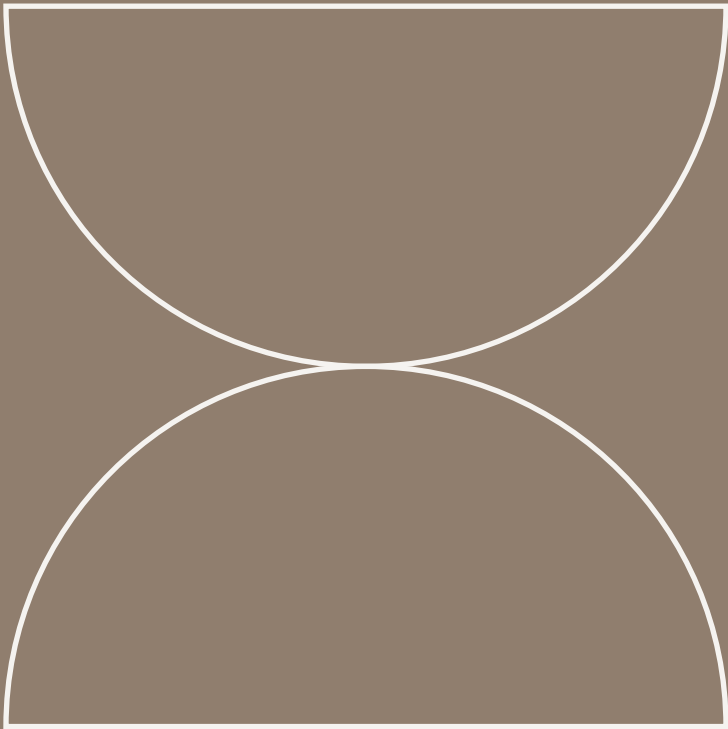


# Building virtual connections in the COVID era : A business survival guide



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# What's in this whitepaper

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## **Engaging communities & building deeper connections in a rapidly changing world**

"How are you doing?" has taken on a whole new meaning since COVID-19 shattered our sense of normalcy. Every Zoom call starts with a heartfelt check-in, and we've gotten used to signing off our emails with "Stay well," "Stay healthy," and "Stay safe."

In this same period, businesses have gone under, industries have evolved, and the way we view our world and each other has shifted. Sometimes it feels like we've pushed fast-forward towards an inevitable digital future.

It's all playing out in a society gone largely virtual: We're watching reporters broadcast breaking news from their homes, tuning into live-streamed town halls and panels, and sending words of comfort and leadership to employees through Zoom.



**We're in this together**

We ask ourselves: When are things going to get back to normal? And the hard truth is, they won't. In the face of so much societal and cultural upheaval, the question becomes: How do we adapt to thrive in the short and longterm?

While we don't have a crystal ball, we can see a story unfold in the data. This story has real implications for businesses across industries looking to ride the wave of uncertainty without wiping out. And it all revolves around digital interactions.

**We'll tell you a secret: Virtual communication is  
at the heart of this story.**

In this whitepaper, we explore trends and projections from internal Sendbird data\* and look at the specific digital technology that organizations across industries should be considering right now. Our hope is to help you prepare to remain relevant in a profoundly changed and continuously in-flux world.

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\* Unless otherwise noted, Sendbird internal data is based on mean differences in customer data between Q4 2019 and Q1 2020.

# What do we do after “winter has come?”

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2020 has been like watching “Game of Thrones.” Our pre-pandemic selves started the year full of anticipation, ready to follow Ned Stark to the end of the earth — only to have our entire world turned upside down with his beheading. Now deep into a COVID reality, winter has come and we’ve realized that there is zero way to predict what’s coming next.

Our world is in a weird place right now. We’re caught in the middle of a massive social and business paradigm shift. Off-screen, we’ve hit an ire as a society — and the devastating virus still rages. The desire to huddle up with a blanket and wait until it’s all over is strong, but if you own a business, run a community, or work in an essential capacity, you can’t wait around. We have to extrapolate meaning from data, anecdotes, and observations, and pivot our approaches to respond before it’s too late.

