

The Zendesk Benchmark Guide for Enterprise

How fast-growing digital natives can innovate and scale

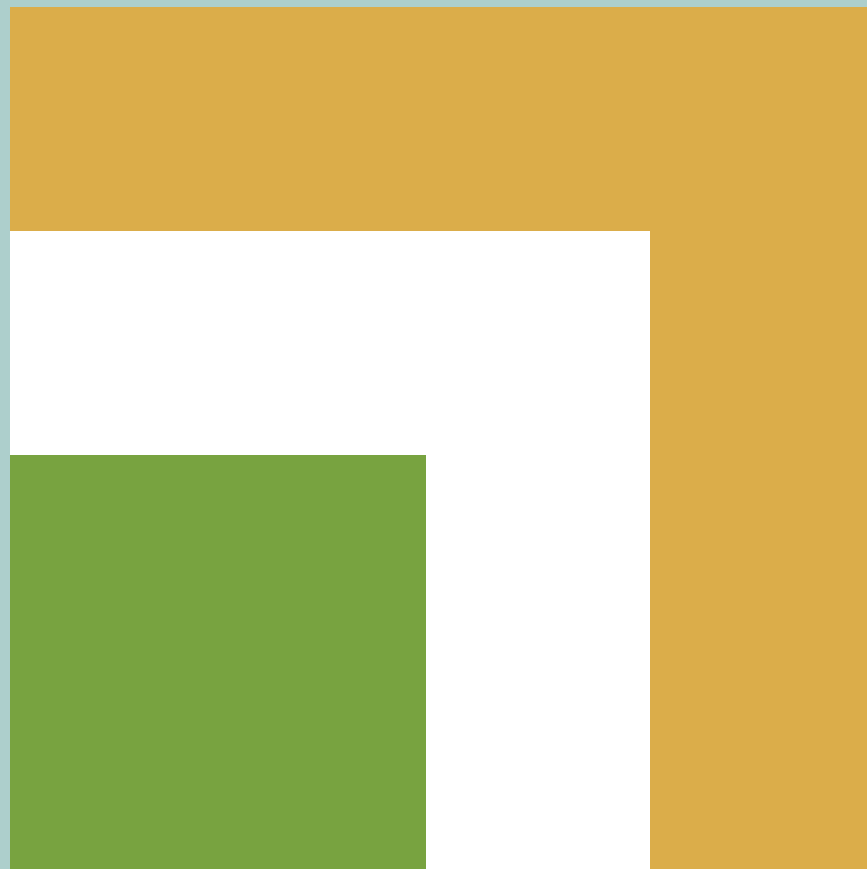


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Executive summary

All enterprise companies aren't created equal, and those that have already moved to adopt digital technology face a unique set of opportunities and challenges compared to companies that are still in the process of modernizing.

These companies often were born digital and have grown quickly thanks to their technological savvy. They tend to be more comfortable with viewing their support software as a platform that can be extended using APIs, apps, and integrations.

Their main objective: Provide support at scale while delivering the high-quality experience customers expect. This means managing extremely high ticket volumes, as their large customer bases have an increasing number of inquiries while demanding an always-on, seamless approach to customer support.

We designed this guide to help support teams that have already mastered the digital landscape—we'll call them **Digital Natives**—understand the best next steps based on their unique profiles and to help them benchmark against their peers.

With data from the [Zendesk Benchmark](#), our crowdsourced index of customer service interactions from more than 45,000 companies using Zendesk across the globe, we identified what separates leaders from the rest to pinpoint best practices for large companies looking to optimize and scale their fully-integrated digital approach to customer experience.

Key findings

01

High Performers are masters of scale

Among Digital Natives, the best support teams manage enormous ticket volumes at scale. Because of their extremely demanding customer bases, they see slightly lower CSAT than their peers while handling more than five times the ticket volume.

02

Embrace a platform approach

Great support teams have already committed to building out and integrating their support solution, ensuring data is synced between systems and agents are able to find the information they need all in one place. Digital Natives using API integrations see 61 percent lower first reply times and 55 percent lower requester wait times than those that don't.

03

Focus on reliability across the customer experience

High Performers aren't preoccupied with any single metric, instead delivering a consistently strong experience for customers. They respond to customer requests six times faster and resolve tickets four times faster by leaning on advanced features and improving the agent workflow.

04

Rely on self-service to deflect tickets

Digital Natives have help centers that are more comprehensive and contain more relevant content. They have twice as many articles and a median Self-Service Ratio that's two times higher than the median for companies that are just starting the digital transformation.

05

B2C companies are most innovative

Digital-first B2C companies are pushing the limits of their support software, taking full advantage of an omnichannel approach, automation, and AI to manage their high volume of requests. But keeping up with customer expectations isn't easy—and B2C companies have a median CSAT that's nearly 10 percentage points lower than peers among B2B companies and internal help desks.

06

Age is just a number

We found that a company's age isn't the primary determinant of their approach to support. Just because a company was born digital, that doesn't mean its support team is automatically delivering a great customer experience.

