

Whitepaper

PROACTIVE CHAT

Five commonly asked questions.

Highlights

- Thousands of customers, worldwide
- Reliable 99.99% uptime
- The industry's best value
- Fully deploys in days
- 24/7 support
- Proven installs across vertical markets

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Introduction

Without a doubt, the most talked about and controversial topic surrounding live chat software is the practice of proactively inviting visitors to engage in a live chat interaction. This short whitepaper taps into BoldChat's extensive research findings and professional services experiences in order to answer the five most frequently asked questions about proactive chat.

Question 1: Exactly what is Proactive Chat?

There exists no standardized definition but what follows is the most formal one we use.

Proactive Chat - (prō-ak'tiv chat): The issuance of images, text input fields, and/or other interactive mechanisms to website visitors either through manual means or via the use of an automated rules engine with the intent of inviting the recipient into a one-on-one chat engagement.

So then, proactive chat invitations can be triggered either manually or automatically, and the form of the invitation itself can vary widely. Depending on the business, companies may choose one type over another to suit their needs.



Image invitations offer limitless customization possibilities.

 A pre-chat form invitation window. The title bar says "BOLDCHAT" with a close button (X). The main text asks "Do you have a question about proactive chat?". Below this is a text input field labeled "Name:". At the bottom right, there are two buttons: "Yes" and "No".

Pre-chat form invitations allow information capture before the conversation begins.

 A chat-form type invitation window. The title bar says "THE SOURCE" with a close button (X). The main text says "[Chris] Hi, I am a live agent. Is there anything that I can be of assistance with?". Below this is a text input field and a "Send" button.

Chat-form type invitations provide the fastest path to engagement.

Question 2: Don't Proactive Chat Invitations annoy website visitors and drive them away?

The short answer to this question is that a poorly done proactive chat implementation runs the risk of annoying website visitors while an expertly deployed proactive effort will drive more sales and increase customer satisfaction.

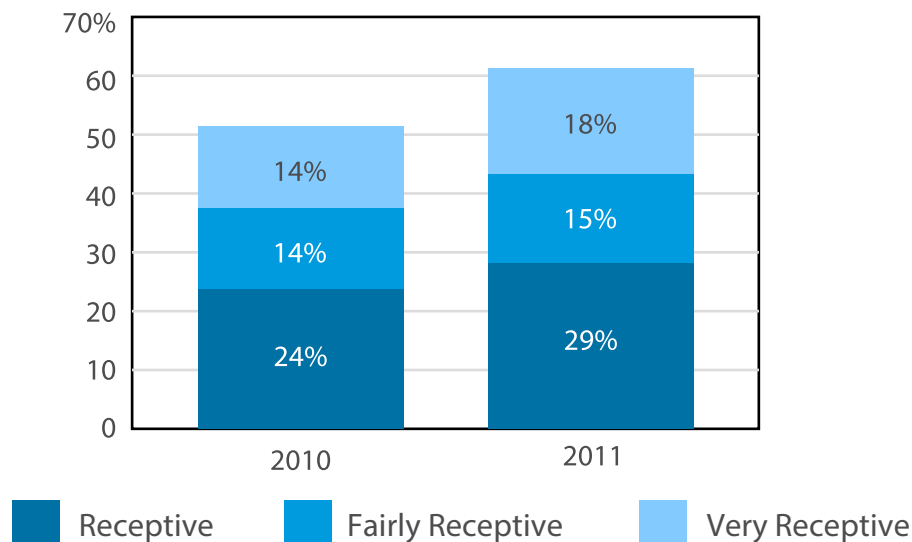
The long answer simply provides the data in support of these statements, but before diving into that, let's consider a brick and mortar analogy. Does being approached by salespeople in a store annoy shoppers and drive them away? The answer is basically the same – it depends on the strategy employed by the retailer. Knowledgeable, friendly, and timely interruptions to offer help are welcomed, while aggressive, uninformed, and inconvenient intrusions are a recipe for certain disaster.

In a recent survey¹ conducted with over 1,000 regular internet shoppers, participants were asked to indicate

their reaction to being proactively invited to chat. The majority of respondents - 62% - were receptive. (See figure below) Some sub-groups were even more welcoming: 67% of those who'd had experience with live chat were receptive and 72% that it was their preferred method of communication.