**It hasn’t all been bad, though. This whiplash state of existence has highlighted the resilience of the human spirit and our ability to stay connected during seemingly apocalyptic times.**

TV show hosts interview guests remotely. National sports leaders livestream their activism for racial justice. Families host digital board game nights and churches hold virtual prayer sessions. Parents rally their communities on social media to participate in birthday and graduation parades. Performance artists weave together heartfelt TikTok compilations

to uplift spirits. Every day, we hear new stories that mark the grit and adaptability of our society, and of our evolving technology.

**There's a lot we still don't know. But right now, two clear patterns are emerging:**

- People are seeking connection, community and normalcy through virtual interactions and activities
- Businesses are swiftly adjusting internal and customer communications to keep up

Livestreamed community forums, virtual fundraisers, meetings that resemble the opening credits of the “Brady Bunch,” Houseparty, video dates, workout classes, delivery packages and meals piled up on front doorsteps — these are the pieces of our new daily reality.

**Consumers are seeking intuitive virtual alternatives to connect with the people, services, and businesses they rely on the most. In response, businesses will need to nimbly pivot to find success, to cope, and to forge ahead in this new COVID world.**

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“Everyone in the world right now needs human connection more than ever, with your colleagues, your family members, your friends who you physically cannot meet ... we can bring richness to enabling these human connections.”



**John S. Kim**  
CEO at Sendbird

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Here are our thoughts on how to remain relevant and prepare for business in this new reality.

# A lesson in business upheaval & change

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Since the pandemic started, the US job and stock markets have crashed and magically rebounded — and other small businesses have taken a hit from curfews and riots. Right now, many investors expect at least a year of recovery time, if not more.<sup>1</sup>

This volatility has many businesses asking: How quickly do we have to adapt to keep our heads above water and get ahead?

(The short answer? Pretty fast.)

## Industries are transforming right in front of us

Virtual classrooms, virtual clinics, live-streamed fitness classes and therapy sessions over Zoom are now the norm. Giants like Zoom, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meet have grown by millions of users since the beginning of March.<sup>2</sup>

To understand how radically industries have changed, you just have to look at the healthcare sector.

Many non-emergent practices had to temporarily shut their doors. Those who could stay open experienced a drop in patients coming into the

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<sup>1</sup> [The V.C. & Founder COVID-19 Sentiment Survey](#), NFX, April 2020

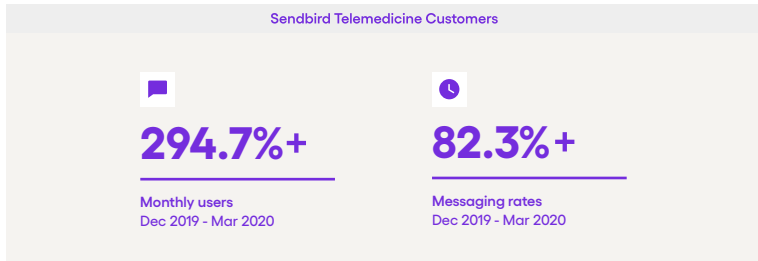
<sup>2</sup> [The Virus Changed the Way We Internet](#), Koeze, Popper, New York Times, April 2020



office because people were afraid to contract the virus. That didn't mean patients didn't need care, just that safe solutions weren't readily available.

As a result, the practice of telemedicine among PCPs, specialists and patients is growing exponentially: Telemedicine visits nationwide surged by 50% in March 2020 alone and the number of Medicare patients using telemedicine increased from 11,000 to 650,000 per week by the end of April.<sup>3</sup>

Sendbird's telemedicine customers have benefited from this shift dramatically: across our customers in this sector, the number of average monthly users shot up by 294.7% from December 2019 to March 31, 2020. Messaging rates increased by 82.3% for our telemedicine customers in the same period.