How enterprise companies approach customer support

With real data from a sample of 170 leading enterprise companies using Zendesk, we applied machine learning to identify distinct approaches to customer experience. We grouped companies based on how they tackle support across their channel mix, CSAT, response speed, use of apps and integrations, and more.

We found that large companies fall along a spectrum of increasing efficiency and sophistication. Companies that were born digital tend to exhibit the most complexity in their use of a support software solution, with more agents, customers, channels, and integrations.

Our analysis identified two primary groups of companies based on how they have configured their customer support operations rather than:

Digital Transformers: Home to most large companies in the early stages of their digital transformations, this group relies almost entirely on standard channels like email and webform. Most Digital Transformers haven't yet begun to dabble in using live digital channels or social media, and if they allow customers to self-serve, these offerings are on a smaller scale than those of companies in other groups. They typically see a lower volume of customer requests and are slower to respond than support teams with a more varied channel mix. And a relatively large share of them, nearly 50 percent, use help desk software to provide support internally.

Digital Natives: These digital-first enterprise companies handle massive ticket volumes and boast the most complex and optimized workflows. They use self-service to deflect incoming tickets and have integrated a host of advanced capabilities, including apps to extend the agent experience, integrations and targets to connect to other systems, customer lists to power personalized support, and macros, triggers, and automations to drive agent efficiency. Digital Natives look for agility and economy in their support solutions and are more inclined to view their support software as a platform that can be built out as needed to keep up with their rapid growth.

In addition to these two main groups, we also identified a third group connecting Digital Transformers to Digital Natives. We'll call these companies **Digital Upstarts**, organizations that fall into an intermediate stage, differing from Digital Transformers due to their increased use of live channels like phone and chat. These companies are in the process of transitioning to a diversified channel mix that is more likely to allow customers to self-serve and to lean on apps and integrations that extend the functionality of their support solution.

Are you a Digital Native?

In this report, we'll focus on best practices for Digital Natives, organizations that are already masters of the digital landscape. If you are a Digital Native, you're in good company, with organizations like [Slack](#) and [Squarespace](#) also belonging to this group.

Here are a few questions to confirm that your organization is a Digital Native.

How many support channels do you offer?

Digital Natives lean on social media and live channels like phone and chat to round out their channel mix and meet customers on the channels that they're already using to communicate with friends and family.

How many tickets do you handle per month?

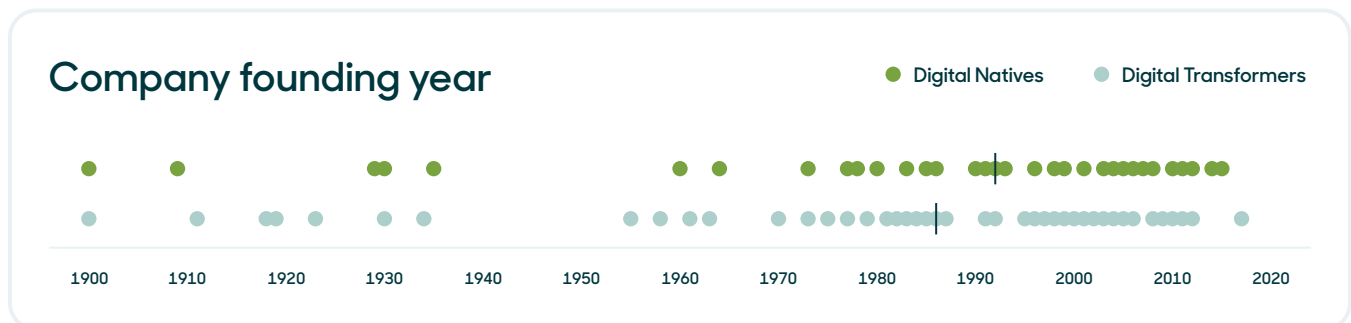
Digital Natives typically field a much higher volume of customer requests than other types of companies, with most handling more than 20,000 tickets per month.

How well-integrated is your support solution?

Digital Natives are more proactive about extending their support software using apps, integrations, and APIs. Most companies in this group lean on Zendesk's API to tame their high ticket volume and use 10+ apps and integrations to add functionality to their support solution.

