

Minor Hotels improved its resolution time by 55% with Zendesk

From the sparkling turquoise waters of the Maldives to the lush plains of the Serengeti, Minor Hotels offers accommodations for travelers who want a bit of luxury as they adventure in some of the world's most exotic locales.

Over the past 40 years, this Thailand-based company has grown from a single resort located near Bangkok to encompass five brands, 154 hotels, and nearly 20,000 rooms scattered across two dozen countries. As one of the fastest-growing hospitality groups, Minor Hotels are passionate about bringing more value to customers, partners and shareholders.

To manage online customer service inquiries across the company, Minor Hotels began using two instances of Zendesk in 2015 for two use cases—directly serving customers and for internal requests made by employees at various properties to corporate headquarters. In mid-2016, K'Lee Challinger became Minor Hotels' Social Media Optimization and Real-Time Customer Service Manager, and took ownership of both instances. After digging in, she discovered that Zendesk's capabilities had yet to be fully implemented.

"With so many hotels across different regions and time zones, scalability was a massive challenge and there wasn't always clear ownership for each channel," said Challinger, who had up to that point no experience using Zendesk or other customer service tools. "Our Zendesk account managers were quite good with answering my questions when I first stepped into the role. Zendesk is a really user-friendly platform."

One of the most important needs Challinger and Minor Hotels identified was improving response time across its channels: email, chat, self service, and web forms. On live chat, for example, the average response time was 70 seconds, and Challinger wanted it under a minute.

"We've seen a massive shift with Zendesk Chat," Challinger said. "The direction we are heading is to leverage real-time customer service. We've rolled out live chat across six regions so far and are answering, on average, within 50 seconds."

That's a 29 percent improvement in response time, which has helped Minor Hotels to scale its live chat support. Now each region—the Maldives, Thailand, Australia, Africa, United Arab Emirates, and Portugal—handles roughly 800 to 1,000 chats per month.

"Customers like the instantaneous service and the personalization," said Challinger, who noted that 30 percent of requests come via mobile devices. "We maintain a CSAT score of 97%, further highlighting this point. At the end of the day, we're trying to make ourselves easily approachable so we can drive more bookings and conversions to our website rather than have customers default to other travel and booking sites. We're also noticing a lot more repeat website visitors, reaching out to us when they have learned they get a quick, personalized response. Zendesk Chat allows us to build relationships with our guests that we may never have had the chance to before; it's helping us to build brand loyalty," she said.

As Minor Hotels put more of Zendesk's capabilities into play, it opened up a view into metrics that were next to impossible to measure when the regions were siloed and relied on email to track around 1,000 tickets each month. Since January 2017, Challinger said, the company has seen a 55 percent improvement in full resolution time, with a 40 percent decrease in first response time.

"We've seen really great improvement in terms of solving tickets," Challinger said. "We know we're solving tickets a lot quicker nowadays."

While Zendesk Support, Guide, and Chat have helped Minor Hotels realize tangible benefits in a short period of time, the omnichannel solution has also played an important role in improving internal communication.

“With so many properties and one corporate office, we were getting feedback that our support teams were delaying our hotel teams’ ability to move forward on different projects, or our approval process was too long,” Challinger said. “Prior to having Zendesk, a lot of these requests were just getting lost. There were no response rates, no one was really appointed as being responsible. Now there’s an actual workflow.”

Minor Hotels leverages Zendesk’s triggers and macros to direct tickets to the correct teams, ensuring that no one misses an opportunity to follow up with customers about possible bookings.

“I’m going back to our agents and telling them what our in-users are searching for. That helps them to make sure they capture and store relevant user information in the knowledge base,” she said. “We’re in the process of changing behavior for better customer outcomes.”