Sendbird has also seen healthcare organizations quickly pivot to bring their services online and meet the growing demand for telehealth. “We’re working with healthcare customers to meet their needs for doctor-to-

<sup>3</sup> [How coronavirus accelerated the rise of telemedicine](#), Zhang, CNBC, May 2020

patient communication, whether it be chat or voice or video — or all three,” shares Sendbird CEO John S. Kim. With one Sendbird customer seeing a sixfold jump in the number of people using in-app live chat to book doctor appointments, moving swiftly to integrate this type of technology can pay off.

It’s no surprise, then, that the telemedicine market is expected to hit an explosive 80% year-over-year growth by the end of 2020.<sup>4</sup>

**TAKEAWAY:**

Telehealth and other organizations must take quick cues from their customers: Consider onboarding new virtual communication methods and improving processes to better serve your communities now and in the future.

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<sup>4</sup> [U.S. Telehealth Market – Industry Outlook and Forecast 2020-2025](#), Arizton, April 2020

## Companies are prioritizing communication

Communication and message volume has shot up exponentially alongside virtual meetings and video calls.



**269.52%+**

Software & services  
Dec 2019 - Mar 2020

Among our **software and services customers**, we saw the number of average messages jump by 269.52% from December 2019 to the end of March 2020.

The education sector has seen especially rapid changes. Learning institutions had to figure out how to teach students remotely, while simultaneously navigating virtual communication with students, parents and faculty/administration between lessons — in a matter of weeks.



**3112%+**

Online learning  
Dec. 2019 - March 31, 2020

As a result, our customers in **online learning** experienced a massive 3112% increase (yes, you read that right) in message volume by the end of March 2020 as digital usage skyrocketed.

One Sendbird customer in e-learning saw a fourfold increase in users chatting on our platform between March and June 2020. Another Sendbird ed-tech customer saw rapid growth after furiously working to

roll out their online learning app to schools in record time. Online learning classrooms made quick use of the in-app live group chat feature during class sessions, with millions of messages sent weekly at the peak of the lockdown. And the shift online doesn't seem to be going away anytime soon, especially for higher ed.<sup>5</sup>

**TAKEAWAY:**

Streamlining communication is critical for organizations that have quickly moved online. Quick fixes may work in the short term, but incorporating fully integrated communication solutions like in-app live chat and audio calls are essential for keeping stakeholders engaged in the long term.

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<sup>5</sup> [How will higher education have changed after COVID-19](#), Dennis, University World News, March 2020

## Consumers are forming new habits

Consumer brick-and-mortar businesses also had to learn how to service customers without face-to-face interactions. Grocers, restaurants, and other consumer goods businesses were quick to add curbside pickup or delivery options, and people were quick to embrace them.

**The total monthly volume of online grocery orders has jumped by 193%,<sup>6</sup> and 32% of Americans have ordered food via a food delivery app, like DoorDash, Grubhub or Uber Eats as of mid-April,<sup>7</sup> from 22% in March 2019.<sup>8</sup>**

While these delivery services were already options in “before times,” the convenience and necessity caused them to become many people’s first move towards a more virtual existence.

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**“People who had never ordered food delivery before, have now, — and they’ve probably ordered it a few times. Now it’s become their habit, and forming those habits will have a lasting impact,” predicts CEO John S. Kim.”**



**John S. Kim**  
CEO at Sendbird

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<sup>6</sup> [How the coronavirus crisis is changing grocery shopping](#), Redman, Supermarket News, April 2020

<sup>7</sup> [From virtual parties to ordering food, how Americans are using the internet during COVID-19](#), Vogels, Pew Research Center, April 2020

<sup>8</sup> [Which Company is Winning the Food Delivery War?](#), Rieck, Second Measure, April 2020

On-demand delivery services that were able to respond quickly reaped big rewards. One Sendbird food delivery customer doubled the amount of users sending messages between March and June 2020.

A seamless experience is key here. Our on-demand customers that have streamlined communication between delivery person, service provider, and consumer have seen up to a 75% reduction in booking cancellation rates.

### **Adapting at bullet speed**

The organizations and industries that were quick to make changes are seeing results. But this volatility isn't going away anytime soon. **Periods of social distancing are expected to continue incrementally through 2022, according to Harvard disease experts.**<sup>9</sup>

**TAKEAWAY:**

Businesses that want to stick around will need to stay lean and agile. Continual adaptation to rapid shifts in regulation and public behavior will be key to stay afloat.

