

Customer Service on Twitter: How Top Brands Respond

A Study of the Interbrand Top 100 Brands on Twitter

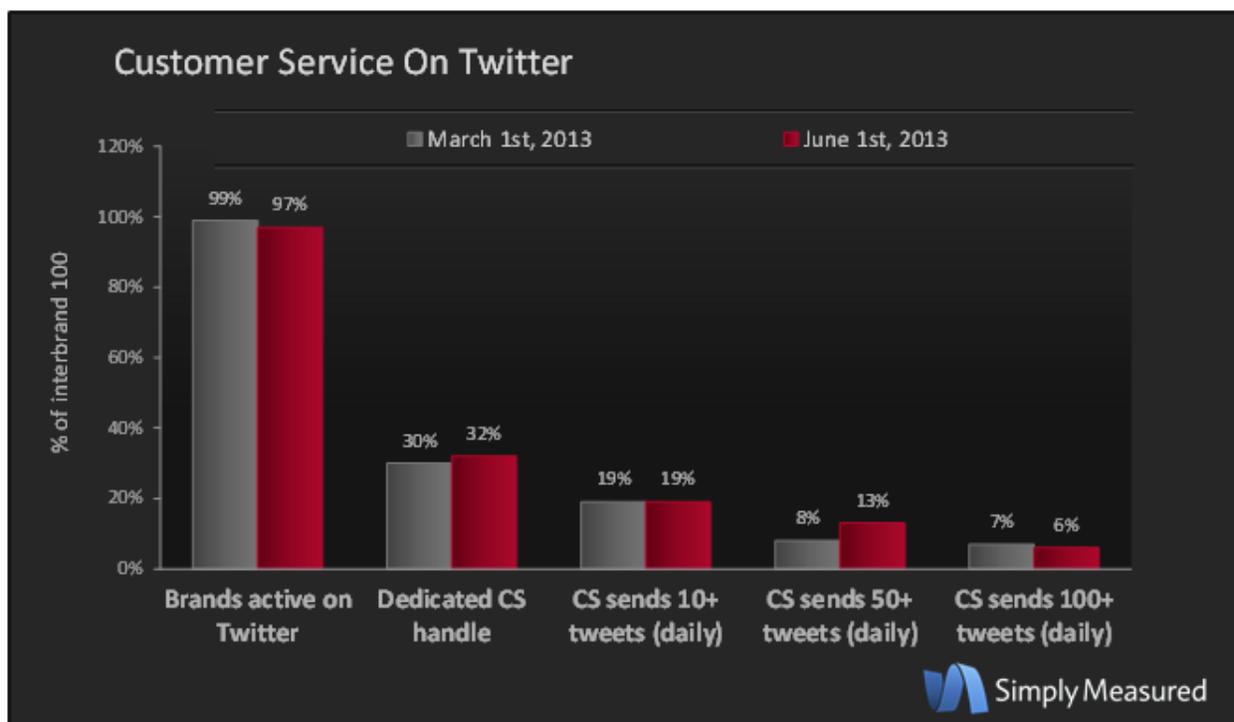
Released June 2013

For the third straight quarter, demand for customer service on Twitter has grown alongside increased brand investment and responsiveness. Of the Interbrand top 100 brands, 32% now have dedicated customer support handles. These brands are improving their ability to respond quickly while serving more customers.

This quarterly study looks at the Interbrand Top 100 Brands with dedicated customer service accounts on Twitter. The analysis is focused on what tactics brands are using to deliver customer service, which industries are receiving the most demand, and how well brands have performed against key customer service metrics over the last three months.

The data and analysis come from Simply Measured's [industry-leading social media analytics and reporting platform](#). Simply Measured is a Twitter Certified Product that helps marketers report on their own social media analytics and engagement in context with competitors across all of their social channels.

Adoption: Growing Investment in Customer Service on Twitter



Since our March study, the number of identified customer support handles has grown to 32. Brands are increasing their investment in Twitter as a customer service channel not only in terms of the number of dedicated customer service accounts, but also the amount of resources they are committing to meet customer needs.