Another interpretation of these findings is the reasoning that if 62% of the population is welcoming to being proactively invited, then 38% must be annoyed by it. Indeed, simple arithmetic certainly supports this theory, but additional information sheds more light upon it. When asked why survey takers had left websites after being proactively invited, not an insignificant number of survey takers stated they left because of poor invitation practices. Before deployment of a proactive invitation solution, firms should ensure they've chosen a technology which gives them enough control to alter some key components of proactive chat, such as timing and style of invitation.

**Proactive Chat Receptiveness
Among Regular Internet Shoppers**



¹ *The Effectiveness of Live Chat Technology*, 2011, LogMeIn, Inc.

Question 3: If we add Proactive Chat to our website, what impact is it likely to have on chat volume and conversions?

There are three ways to answer this question and all of them have merit. The first way relies on an analytic analysis of BoldChat's entire customer base. This effort – reported in the Live Chat Performance Benchmarking Report – produced averages and confidence interval ranges for a wide variety of chat statistics. With regard to proactive chat here are some of the most salient findings:

- The average website should expect 6% of invitations to be accepted, though the range is anywhere from 1% to 22%.
- Repeat visitors are, on average, 10% more likely to accept proactive invitations.
- On average, visitors that engage through proactive chat are 6.3 times more likely to purchase than visitors who don't chat.
- Proactive chat, when implemented on top of a reactive chat implementation, will increase chat volume by between 40% and 100%.

The second way to answer the question is by way of anecdotal example. Allergy Buyer's Club is an online retailer of healthy home and allergy relief products such as air purifiers, specialty vacuums, and dehumidifiers. A longtime believer in live chat, the company has spent several years measuring and tweaking their deployment in order to turn it into a major sales channel. The effort has resulted in an implementation that by and large exceeds the aforementioned benchmarks. During one month in the beginning of their 2009 busy holiday season, the following results were reported:

- Live chat, mostly proactive chat, increased total website conversions by ~8% for Allergy Buyer's Club.

- The company's use of rules-based proactive chat increased their overall chat volume approximately five-fold.
- During this same time, repeat visitors were ~70% more likely to accept invitations from Allergy Buyer's Club agents.

This is just one of hundreds of examples of proactive chat success.

The final way for this question to be answered is for individual businesses to use BoldChat's live chat volume and ROI calculator. The underpinnings of the Live Chat Performance Benchmarking Report drive the calculations and users can directly interact with a variety of assumptions. The calculator predicts the quantity of chat volume (for both reactive and proactive deployments) a website is likely to experience, the number of full time chat operators required to handle the volume, and the return on investment a firm will recognize based on their expense in live chat software license costs.

Chat Volume & ROI calculator

Monthly Website Traffic:

Website Conversion Rate:

Average Value of Conversion:

calculate

The calculator may be accessed from [BoldChat.com](https://boldchat.com)

Question 4: Will proactive chat invitations be blocked by third party security software or by precautionary measures built into today's modern browsers?

If you are using BoldChat's proactive invitation capability then the answer to this question is that no, triggered invitations will not be blocked. BoldChat chat invitations are simply layers of 100% HTML which pop-up blockers do not even see. Third party security products and security protocols inside browsers are focused on stopping programmatic elements which are not included in an HTML layer.

Question 5: How long does it take to implement proactive chat?

The only accurate answer is that "it depends." If you are starting from scratch and don't currently have live chat on your website then best practices generally dictate that you implement reactive chat first, and baseline results of that implementation for one to two weeks at least.

Speaking specifically about proactive chat, depending on the number of rules you want to use, the complexity of the rules themselves, the number of invitations, and the level of customization associated with each, a solid implementation will take between 1 and 4 weeks to fully complete.

For companies that want to manage live chat like its own stand alone sales channel, their work is never done. Things change and constant vigilance around proactive messaging, timing, and countless other metrics (including integrated conversion tracking) will always be required. Through reporting features and best practices, companies who want to maximize their live chat deployments are always working at it.

BOLDCHAT

BoldChat is a market-leading live chat solution enabling businesses to quickly and effectively engage visitors on their websites. BoldChat is offered in different editions and includes other integrated communications technologies like click-to-call, email management, SMS management, and co-browsing. Organizations of all sizes – from small proprietorships to large ecommerce enterprises – can drive more conversions and higher customer satisfaction by using BoldChat.

For more information:

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Chat with us, start a trial or download more resources like this one at: www.BoldChat.com

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