

# White Paper

Using WhatsApp as an Effective  
Communication Channel in  
the Housing Marketplace

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# Executive Summary

In today's fast-paced digital world, popular consumer communication channels can play a crucial role in determining the success of businesses. For businesses operating in the UK housing market, such as conveyancing services, structural and general surveys, and related services like finding solicitors and arranging EPC certificates, engaging customers across multiple channels is very useful. While traditional channels like phone calls and emails remain valuable, WhatsApp has emerged as a powerful tool for customer interaction due to its popularity, ease of use, and near instant communication capabilities.

Many consumers find this channel effective because it allows them to carry on with their daily activities and not be chained to a phone waiting to connect to a call handler or agent to assist with their query. This white paper outlines the importance of offering WhatsApp as a business communication channel for conveyancing services. It discusses the key factors influencing customer expectations, the importance of prompt responses, and the potential risks of underutilising this channel. It also emphasises the need for well-trained resources or smart AI chatbots to manage customer interactions effectively and to avoid dissatisfaction.

# Introduction to the Customer Journey and Business Channels

The customer journey refers to the series of interactions a potential or existing client has with a business throughout their engagement. For conveyancing services in the UK housing market, the customer journey may begin with browsing property listings on websites like Rightmove, Zoopla, or OnTheMarket, and extend to enquiring about surveys, solicitors, and insurance services. Offering multiple communication channels allows customers to interact in ways that suit their preferences and lifestyles. Customers today expect instant and seamless communication, regardless of which platform they choose—phone, email, social channels, webchat or WhatsApp. As the digital landscape evolves, WhatsApp has become a preferred channel due to its ease of access and user-friendly interface.

# The Importance of WhatsApp in Business Communication

WhatsApp is one of the most popular messaging platforms globally, with over 2 billion active users as of 2023, according to Backlinko. In the UK alone, WhatsApp usage is widespread, with millions of people relying on it for daily communication, both personal and professional. For businesses offering services like conveyancing, WhatsApp provides several key advantages:

## Ease of Use and Accessibility

WhatsApp is easily accessible on mobile devices, which means customers can quickly send a message or ask a question while on the go. Unlike emails that can sit unread or phone calls that may be inconvenient, WhatsApp offers a near-instant connection.

## Faster Response Times:

WhatsApp facilitates near real-time communication. Customers are more likely to receive prompt responses compared to email, which can take hours or even days to get a reply. Timely responses are crucial in the housing market, where decisions and actions often need to be made swiftly.

## Personalised Conversations:

Unlike impersonal emails or phone calls that may follow a rigid script, WhatsApp enables businesses to have more personalised and casual conversations. This relaxed communication can build trust and rapport, leading to better customer satisfaction.

## Broad Reach and Cross-Generational Appeal:

WhatsApp is not just popular with younger demographics; it also has widespread appeal across different age groups, making it an excellent tool for reaching a diverse customer base in the housing market.

## Data Supporting WhatsApp's Effectiveness

According to the latest studies from WhatsApp Business:

- 80% of adults in over 180 countries use WhatsApp as their primary messaging tool.
- WhatsApp business users have reported higher customer engagement rates than traditional channels.
- Businesses that use WhatsApp for customer service see significantly reduced response times, with customers receiving answers in under 10 minutes

on average. These data points highlight why WhatsApp is not only a preferred communication channel but also an effective one.

## WhatsApp Versus Other Communication Channels

While phone calls and emails remain effective in certain contexts, WhatsApp offers several competitive advantages in the conveyancing industry:

- **Phone Calls:** Although personal, phone calls may not always be convenient for customers who are busy or prefer written communication. Phone conversations can also be time-consuming, and there is often no record of the conversation unless it's manually noted. Or the consumer must rely on the business for call recordings.
- **Emails:** While useful for formal communication, emails tend to have slower response times. Emails can also be perceived as more formal and less personal, which might not suit every stage of the customer journey in a service-based business-like conveyancing.
- **WhatsApp:** WhatsApp's instant messaging platform allows for quick, easy, and conversational communication. With features like file sharing, image uploads (important for survey reports, legal documents, etc.), and voice notes, WhatsApp provides greater flexibility than traditional channels.

# Key Considerations for Offering WhatsApp as a Business Channel

While WhatsApp can greatly enhance the customer experience, offering it as a communication channel comes with responsibilities. Here are several critical factors to consider when integrating WhatsApp into your business communication strategy:

### Availability and Response Times:

Customers expect timely replies on WhatsApp. Delays or unanswered messages can harm your reputation and lead to lost opportunities. To mitigate this, ensure that your staff is properly trained to handle WhatsApp inquiries in a timely manner. A good benchmark is to respond

### Resource Management:

Adequate staffing is essential to manage WhatsApp interactions effectively. This requires dedicated staff who are responsible for monitoring the WhatsApp channel during working hours. If staffing resources are limited, businesses may want to consider automated chatbots

within 5 to 10 minutes of receiving a message, as this is the typical expectation for messaging platforms.

### AI and Chatbots: A Balanced Approach:

While chatbots can be beneficial in answering FAQs or providing initial assistance, poorly programmed bots can frustrate customers if they fail to provide meaningful answers. Businesses must ensure that their chatbots are well-designed, offering clear and relevant responses or seamlessly handing off the conversation to a human agent when necessary.

### Risks of Poorly Managed WhatsApp Interactions:

Introducing WhatsApp as a business communication channel without proper preparation can do more harm than good. Some common pitfalls include:

- **Delayed or No Response:** Customers who do not receive timely responses may feel neglected, leading to frustration and lost business.
- **Inefficient Chatbots:** A chatbot that cannot provide helpful information can lead to customer dissatisfaction. It's essential that chatbots are programmed to handle a wide range of inquiries or escalate issues to a human promptly.
- **Resource Strain:** Without proper staffing, a surge in WhatsApp inquiries could overwhelm your team, resulting in poor customer service across all channels.

that can handle initial inquiries such as Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) before connecting customers with a human representative.

### Maintaining Quality of Service

Businesses must ensure consistency in communication quality across all channels. Customers who are directed to WhatsApp must feel they are receiving the same level of service, accuracy, and professionalism as they would via phone or email. Regular training of staff and updates to chatbot logic are crucial for maintaining high service standards.

# Conclusion

WhatsApp has emerged as a key communication tool for businesses and offer many benefits for consumers in the UK housing market. By offering instant messaging, personalised conversations, and cross-generational appeal, WhatsApp can significantly enhance the customer journey. However, to unlock its full potential, businesses must ensure that they have the right resources, tools, and strategies in place to manage customer interactions effectively. Whether through well-trained staff or intelligently designed chatbots, the goal should always be to offer a seamless, responsive, and positive experience for customers. Failure to manage WhatsApp interactions appropriately can lead to customer dissatisfaction and damage to the brand's reputation. Therefore, businesses offering conveyancing services should prioritise optimizing their customer journey through WhatsApp while ensuring they can meet the high expectations of today's digital-savvy customers.

# References

1. Backlinko, "WhatsApp Users 2023," Accessed September 2023. <https://backlinko.com/whatsapp-users>
2. WhatsApp Business Blog, "Providing Quality Customer Care with WhatsApp Messages," Accessed September 2023. <https://business.whatsapp.com/blog/quality-customer-care-messages>

This white paper provides a clear understanding of why WhatsApp should be a prioritised channel for customer interaction in the conveyancing sector while emphasising the importance of managing it efficiently.



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