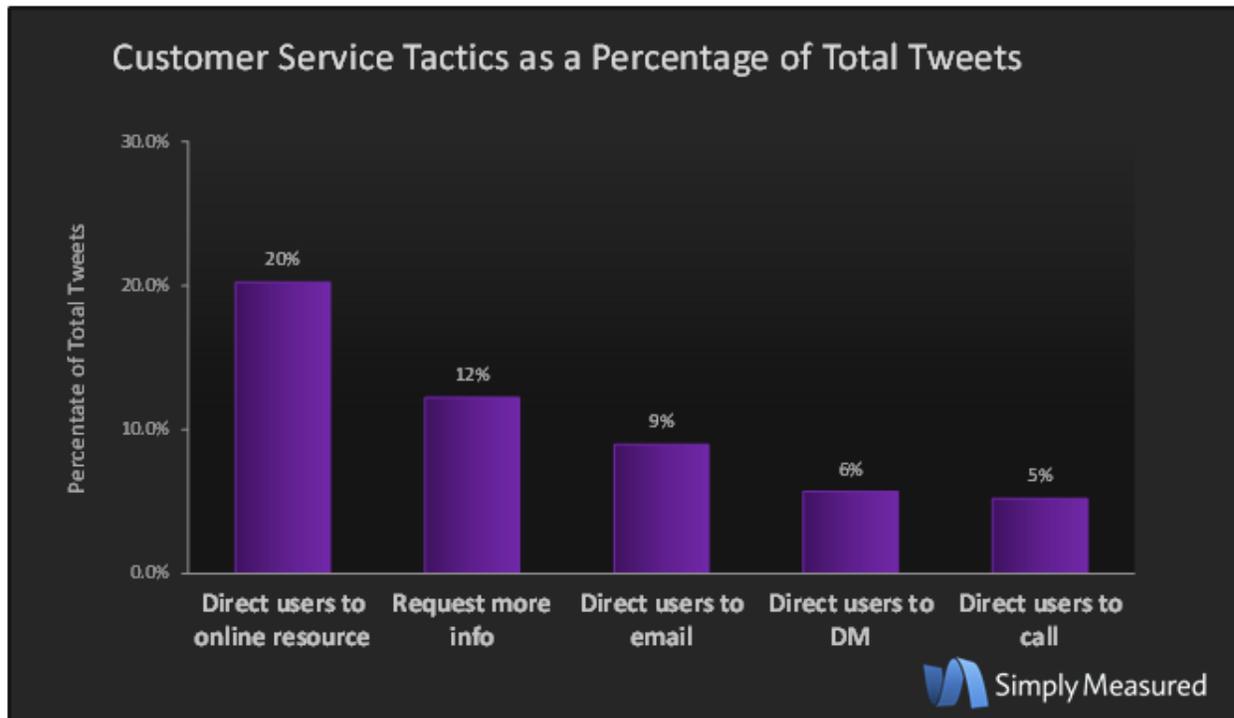
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The number of brands that send 50+ customer service Tweets per day grew to thirteen (63% quarter over quarter), alongside a 5% increase in customer support mentions. These brands serve as excellent examples for understanding what the top brands are doing to meet growing consumer demand.

Tactics: How Brands Are Providing Support



46% of sent customer service Tweets contained one or more of the following tactics: linking users to a website, requesting more info, or directing users to email, DM (Twitter Direct Message), or call a support number.

20% of Tweets directed users to an online resource, making it the most common customer support tactic. Brands also frequently requested more info, either in an attempt to resolve the problem on Twitter, or to identify the correct customer service resource to share with the user.

Often brands are choosing to funnel customer service requests to traditional support channels, where they are better equipped to process issues and can do so out of the public eye.