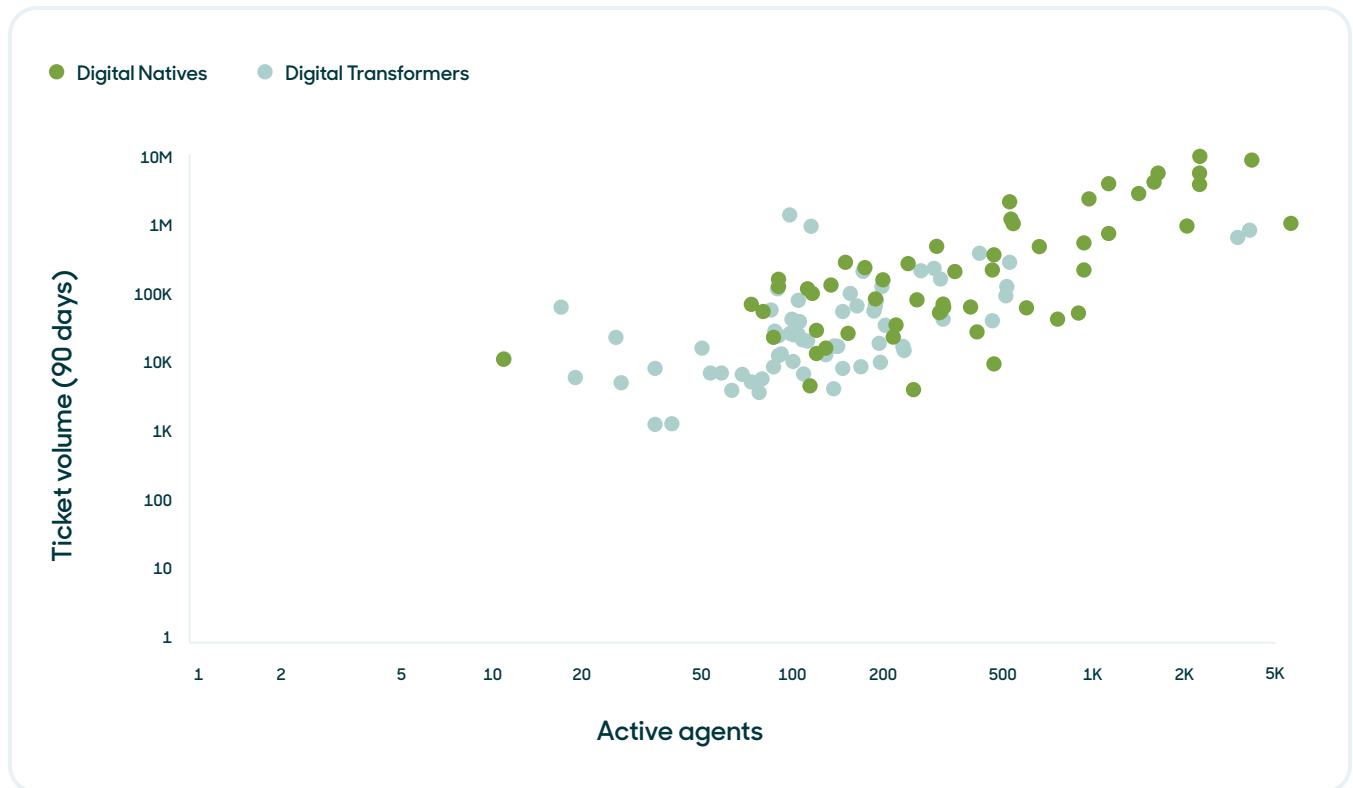
How many years has your company been around?

Digital Natives tend to have been founded more recently than Digital Transformers, but the difference is not as pronounced as you might expect. In fact, plenty of Digital Natives were founded prior to 1990, and founding year isn't the primary factor linked to a company's progress when it comes to adopting digital technology.



Benchmarks for Digital Natives

Looking to benchmark against other large companies that are digital-first? Start here.



We looked more closely at Digital Natives, companies characterized by extremely high ticket volumes, complex workflows, API integrations, apps, targets, extensive self-service offerings, and a diversified mix of channel offerings, including live channels and social media.

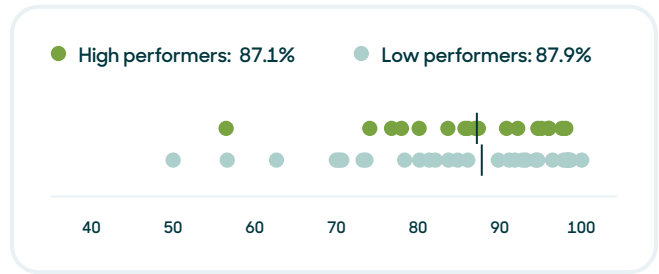
Within that group, we identified leaders by examining performance across five key success metrics for a healthy help desk: CSAT, First Reply Time, Requester Wait Time, Resolution Time, and Ticket Volume.

High Performers are companies that fall above the median for at least four out of five metrics. Roughly one-third of Digital Natives are High Performers, and the rest are Low Performers.

See how your team stacks up against other Digital Natives.

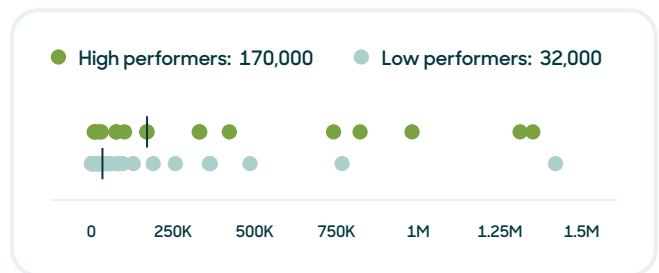
CSAT

CSAT helps your team understand how customers have rated their support experience. Factors contributing to CSAT include reply time, the quality and accuracy of responses, and a customer’s overall perception of your brand. Digital Natives typically see a lower CSAT than companies that are less far along in adopting digital technology because their customers are generally much more demanding when it comes to support. Digital Natives are also more likely to be B2C, meaning they handle a much higher ticket volume than other types of companies.



