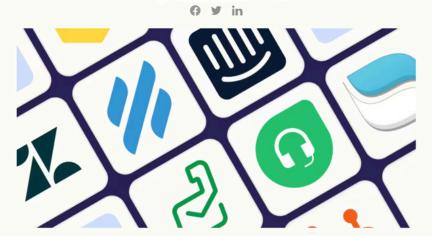
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Best apps 16 min read

# The best help desk software and customer support apps

By Maria Bell · May 13, 2024



I'll be frank—there are too many help desk tools out there. Many of them are practically carbon copies of one another with a fresh interface slapped on them. So if you're dealing with decision fatigue as you sort through platforms that can help your team turn a raging customer into a loyal one, you aren't alone.

I spent weeks researching and testing dozens of help desk tools to uncover the apps that are most worthy of your consideration. Below, I unpack nine of the apps that shone through the noise, each in its own unique way. Check out the best help desk software of 2024 below.

# **Try Zapier Chatbots**

Create free custom AI chatbots to engage customers and take action with built-in automation.

Get started

# The 9 best help desk apps

- Zendesk for Service for customization
- Help Scout for team collaboration
- Intercom for a premium experience
- Zoho Desk for Al features
- Freshdesk for ticket management
- Re:amaze for eCommerce companies
- HubSpot Service Hub for CRM integration
- · Hiver for consolidated email app integration
- HelpCrunch for solid automation on a budget

# What makes great help desk software?

### How we evaluate and test apps

Our best apps roundups are written by humans who've spent much of their careers using, testing, and writing about software. Unless explicitly stated, we spend dozens of hours researching and testing apps, using each app, as it's intended to be used and

evaluating it against the criteria we set for the category. We're never paid for placement in our articles from any app or for links to any site—we value the trust readers put in us to offer authentic evaluations of the categories and apps we review. For more details on our process, read the full rundown of how we select apps to feature on the Zapier blog.

If your customer support team is overworked, or it seems like you spend more time fielding customer complaints than improving your product or service, it's time to invest in some new tools. But you need to know what you're looking for to be sure the customer support software you choose will actually help you and not just complicate your process even more.

As I researched and tested help desk services, these are the criteria I was most focused on:

- Checking off the "basics." Granted, my definition of "the basics" might be
  stricter than most. Every app on this list offers ticketing, a shared inbox tool,
  self-service features (such as a knowledge base or help center), and a live chat
  tool. We're living in the 2020s—while live chat may have been a "premium"
  feature several years ago, it's a must-have to be considered a great customer
  service app now.
- Automation features. There are several ways help desk software can integrate
  automation. On the simplest end, we have macros (canned replies you can save
  and repeatedly use). On the more advanced end, we have Al-powered reply
  assistants. Somewhere in between, there's customizable bots and automated
  workflows. The apps on my list all stood out with their automation features,
  though some shone brighter than others.
- Quality of reporting and analytics. Good help desk software offers analytics
  and reporting features that help you identify high-level trends and optimize
  your processes. Great ones give you a microscope to dig into more niche,
  granular data and enable you to customize reports and dashboards to share
  with stakeholders. I ensured every app contained some type of reporting,
  prioritizing those with more advanced features.
- Collaborative features. Collaboration tools help agents complete tickets
  quickly and efficiently—with each other's help. I checked each customer
  service tool for shared inboxes, file sharing, internal knowledge bases, and
  other features that help agents collaborate without butting heads.
- Integrations. Your customer support tool needs to be able to talk to the other tools you use at your company.
   After all, the best customer service doesn't happen in a vacuum—it's connected to all the moving parts of your business.
- Value for price. For all the apps
  featured here, the price is justifiable
  for the features offered and the target customer base.

Automation can help your customer support team

These criteria—and my experience testing the apps—helped me narrow it down to nine apps that are best for a holistic help desk experience.

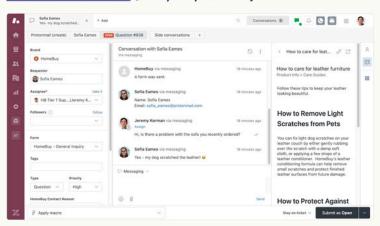
# The best customer support apps at a glance

	Best for	Standout feature	Pricing From \$19/agent/month, billed annually	
<u>Zendesk</u>	Customization	Advanced reporting		
Help Scout	Collaboration	Shared inbox	From \$20/user/month, billed annually	
Intercom	An intuitive, premium	Al-powered inbox	From \$39/user/month	

	experience		
Zoho Desk	Al tools and features	Zia, the Al-powered virtual assistant	From \$14/user/month, billed annually, for the Standard plan
<u>Freshdesk</u>	Ticket management	A unified channel interface with Freshchat	Free plan for up to 10 agents; from \$15/user/month, billed annually
Re:amaze	eCommerce functionalities	Client profile and historical data	From \$26.10/user/month, billed annually
HubSpot	Capacity for CRM integration	Data consolidation across HubSpot products	From \$20/month for 2 users
<u>Hiver</u>	Email app integration	Integration with Gmail	From \$15/user/month, billed annually
<u>HelpCrunch</u>	Affordable automation	Automated client communication	From \$12/user/month, billed annually

# Best help desk software for customization

# **Zendesk for Service** (Web, iOS, Android)



#### Zendesk for Service pros:

- User-friendly interface
- · Comprehensive reporting features
- · Highly customizable interface

# Zendesk for Service cons:

- · Expensive compared to other solutions on the market
- Takes time to learn all it can do
- · Heavy features lag/take time to load

As soon as I started testing Zendesk for Service, I felt pretty confident it would make the list. And not just because it's a household name when it comes to customer service—its user-friendly interface and clear, fun tutorial process said, "I make my users' lives as easy as possible." Diving into its features only validated my hunch.