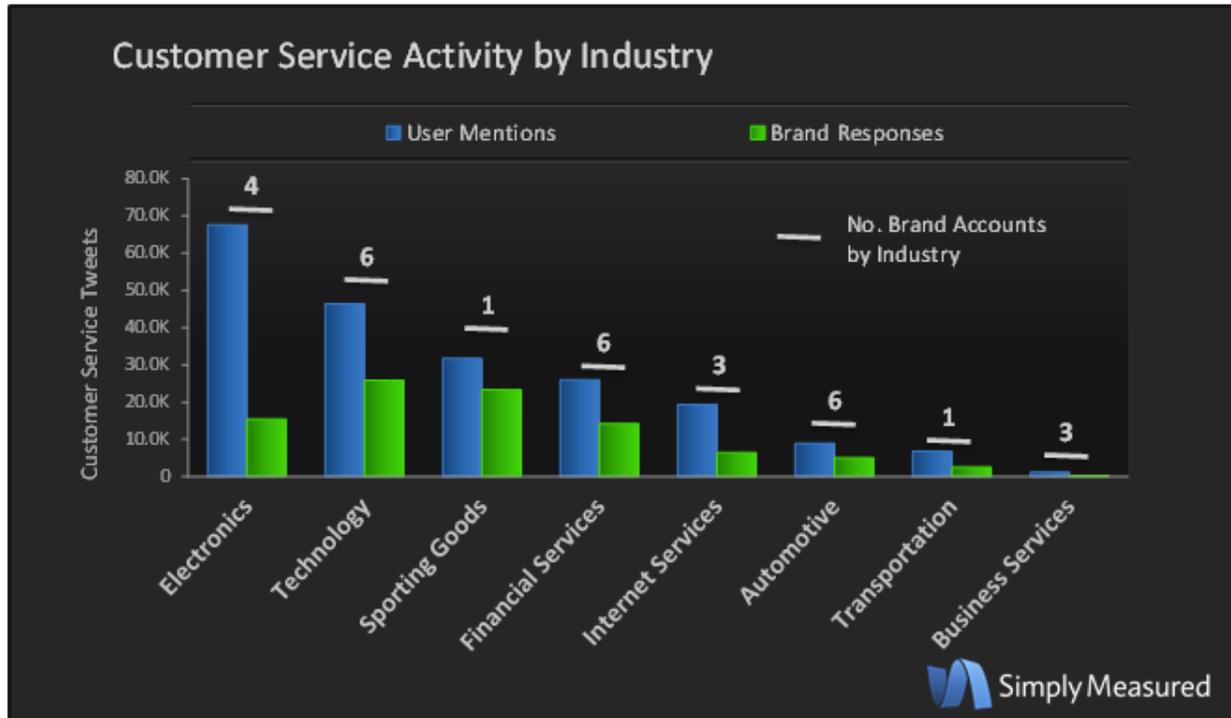
Industry Perspective: Customer Demand vs. Brand Investment

The Electronics and Technology sectors have had the highest demand for customer service on Twitter, receiving 67k and 46k mentions per quarter respectively. Brands within both industries have encountered challenges scaling response to meet customer needs.