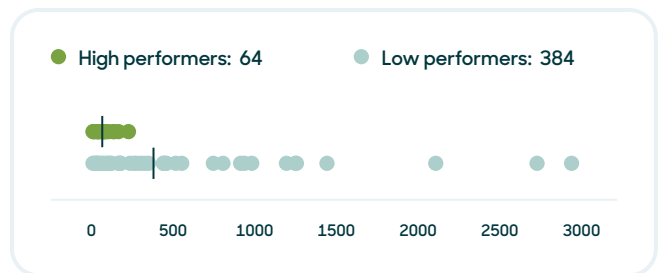
Monthly tickets

Support teams should benchmark against other teams that handle a comparable quantity of tickets. Digital Natives see much higher ticket volumes than other companies.



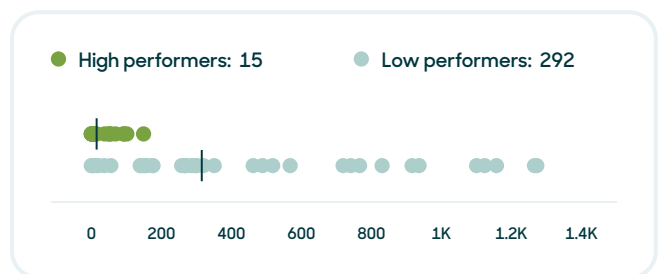
First reply time (minutes)

First Reply Time is the time it takes for a support agent to respond to a request. Our research indicates a lower First Reply Time tends to be linked to higher customer satisfaction.



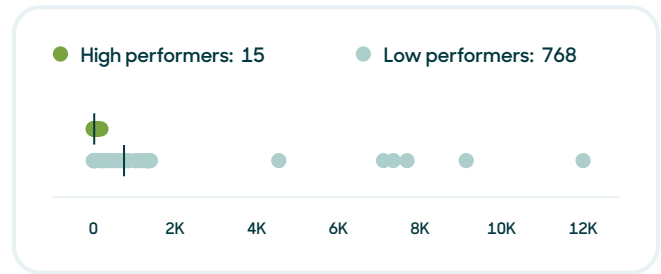
Requester wait time (minutes)

This is the time a customer spends waiting for an agent to respond. Reducing wait time can lead to happier customers.



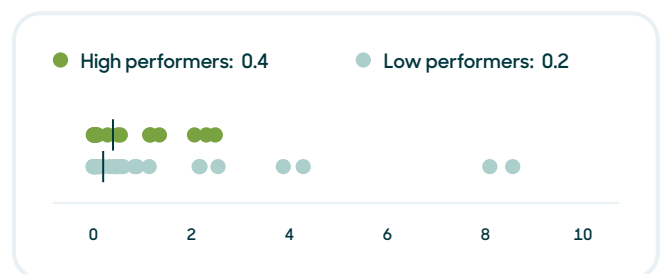
Resolution time (minutes)

The time that it takes for a ticket to be solved, this metric plays a big role in informing how satisfied customers are with any given interaction.



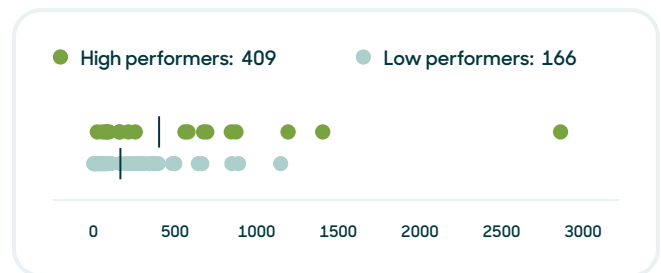
Self-service ratio

This ratio compares self-service content views to a team’s total ticket volume, helping your support team understand how well your knowledge content is deflecting tickets. Companies should aim for a higher Self-Service Ratio.



Monthly ticket-to-agent ratio

This is the monthly ratio of customer requests to agents. Support teams should seek a higher Ticket-to-Agent Ratio as they look to make each agent more productive.



For Digital Natives looking to improve how they serve customers, here's how to move toward the top of the pack.

Make sure your support solution can adapt as your team grows.

- **Use a software solution that is agile enough that you can move quickly.** Digital Natives typically have more diverse and demanding customer bases than other companies and face pressure to contain customer service operating costs as their teams scale. Your support software needs to allow your team to move quickly when adding new communication channels, deploying self-service, personalizing service across new touchpoints, launching in new markets, and adding new brands and products.

Extend and integrate your support solution.