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<sup>9</sup> Projecting the transmission dynamics of SARS-CoV-2 through the postpandemic period, Kissler, Tedijanto, Goldstein, Grad, Lipsitch, Department of Immunology and Infectious Diseases, Department of Epidemiology, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Boston, MA, USA, April 2020

# Engaging customers in our strange new world

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2020 definitely feels like an alternate dystopia. It's easy to wake up and feel like you've stepped into an episode of "Black Mirror."

Keeping your customers engaged and active while staying profitable and building loyalty is a big ask in normal times, let alone during a pandemic and cultural revolution.

## What do consumers want right now?

Take a second to analyze your own experience over the last several months.

If you're anything like the collective hive mind, you've experienced a series of highs and lows. Fear, loneliness, maybe even anger. You've teetered between highly productive and highly futile — and somewhere along the line, you probably decided sweatpants should always be acceptable work attire.

Maybe you went from watching "Tiger King" and laughing at internet memes to engaging with national dialogues on racism and blacking out your Instagram. Then, on the same day, you swore off the news, only to tune back in a few minutes later.

We've all looked for ways to overcome these feelings during dark times.

Consumers' interactions and behaviors are telling us two things very clearly: They need connection, and they want entertainment.

## The party has moved online

As recently as 2019, the concept of a livestreamed event or virtual happy



As of April 2020, 32% of Americans have participated in a virtual party or social gathering.



20% of people have watched a live-streamed play or concert.<sup>10</sup>



76% have used a messaging service or email to stay connected.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> From virtual parties to ordering food, how Americans are using the internet during COVID-19, Vogels, Pew Research Center, April 2020

<sup>11</sup> Americans turn to technology during COVID-19 outbreak, say an outage would be a problem, Anderson, Vogels, Pew Research Center, March 2020





hour was practically unheard of. Now, they're both part of your average Friday night.

The infographic consists of two rows. Each row features a white square icon on the left containing a black silhouette of two people and a number. To the right of each icon is a text block. The first row shows '22,000' and text about a virtual Black Lives Matter protest. The second row shows '300,000' and text about a virtual town hall.

 <b>22,000</b>	Engagement in virtual social activism has surged, too: 22,000 people joined a virtual Black Lives Matter protest in June in London. <sup>12</sup>
 <b>300,000</b>	Over 300,000 people participated in a June virtual town hall on policing and racism hosted by the Obama Foundation. <sup>13</sup>

Sendbird customers in the social and communities sector have seen a 31.5% increase in messages from December 2019 to the end of March 2020. And among our online gaming customers, the number of monthly average users chatting has increased by 233.6% in the same period.

The infographic is titled 'Sendbird Customers' in purple. It features two columns. The left column has a purple icon of three people, a large purple percentage '31.5%+', a horizontal line, and the text 'Social & communities Dec 2019 - Mar 2020'. The right column has a purple icon of a game controller, a large purple percentage '233.6%+', a horizontal line, and the text 'Online gaming Dec 2019 - Mar 2020'.

<b>Sendbird Customers</b>	
 <b>31.5%+</b>	 <b>233.6%+</b>
Social & communities Dec 2019 - Mar 2020	Online gaming Dec 2019 - Mar 2020

<sup>12</sup> [Black Lives Matter Virtual Protest: 22,000 People Join Online, Manchi, Londonist, June 2020](#)

<sup>13</sup> [A Conversation with President Obama: Reimagining Policing in the Wake of Continued Police Violence, YouTube, June 2020](#)

People are chatting more and playing more, all online.