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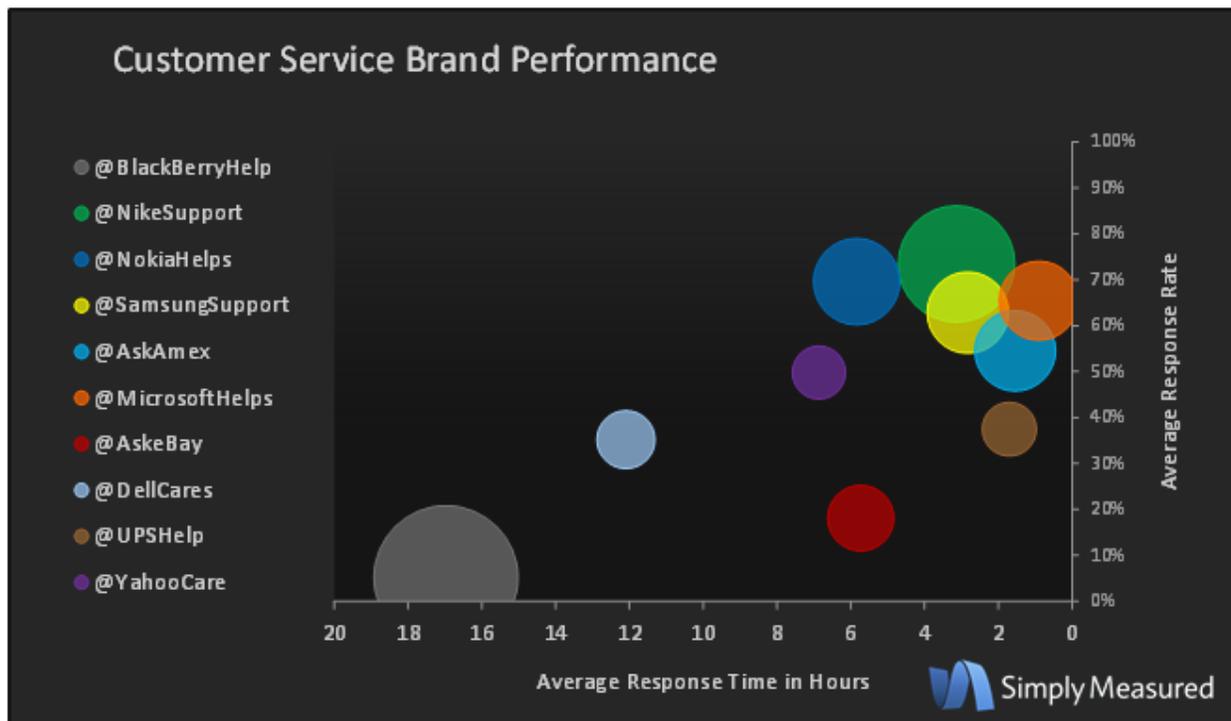
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The high demand for these industries is likely due to more social media savvy customers. For mobile electronics brands like BlackBerry and Nokia, this is especially true. Their products connect their customers to Twitter, creating a natural relationship for those seeking support.

How The Top 10 Brands Deliver Customer Service on Twitter



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The top 10 accounts by mentions received an average of 17k customer service mentions during the quarter (nearly 200 mentions per day), and sent an average of 136 Tweets per day. The ability to tackle a large volume of customer issues with a high response rate and quick response time is what sets customer service brands apart.

@NikeSupport earned the top response rate again, averaging 73% during the quarter, and @MicrosoftHelps maintained the fastest average time of just under an hour.

Splitting the difference was @SamsungSupport, which had an average response rate of 63% and an average time of 2.8 hours.

Twitter Account Details: 3 Month Totals								
Customer Support Handle	Mentions	Q/Q Mentions	Sent Tweets	Q/Q Sent	Average Response Time	Q/Q Response Time	Average Response Rate	Q/Q Response Rate
@BlackBerryHelp	48,578	-6%	4,824	13%	17.0	-14%	5%	37%
@NikeSupport	31,731	-6%	32,770	-1%	3.1	23%	73%	0%
@NokiaHelps	17,489	65%	15,002	66%	5.8	58%	70%	-4%
@SamsungSupport	15,470	-13%	12,341	-16%	2.8	-76%	63%	58%
@AskAmex	15,215	-16%	12,992	6%	1.5	21%	55%	3%
@MicrosoftHelps	14,602	18%	13,990	29%	0.9	33%	65%	-4%
@AskeBay	10,152	119%	8,176	403%	5.7	-17%	18%	48%
@DellCares	7,865	8%	7,496	51%	12.1	1%	35%	4%
@UPSHelp	6,794	-12%	12,933	13%	1.7	16%	37%	16%
@YahooCare	6,608	23%	4,670	29%	6.9	21%	50%	9%

Of the top ten brands, seven improved their response rates during the quarter. Samsung made the most significant gains, improving its response rate by 58%, to become one of only four top brands with a response rate greater than 60%.