- **Extend your support software by leaning on APIs.** Digital Natives that are High Performers are twice as likely to use APIs to manage tickets. APIs allow your team to add functionality at scale. Quickly update customer records, create tickets, migrate ticket data into your support software, edit users in bulk, and allow agents to search your records to find the information they need. Digital Natives using API integrations see 61 percent lower first reply times and 55 percent lower requester wait times than those that don't.
- **Add and integrate channels for a better customer experience.** Adding live channels is a great way to round out your channel mix, since these channels aren't just growing quickly among companies using Zendesk—they also perform better. Tickets handled through phone and chat support see higher CSAT, fewer re-opens, and faster first resolution times. And companies that take a truly integrated omnichannel approach combining email, webform, phone, chat, and self-service have customers that spend less time waiting for responses, resolve their issues faster, and are less likely to require any follow-ups.

Use automations and advanced features to handle high ticket volumes more efficiently.

- **Tame your ticket volume with automated actions.** High Performers among Digital Natives have more agents and significantly more tickets. Yet they still have more than twice the Ticket-to-Agent Ratio of Low Performers, meaning their agents are more efficient. High Performers use 50 percent more triggers to remind agents of important workflow steps and nearly 70 percent more shared automations to optimize their workflows and alert agents about tickets that need urgent action.
- **Take steps to improve how you collect and organize customer information.** High Performers in our Digital Natives group use more than 40 percent more ticket forms to collect and organize customer data—allowing customers to share information up-front and agents to easily add customer data to a ticket. Relative to Low Performers, they also use nearly twice as many customer lists, letting them learn more about key segments of their customer base via surveys that gauge NPS and customer preferences. The best next step when it comes to this information? Use what you've learned to proactively reach out to customers to address their issues before they become a ticket.
- **Improve efficiency by pushing key data to alert external applications.** High Performers among Digital Natives tend to use twice the webhooks—known as targets at Zendesk—of Low Performers. Webhooks push data to external applications, reducing context switching for agents and allowing your team to do things like send a text message when a ticket has been unresolved for more than 48 hours or add a notification about an urgent ticket to a Twitter stream.

Adding the right apps and integrations for Digital Natives

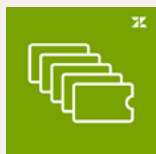
We looked at which apps Digital Natives are using and highlighted the top apps from the most popular categories.

Customer context



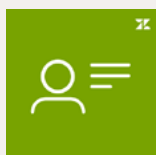
Conditional Fields

Customize fields in tickets to give agents and customers a better experience.



Five Most Recent

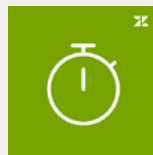
Get more context on past support requests made by a customer.



User Data

Give agents a complete picture of the customer right from the ticket.

Productivity and time tracking



Time Tracking

Get a better understanding of customer requests and the time it takes to solve them.



Pathfinder

Allow agents to see which articles and community posts customers have viewed.



Notification App

Easily broadcast messages to some or all of your agents.