We've seen unprecedented levels of online engagement with the Black Lives Matter movement alongside the in-person protests, with groups rallying fans on social media to donate to the cause. In just five days from June 1-6, the fan group of K-pop band BTS, One in an Army, raised over \$1.3 million in donations for Black Lives Matter all over a Twitter thread and hashtag.<sup>14</sup>

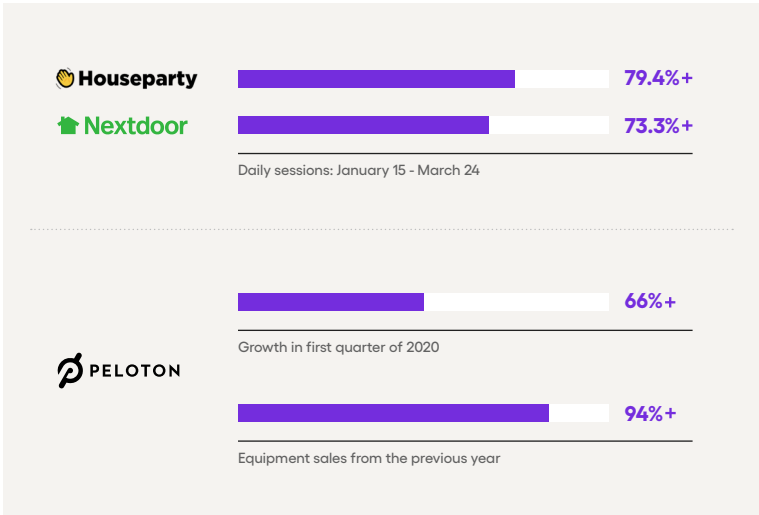
And we can't overlook the widespread adoption of once relatively stagnant apps, like Houseparty and Nextdoor, which saw a 79.4% and 73.3% increase in daily sessions, respectively, from January 15 through March 24.<sup>15</sup> Or, the explosive growth of the at-home fitness industry: in-house exercise company Peloton saw 66% growth in the first quarter of 2020, and a 94% increase in equipment sales from the previous year.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> [BTS Fans Say They've Raised \\$1 Million for Black Lives Matter Groups](#), Zaveri, New York Times, June 2020

<sup>15</sup> [The Virus Changed the Way We Internet](#), Koeze, Popper, New York Times, April 2020

<sup>16</sup> [Peloton reports 66% increase in sales as coronavirus keeps consumers working out at home](#), Hanbury, Business Insider, May 2020



People are communicating more virtually and seeking out mediums that provide entertainment. But keep in mind that, in an economic environment where consumers may not have the discretionary income they once had, they're primarily spending money on essentials.

**TAKEAWAY:**

To encourage people to spend money or time on your app, game, business, or service, engaging with their need for socialization, connectedness, and entertainment is key.

# Rebuilding rich human connection, digitally

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“Don't worry about a thing ... 'Cause every little thing gonna be alright.”

Bob Marley, *Exodus*, 1977

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Troves of scientific research show that we need social connections to survive. As UCLA psychology professor Matthew Liberman said: “We are profoundly shaped by our social environment and ... we suffer greatly when our social bonds are threatened or severed.”<sup>17</sup>

COVID-19 definitively disrupted and continues to threaten our in-person communication, and social isolation is terrible for overall health and well-being — it's a significant risk factor for mortality.<sup>18</sup>

In this period of social distancing, more users are turning to social media to feel connected. But it isn't the be-all, end-all to solving the world's loneliness.

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<sup>17</sup> [Why We Are Wired to Connect](#), Cook, *Scientific American*, October 2013

<sup>18</sup> [Social relationships and health](#), House, Landis, Umberson, *Science Magazine*, July 1988

## Social media isn't enough

It's easy to assume that social media is the answer to social isolation. But despite its popularity, most people don't use social media as a true communication tool. Clinical psychologist, Lara Otte, Psy.D. explains, "Traditional social media — such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter — may technically connect us to others, but frequently these are performative interactions rather than meaningful, human conversations: 'I like your post' vs. 'I understand something about you and want you to understand me, too.'"<sup>19</sup>

Liking posts, curating content, lurking, and aimlessly scrolling feeds might make people feel like their social needs have been met, but when you dig deeper, there's a lack of interpersonal connection. People are left without the support and connectedness they need to thrive.

### TAKEAWAY:

Meeting people's need for social connection means diving deeper and understanding how to cultivate meaningful interactions within your organization to feel connected beyond social media platforms.