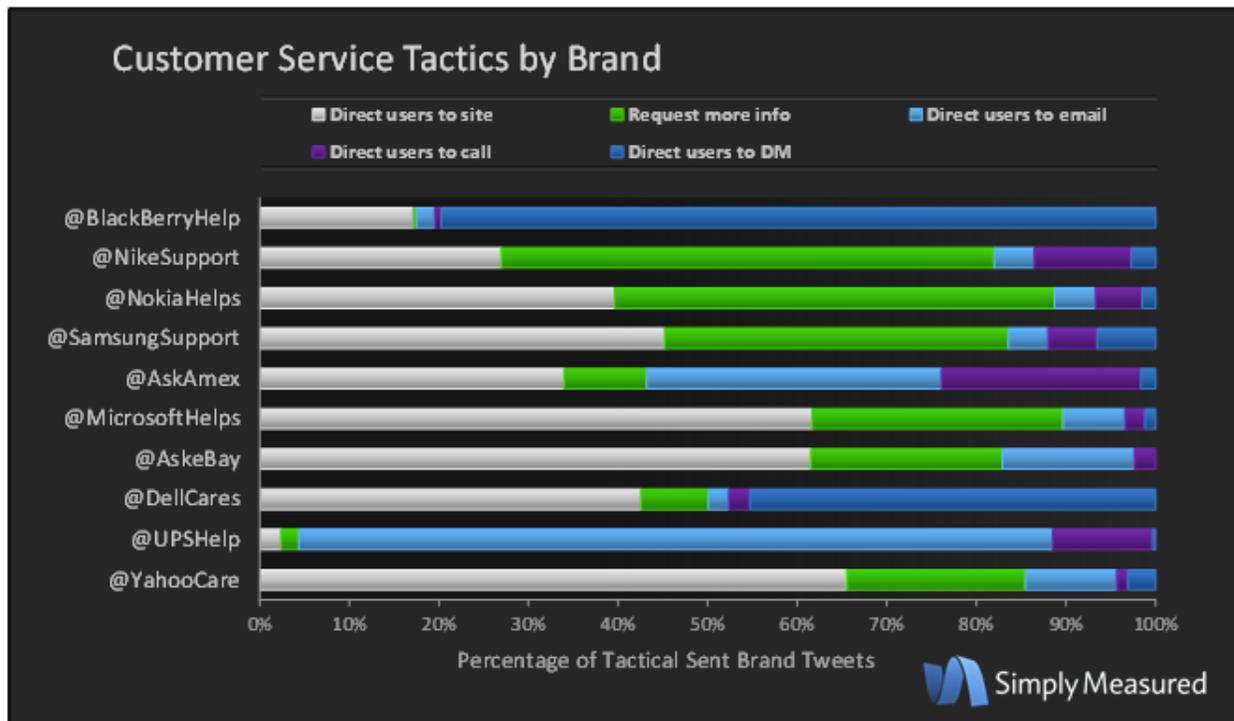
Three of the top brands were able to shorten their response times: BlackBerry, Samsung, and eBay. Samsung improved both its response time and rate during the quarter, making it the most improved brand and leaving it better positioned to serve its customers.

Collectively, the top 10 customer service handles accounted for more than 80% of customer support mentions. These brands demonstrate the ability of top brands to respond, and serve as an excellent example of how customer service tactics are being implemented.

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Analysis of the most engaged customer service handles shows brands taking many different approaches to the way they provide customer support on Twitter. BlackBerry and Dell are quick to take the discussion offline by requesting users to DM them. UPS primarily uses email support to serve its customers.

Nike most often requests more info to resolve issues within 140 characters, or directs users to the appropriate online resource. Microsoft, eBay, and Yahoo have created substantial online support resources, on which they rely heavily to serve customers.

AmEx has the most evenly distributed mix of tactics, indicating the ability to provide a variety of support resources based on customer needs, whether on Twitter, phone, email, or online resources.

Performance Averages: Customer Service Response Rates & Times

Customer service accounts have continued to improve their responsiveness, both in terms of average response times and response rates. This trend has continued since we first started tracking customer service handles in September 2012.

Over the last three months, the average response time of dedicated support handles improved from 5.1 hours to 4.6 hours and the average response rate increased from 42% to 45%.