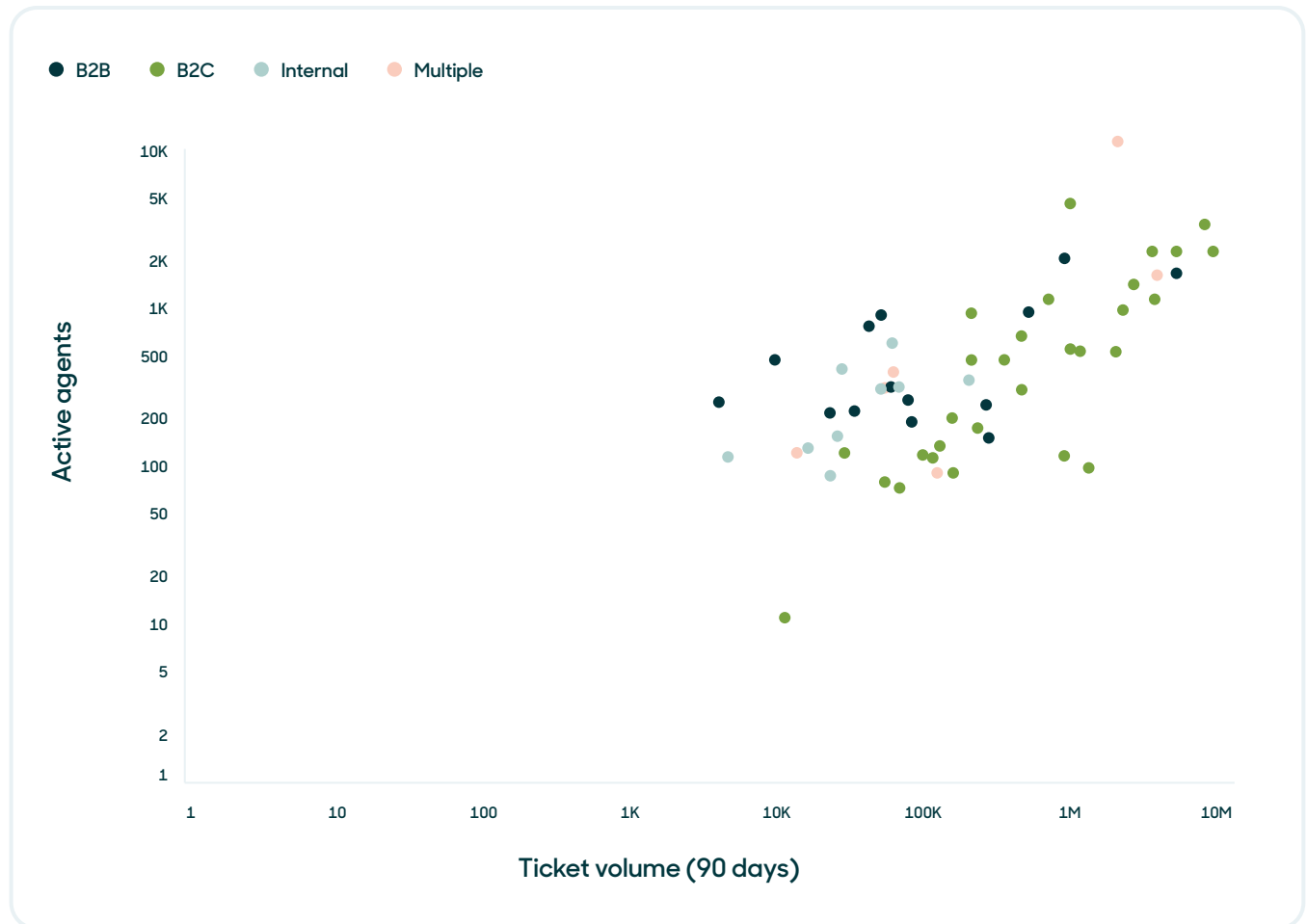
Knowledge and content



Answer Suggestion

Automatically suggest relevant articles, so agents can add them to the ticket.

Want a prescription based on the audience your team serves?



We looked at best practices for Digital Natives across three target audiences: B2C, B2B, and internal help desks.

Target audience	The problem	How to fix it	The benchmark
B2C	For B2C Digital Natives, rapid growth often means handling extremely high ticket volumes and needing to keep up with customer expectations for rapid responses.	Use macros, automations, and self-service to deflect tickets. Lean on proactive support using customer data—including tickets, tags, and satisfaction ratings—to personalize responses.	B2C Digital Natives see a median of 5,000 tickets per day, compared to only 834 tickets per day for B2B and 337 for internal help desks.
B2B	B2B companies face long requester wait times, with agents being slow to respond to customer requests.	Use automations to prevent tickets from falling through cracks. Revisit ticket forms to make sure customer information is provided at the beginning of an interaction.	The median requester wait time for B2B Digital Natives is 380 minutes, roughly two-and-a-half times that of B2C companies and internal help desks.
Internal help desks	Internal help desks often suffer from a lack of self-service content that could deflect tickets and get inquiries resolved faster.	Tools like Knowledge Capture and Content Cues let your team easily add content and fill in gaps in your knowledge base.	Relative to companies that don't, internal help desks that are Digital Natives see an 8x improvement in Self-Service Ratio if they use Knowledge Capture.

Leveling up with new technology and approaches

We chatted with Greg Dreyfus, who has spent more than six years on Zendesk's solutions team helping companies like Groupon think through their platform strategies around customer support.

He shared his top recommendations for Digital Natives looking to improve how they engage with customers.

- 1. Balance support using humans and AI.** Gartner estimates that by 2022, 72 percent of customer interactions will involve an emerging technology like a machine learning app, a chatbot, or mobile messaging. Even as AI becomes more established, human agents will still be needed to answer complex issues and create scripts that can be leveraged using AI. Try out AI with [Answer Bot](#), which uses machine learning to answer customer questions, and the [Chat Conversations API](#), which lets you add bots to your chat experience.
- 2. Build support into every customer touchpoint.** Whether it's your website, mobile app, or another platform, we recommend relying on the web widget and mobile SDKs that allow your developers to plug customer support into any native environment. The result: Your customers can access live chat, self-serve, or submit a ticket whenever they want and on whichever device they're using.
- 3. Add new channel integrations.** Use integrations—two-way ticket-creation services—to bring customer communications from other channels into your support software. Create tickets from ratings and reviews in Yelp, app stores, Amazon, eBay, or comments in communities like Reddit or Quora. You can even dive deeper into social media and messaging by allowing tickets to come in from channels like Facebook Messenger, Instagram, Pinterest, or WhatsApp.
- 4. Add to your platform with APIs.** Digital Natives are more likely to take a best-of-breed approach to software, allowing them to connect their support solution to other systems through pre-existing apps and APIs. APIs can be used to keep information in sync across multiple systems, providing a single source of truth for data like customer records.
- 5. Use shared reporting systems that enhance cross-team collaboration.** Sharing access to metrics, lead scores, conversion rates, and churn rates makes it easier for support to collaborate with other teams and pursue customer success strategies that boost long-term retention. Nearly all Digital Natives rely on analytics to improve how they're offering support.
- 6. Be mindful of protecting customer data.** We recommend using role-based controls to manage access to data based on a team member's department, role, and seniority. Companies should also train employees on procedures related to personally identifiable information and how to handle a suspected hack or malware. And they should rely on controls like encryption at rest and in motion, data loss prevention, and monitoring the use of removable storage devices.