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<sup>19</sup> [Making Real Connections in the Age of Social Media](#), Otte, Psy.D. Psychology Today, December 2019.

## What we're missing most

When we aren't face-to-face with another person, a few key things are missing:

- Nonverbal cues
- Subtle auditory communication cues
- Touch

These are pivotal to making us feel more connected — they're what “people readily do during in-person communication such as smiling, touching, or changing the tone of one's voice to express emotion. [They] are important contributors to how we connect with others. Seeing someone's smiling face can increase feelings of acceptance, feeling someone's touch can enhance cooperation with them, and hearing someone's voice humanizes them during conflict.”<sup>20</sup>

Historically, digital interactions have taken away visual, auditory, and physical cues, denying people the real-time connection and support they're looking for from companies and communities.

**Intuitive technologies that recover the essential components of connection are critical in this moment.**

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<sup>20</sup> [Increasing Social Connection While “Social Distancing,”](#) Lieberman, Schroeder, Behavioral Scientist, March 2020.

# **Intuitive technologies to bridge the communication gap**

Based on what we know about human connection and insights from our clients, there are three main technologies worth considering: video calls, audio calls, and live chat.

## **1. Building video calls into user interactions**

Video is the most straightforward way to translate the real world into the digital one. With video, we can pick up on essential nonverbal and auditory cues, build deeper and more meaningful connections, and participate in virtual versions of normal events. Consumer companies today can offer video calling to enhance the user experience directly within their apps.

Popular dating app Hinge already had Sendbird's API in-app chat and a video loop feature. But we recently helped them roll out video and audio calls into their app using our Video API and Voice API — allowing users to deepen their online connections and participate in “virtual dates.” Hinge's CTO shared:

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“We needed to quickly find new digital ways for our users to build meaningful connections and Sendbird’s video calling API promises to do just that. With millions of daters looking for connection, we needed a partner that we could trust with our scale.”



**Ben Celebivic**  
Hinge CTO

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Hinge now says that “70 percent of members are ‘down for a digital date.’” Plenty of Fish, Tinder, and other dating apps are also encouraging users to date virtually to help stop the spread of the virus — and now, those looking for love have flooded the internet with stories about their virtual meet-cutes.

**TAKEAWAY:**

Videos are the best stand-in for real-life interaction. Incorporating video communication into your business, customer interactions, and communities is a necessary step toward keeping consumers engaged with your brand throughout the pandemic and beyond.



## 2. Audio calls are more relevant than ever

Calls might seem analog compared to video, but auditory communication is fundamental to feeling connected. Hearing someone’s voice and deciphering subtle pitch changes is critical to meeting our social needs.<sup>21</sup>

We’re seeing a renewed interest around audio, as shown by the new audio-only app Clubhouse that has gained traction among beta users in early 2020. It’s like “a mashup of listening to a podcast while scrolling through your Twitter feed and attending a conference remotely”<sup>22</sup> where users can listen to talks going on in different virtual rooms. If Clubhouse’s growing endorsements are any indication, audio may be in the midst of a comeback.

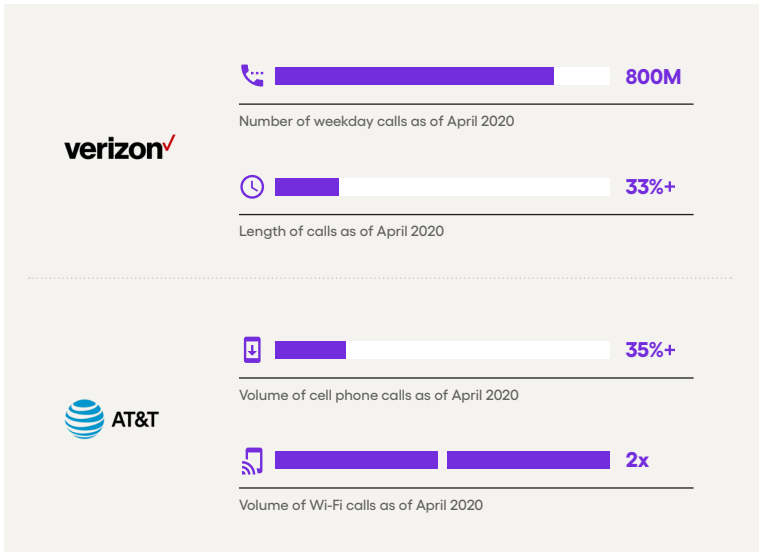
Phone usage has actually shot up more than internet usage since the pandemic started. As of April 2020, Verizon was handling around 800 million calls each weekday — double the number of calls on a typical Mother’s Day (one of the busiest calling days of the year). The length of calls was also up by 33%. AT&T reported similar surges: Cell phone calls have jumped by 35%, and Wi-Fi calls have doubled.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> [Increasing Social Connection While “Social Distancing,”](#) March 2020