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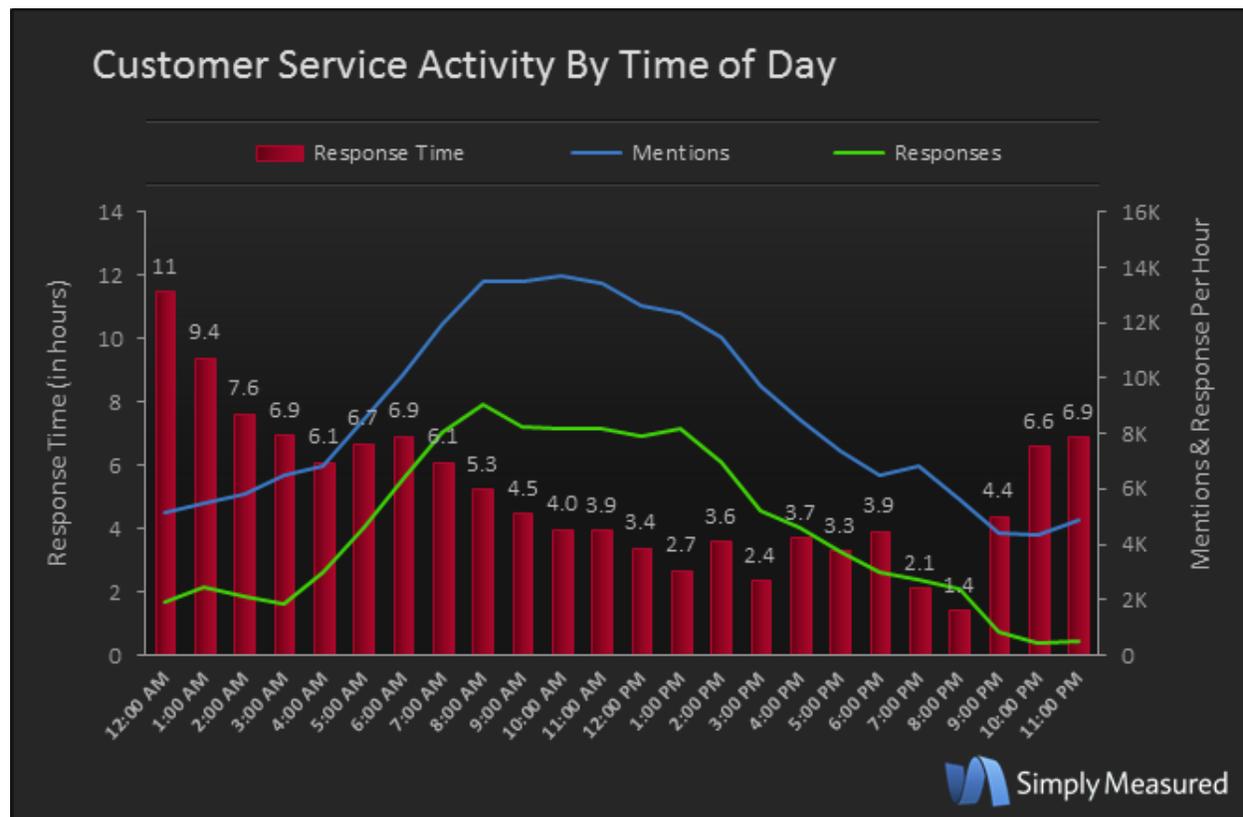
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During the same period, customer service account mentions increased by 5%, and brands increased their responses to support issues by 13%, delivering nearly 94k customer service Tweets. This shows a continued investment to improve the customer service experience that brands are capable of delivering.