Why innovate?

How leaders see better results

Leading support teams are more likely to have a robust strategy involving a more diverse channel mix and advanced features that allow them to customize their support solution as needed.

High Performers across our sample see improvements from using Zendesk features.

Embedded support across channels for a consistent and connected customer experience

Zendesk feature	What it does	Improvement
<p>Social Media Integrations</p>	<p>Field customer requests from social media, all while managing tickets through Zendesk.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% lower requester wait times • Median Alexa ranking of 15,000, compared to 69,000 for companies without integrated social channels
<p>Unified Web Widget</p>	<p>Bring support directly to customers wherever they are—whether that’s embedded on your website, in your mobile app, or as part of your service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35% faster reply times • 45% faster requester wait times • All while managing 2x higher ticket volume

Intelligent self-service that helps customers help themselves

Zendesk feature	What it does	Improvement
Answer Bot	Use machine learning to recommend articles that address customer issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% reduction in resolution time for tickets
Knowledge Capture	Allow agents to create new content, link to articles in tickets, and flag content for improvements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2x Self-Service Ratio improvement • 4x agents contributing to knowledge content

An agent workflow that is easy to set up, customize, and maintain

Zendesk feature	What it does	Improvement
Guided Mode	Ensure tickets are addressed in the right order by improving how agents work through them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5x improvement in Ticket-to-Agent Ratio
Side Conversations, a feature of the Collaboration Add-on	Let agents share information, request a response, or kick off processes with other teams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% of teams agreed that they were able to simplify communication, so agents resolve tickets faster*
Skills-Based Routing	Get the right ticket to the right agent, so they can efficiently navigate their workflow.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 68% of support teams said skills-based routing enabled them to streamline workflows and boost productivity*

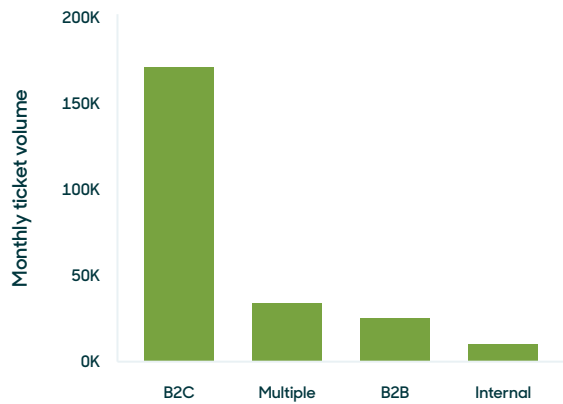
*Refers to results of a 2018 TechValidate survey.

Next steps to compare your support team

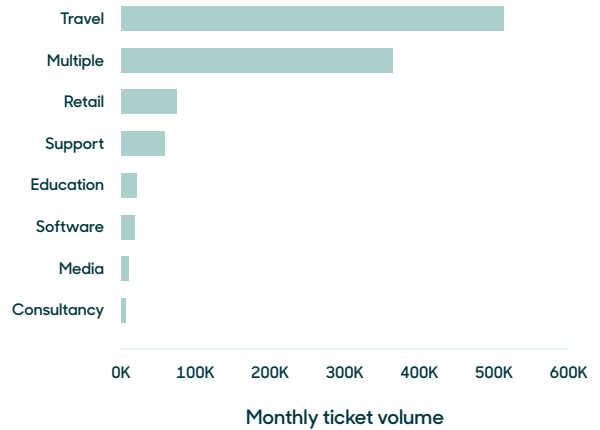
Want to see how you stack up in greater detail? See our benchmark metrics for Digital Natives, broken down by industry and target audience.