<sup>22</sup> [Silicon Valley is going crazy for Clubhouse, a social media app with 1,500 users that’s already worth \\$100 million,](#) Levy, Rodriguez, CNBC, May 2020

<sup>23</sup> [The Humble Phone Call Has Made a Comeback,](#) Kang, The New York Times, April 2020



Audio calls are especially important for senior citizens who aren't as technologically savvy or for homes without access to high-speed internet. For those who are solely able to connect with your company through mobile, simple audio calling capabilities are key.

Audio conversations help consumer businesses reduce transaction time and provide an easier customer experience. Building audio calls into a company's existing platform makes it easy for customers to reach a direct contact with the press of a button. Parties can quickly establish a personal connection to get small tasks done quickly. From connecting medical providers directly to their patients to enabling marketplace buyers and

sellers to speak in real time, audio calling streamlines communication across numerous sectors.

**TAKEAWAY:**

Audio conversations cut down on miscommunication across the board, and — especially important for consumer businesses — help reduce transaction time. Building audio calling capabilities into your system should be a part of your strategy to serve employees and customers better.

### **3. A new era for live chat**

You know that little rush you get when your smartphone dings with a new chat or text notification? Our bodies release a small amount of dopamine every time.<sup>24</sup> Beyond the psychological thrill, live chat is a terrific way to keep lines of communication open.

Chat takes less energy than video or audio calls, making it the perfect way to stay connected despite Zoom fatigue. With advanced moderation capabilities now emerging, users and communities have more control than ever to block people and moderate content to curb hate speech and keep virtual spaces safe for everyone.

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<sup>24</sup> [Smartphone Detox: How To Power Down In A Wired World](#), Doucleff, Aubrey, NPR, February 2018

Plus, chat conversations can be ongoing. Responses might be immediate, or they could come minutes or hours later. This asynchronicity is ideal for users communicating across time zones: an employee in the US can send a message to a teammate in China and get a response once the other party wakes up the next day. As our CEO John S. Kim explains,

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**“being able to work in a more asynchronous manner across distributed work environments is going to be an absolutely crucial skill set for a lot of companies in a post-pandemic world.”**



**John S. Kim**  
CEO at Sendbird

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Chat may not provide the visual and auditory cues that we mentioned before, but chat features have come a long way towards bridging that gap. Emojis and GIFs insert sentiment into what would otherwise be stagnant text, expressing hard-to-define emotions like sarcasm, genuine excitement, and vulnerability.

Real-time chat can go beyond one-to-one communication, too. Reddit used Sendbird's chat API to roll out a chat function to its users, with both one-to-one and large group chat capabilities. While Reddit already had a direct message option, users previously had to leave the platform to communicate with each other in real time.

Commenting on incorporating live chat on the platform, Reddit's Senior Engineering Manager, Prashant Singh, explained, "Whether they're talking about serious things or the latest distraction, it seems like it's helping people find greater connectedness."

Reddit found that chat enabled users to build meaningful new relationships, too. Jason Lee, Lead product manager, said:

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**"With Reddit chat, Redditors really feel like they're talking to another human being, even though they don't know who that person is."**



**Jason Lee**

Lead Product Manager at Reddit

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**TAKEAWAY:**

Integrating chat with rich media-sharing capabilities allows people to feel continuously connected without always communicating in real time. GIFs and emojis keep chat from falling flat and robust moderation keeps conversations safe. Streamlining live chat into your operation should be an integral part of your COVID connectivity strategy.