Dedicating Resources: Impact on Response Times



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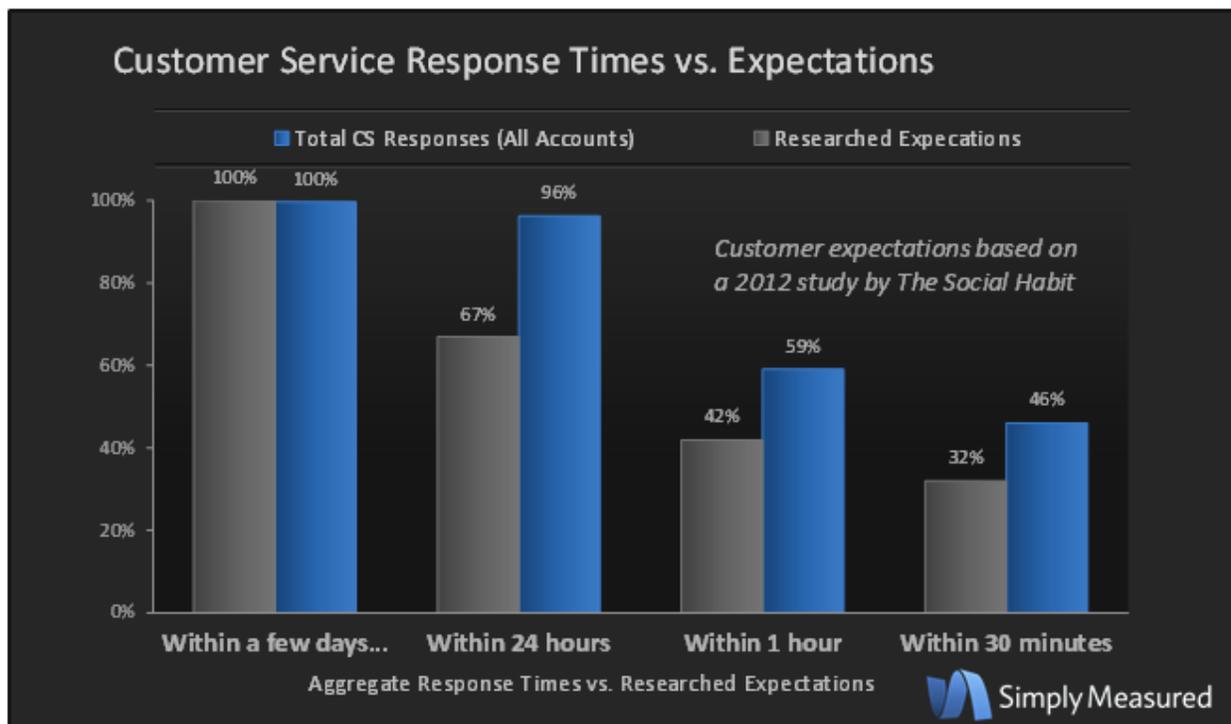
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How brands staff for customer service greatly impacts their performance. Nearly 70% of customer service account mentions are made between the business hours of 6am and 6pm PST, while 80% of all customer support responses are made during business hours.

That means that during off-hours, brands are less responsive to customer needs, resulting in higher response times, especially between the hours of 10pm and 7am. Reduced overnight coverage leaves brands struggling to play catch up until nearly midday.

Between noon and 6pm the average response time is just over three hours. Three hours is the average response time for brands when they are adequately staffed, making three hours a target brands should be seeking to maintain around the clock.



Looking at the percentage of customer service responses sent, we see that 59% of responses were made within an hour of initial user mentions.

According to survey data from the market research firm [The Social Habit](#), customer service accounts are actually exceeding user expectations. Although the average brand response time is 4.6 hours, the majority of customer service responses sent are made within the hour.

Conclusion:

The demand for customer service on Twitter is growing, and has been since we first started tracking customer support handles in September 2012. Brands are responding by increasing their investment to deliver customer support, as evidenced by an increased level of responsiveness, the effect of which has been improved brand response rates and times for three straight quarters.

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An overview of brand tactics show a varied approach to how brands are delivering customer service on Twitter, indicating that brands are still searching for how to best integrate customer service on Twitter with their existing customer support channels.

Although brands are increasing their investment in customer support resources, many are not correctly allocating those resources to serve customers in real-time. Instead, many brands are emphasizing coverage and failing to respond quickly to customers during off-business hours.

For more information on how you can measure your brand, campaigns and social media event performance, visit Simply Measured, or follow [@simplymeasured](https://twitter.com/simplymeasured) on Twitter for more insights and analysis.