Monthly tickets

Monthly tickets by target audience

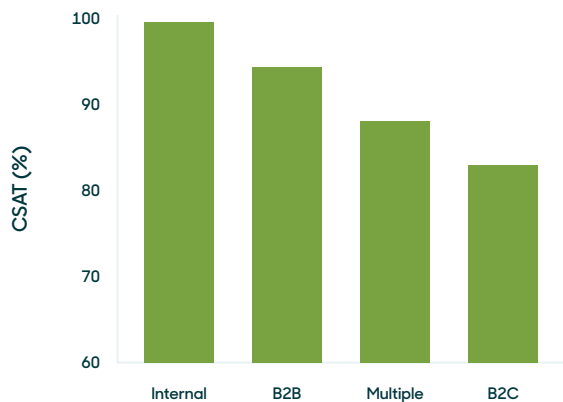


Monthly tickets by industry

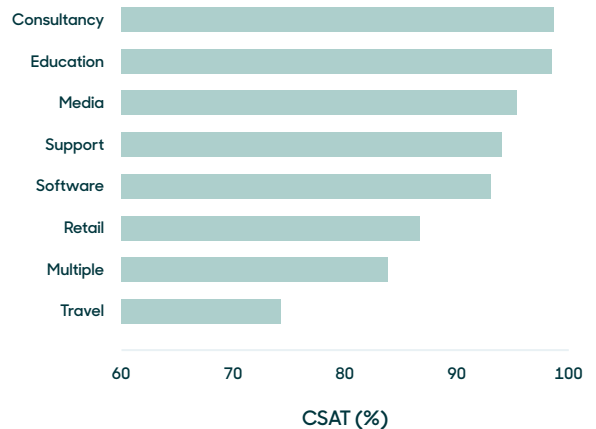


CSAT

CSAT by target audience

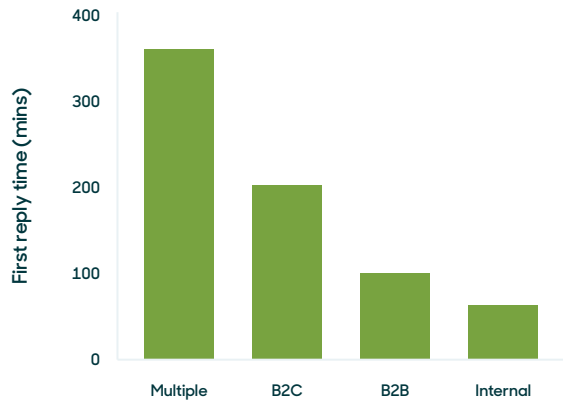


CSAT by industry

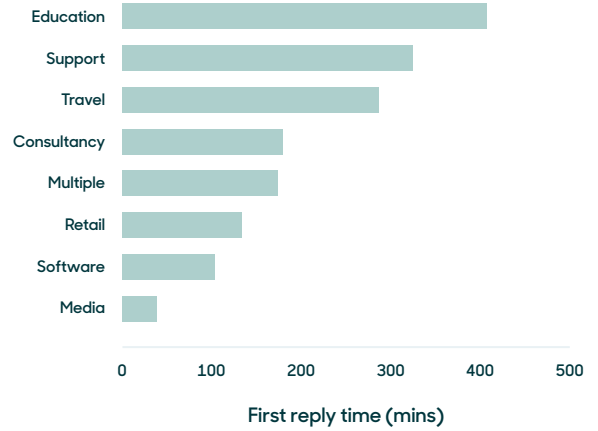


First reply time

First reply time by target audience

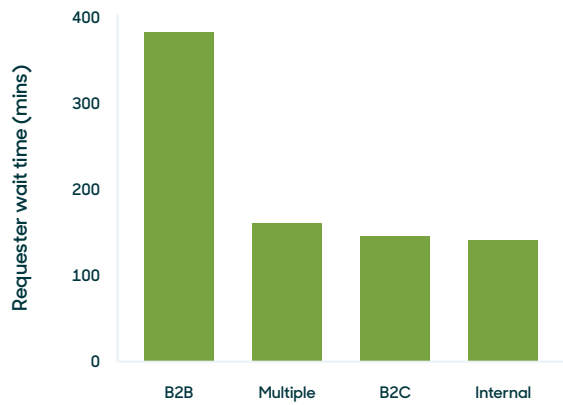


First reply time by industry

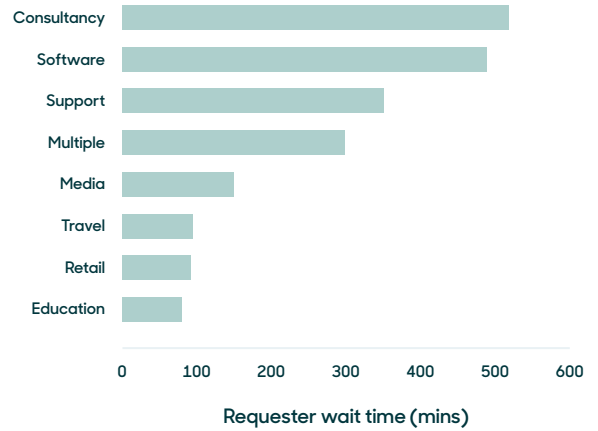


Requester wait time

Requester wait time by target audience



Requester wait time by industry



Methodology

For the purpose of this report, we defined enterprise companies as those with 1,000+ employees and 100+ agents. Looking at a sample of 170 enterprise companies that have opted into the [Zendesk Benchmark](#), we used a dimensionality reduction technique call t-Distributed Stochastic Neighbor Embedding (t-SNE). t-SNE ensured that accounts that were close to each other in the original multi-dimensional space of our dataset remained neighbors when projected into two dimensions. Visual inspection of the resulting data showed nine well-defined clusters. We used Density-Based Spatial Clustering of Applications with Noise (DBSCAN) to formalize the cluster boundaries and tag our data. Each cluster was then analyzed for its defining traits.

Zendesk for Enterprise

[Learn more about how Zendesk can be customized for large companies.](#)