## Going from “social distancing” to “distant socializing”

We’re on board with Stanford University psychologist Jamil Zaki’s suggestion of switching out the term “social distancing” with “distant socializing” — because society is not doomed to social isolation right now even though physical distance is necessary.<sup>25</sup>

This challenges us to provide people with a way of distant socializing and bringing connectedness and togetherness back into the experience. Integrated and streamlined communication solutions are the means: They help people feel more connected, engaged, and willing to stick around. We’ve seen it time and time again with our clients.

- Before Reddit integrated chat, users couldn’t talk one-to-one or socialize within communities on the platform in real time. As a result, users would leave the app to communicate. Since integrating chat, Reddit has seen an increase in engagement.
- Before incorporating video, Hinge users only had chat available to them if they stayed on the platform. To get a video experience, until recently, they had to go off platform and trade direct phone numbers for a FaceTime they may not be comfortable with. Since 70% of their users are interested in video dates, unrolling an integrated video chat feature keeps users on the app while they explore their relationship.
- A vehicle-for-hire company previously offered separate apps for ridesharing, food delivery, and logistics. We helped them integrate into

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<sup>25</sup> [We Should Talk About ‘Distant Socializing’ instead of ‘Social Distancing.’](#) Witte, Social Science Space, March 2020

a single “SuperApp.” Now instead of opening a separate app for orders, users navigate within a single app to place an order and communicate with all stakeholders seamlessly via live chat. They were able to start engaging customers quickly with Sendbird’s SDK.

# Forging your way in a digitized future

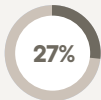
We're in the middle of one of the most rapid moments of digital advancement since the Digital Revolution. We've already seen hurdles and devastation, and for the foreseeable future, things will remain volatile and unpredictable.

People's habits have changed markedly during lockdown, and organizations must stay tuned into shifting trends. From the mindboggling changes our Sendbird customers have seen, we know that:

**Companies have to adapt quickly to keep up and stay ahead right now – while also preparing for long-term change.**

Because we aren't going back to the way things were. People are planning to bring their newfound love of digital communication into the post-COVID world, research shows. And businesses must react to keep customers satisfied.





27% believe that current virtual communication tools are just as good as in-person contact.<sup>26</sup>



37% plan on reducing their face-to-face contact with other people permanently.<sup>27</sup>

The silver lining is that technologies that were light-years away from fruition are being developed at breakneck speeds. In the end, we'll have a more technologically sophisticated world because we were all forced to innovate and advance.

In the interim, though, the world is in a fractured state, and communication and connectedness will be crucial to survival.

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<sup>26</sup> [From virtual parties to ordering food, how Americans are using the internet during COVID-19](#), April 2020

<sup>27</sup> [Study of the coronavirus' cultural impact by the USC Center for the Digital Future and Interactive Advertising Bureau finds rapid life changes and concerns – as well as enthusiasm while Americans confront the pandemic](#), USC Center for the Digital Future, April 2020

As Sendbird CEO John S. Kim says:

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**“The world absolutely needs to bridge those relationships that used to exist in the offline world and bring them back online. Only through rebuilding these human connections in a digital way can we create a new, better future for all.”**



**John S. Kim**  
CEO at Sendbird

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To mark your place in this new digitized future, don't be afraid of adaptation. Respond to peoples' need to connect, feel entertained, and interact in real time online.

**Seamless communication supported by in-app chat, voice, and video calling will be critical to feed this need for connection and entertainment in the COVID era and beyond.**

While quick fixes may work in the short term, incorporating fully integrated communication solutions into your platform or app is essential for keeping stakeholders engaged in the long term.

As we work to break down barriers and battle isolation, may we all realize the promise of the technologies that were meant to connect us.



**Talk to Sendbird to see how your business can create a cohesive digital communication strategy to thrive in the new COVID world.**

[Learn more](#)

