after the digitally savvy airline began promoting messaging as a customer service option, Messenger quickly emerged as the preferred method for customers to contact the brand, with over 48% of customer care interactions being conducted on Facebook Messenger alone.

With Messenger accounting for almost half of Volaris' total messaging volume, the airline has unearthed numerous efficiency and experiential gains of social messaging as a customer care channel:

- Average Handling Time has been reduced by **29%**, as agents are able to handle up to 5 conversations simultaneously on Messenger customer chat compared to 2 conversations via live chat and 1 via phone.

- Agent Response Time has been reduced by **43%** and First Response Time has been reduced by **78%**.

- Most impressively, cost per interaction via Social Messaging is **$1.56** MXM, an efficiency of **83%** over other channels.

"Messaging as a customer service channel is no longer the future, it's a must have. Through Conversocial, we have been able to invest in Messenger as one of our main customer service channels, enabling Volaris to not only improve response times, but significantly reduce costs keeping true to ourselves and our ultra-low-cost business model. Being able to listen and interact with our customers in ways our customers prefer, and in real time when necessary, has significantly impacted our bottom line."

Andreas Waldmann, Digital and Marketing
Director, Volaris

Conclusion: Breaking the Customer Experience Cost Equation

What customers want, and what companies want, can be two different things.

Customers fundamentally want a better customer experience, generally driven by inquires being resolved in-channel in a timely and convenient manner. Brands, and contact centers particularly, are driven by lowering the cost-to-serve, among other KPIs. The two 'wants' are counterproductive and there is a trade-off in meeting one over the other. But Messenger, and more broadly Social Messaging, has the power to break the equation. Customer care executives will no longer be forced to choose between great customer experience and lowest cost-to-serve.

But Messenger will only break the CX Equation if:

01 Brands resource Messenger for real-time conversations

For Messenger to become a channel that can replace traditional service channels, customers need to know that if they message you, they will get a response in minutes, not hours. Start putting together a resource plan for Messenger that enables this kind of response speed not just minimum coverage. Make sure you are able to measure metrics such as agent utilization and the cost-per-resolution in Messenger, as well as CSAT and NPS, to make comparisons to traditional service channels.

02 Brands promote Messenger to their customers

With the right resourcing, brands should not be frightened to open the 'digital floodgates' by actively promoting Messenger Customer Chat. Brands should embrace the "Message Us" button on their existing contact pages and websites, and plan a campaign to promote Messenger care to their customers, both online and offline. Doing this will result in brands being able to quickly increase the volume of private messages they receive, there by decreasing public social complaints, and to begin to deflect from other channels.

03 Brands utilize automation to help Messenger become scalable

Brands should take their first steps in implementing Navigator, using the bot platforms available in Messenger to automate the first couple of messages when a customer contacts. This will help with the routing of issues, improve resolution times, and increase the efficiency of agents. It's a great first step and lays the groundwork for more advanced automation and the application of machine learning.
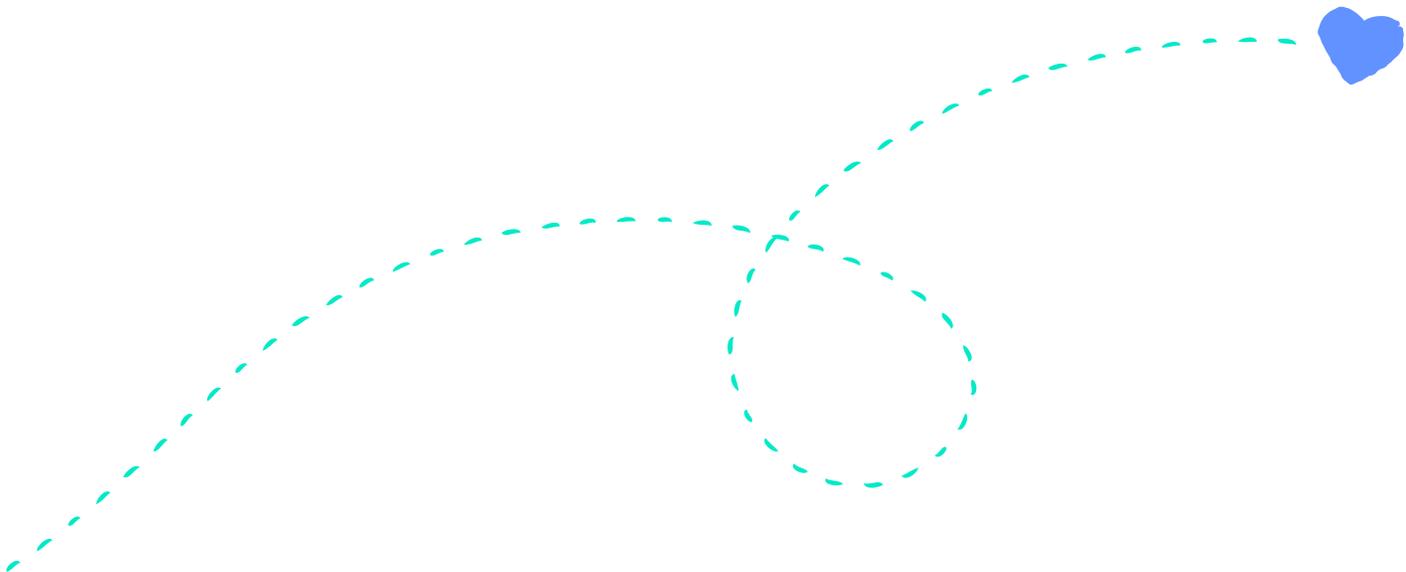
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If you'd like to find out more about how Conversocial can help you develop an effective social customer service program, get in touch with us at hello@conversocial.com.