Of all its impressive features, the one that stood out to me was its advanced and granular reporting options. While Zendesk Explore took several minutes to initially load for me, once it did, I was blown away by the comprehensiveness of its reporting features. In addition to standard help desk metrics like average first response time and tickets created per day, Zendesk offers visual reports on

metrics from every channel, including chatbot efficacy and how the quantity of ticket escalations has changed over time.

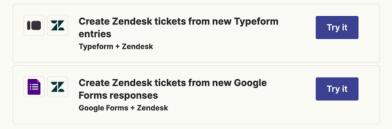
The platform's advanced features don't end there, though. Of all the self-service tools I tested (whether they were named knowledge bases, help desks, or something else), Zendesk's was the most customizable. I could change the look and feel with pre-built themes, added elements, and editing options. It almost felt like I was creating a blog on a website builder. And support agents can now seamlessly collaborate on resolving complex issues within the Zendesk platform through features such as real-time chat, file sharing, and task assignment.

Zendesk is also designed for you to help your customers across platforms—chatbot, email, Facebook Messenger, phone, SMS, WhatsApp, and more—and it's frequently updated to support new networks. I could easily follow conversations across channels, without having to leave my browser.

In the past year, Zendesk has added a few notable AI features. There's new advanced sentiment analysis (to gauge the emotional tone of tickets), predictive ticket routing (to anticipate the nature and urgency of incoming support tickets), and intelligent chatbots.

I'll be honest—it's pretty expensive. But between the call center, the customizations for the knowledge base, the chatbot, and the reporting, the pricing is absolutely justified. And if these features still aren't enough for you, Zendesk Marketplace has over 1,700 apps to integrate with, or you can always build your own Zendesk apps.

Zendesk also integrates with Zapier, so you can do things like create new Zendesk tickets from form submissions or add new Zendesk tickets meeting certain criteria to your project management app. Discover more <u>ways to automate Zendesk</u>, or get started with one of the examples below.

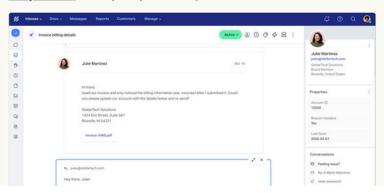


**Zendesk price:** From \$55/agent/month, billed annually, for the Suite Team plan; from \$19/agent/month, billed annually, for the Support Team plan

Take a look at how Zendesk stacks up to similar apps in our showdowns: <u>Zendesk vs. Freshdesk, Zendesk vs. Intercom, Zendesk vs. Jira, Zendesk vs. Salesforce</u>, and <u>Zendesk vs. Zoho Desk</u>.

# Best help desk software for team collaboration

### Help Scout (Web, iOS, Android)





#### **Help Scout pros:**

- · Useful collaboration features
- · Email templating and customization
- · Internal knowledge base

#### **Help Scout cons:**

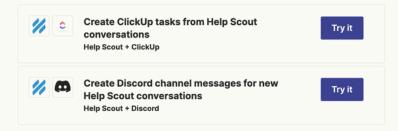
- The updated Doc Editor feature falls short compared to the previous version
- · Minimal number of features compared to other solutions
- · Pricey for its value

Help Scout is all about easily managing email communications with customers. The service offers a variety of advanced email inbox features that make it easy to stay organized and respond quickly to customer inquiries. Create custom email templates, automatically CC or BCC multiple email addresses, set up automatic follow-ups, add a note to an email, and even set up reminders. You can also use Help Scout to track who opens your emails and when, so you can gauge the effectiveness of your communications.

I was most impressed with Help Scout's collaboration features. You can assign conversations to entire teams and even give those teams access to specific mailboxes where specific types of tickets come in. Teams can then collaborate on tickets—no more working alone. The platform also offers an internal knowledge base (known as private collections), which agents can reference to stay on track with customer support procedures.

Help Scout stepped up its game in 2024 with the introduction of Al functionalities that change the email management aspect of the tool. It's nothing groundbreaking, but it builds all the standard content rewriting, tone adjustment, and email summaries into the platform.

If you need stellar collaboration features with a shared inbox that's clean and crisp—if minimal—this software has you covered. You can also connect Help Scout to Zapier to turn tickets into tasks and share new tickets with your team wherever they spend their time, among other things. Learn more about how to automate Help Scout, or try out one of these pre-made templates below.

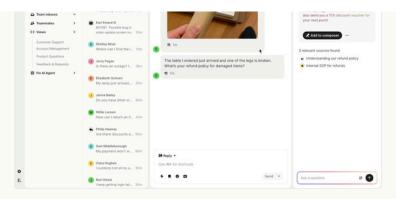


Help Scout price: From \$20/user/month, billed annually, for the Standard plan

# Best help desk software for a premium experience

# Intercom (Web, iOS, Android)





#### Intercom pros:

- · Advanced inbox functionalities
- · Solid Al-powered features
- Intuitive and easy-to-use AI chatbot customization

#### Intercom cons:

- Some basic features are exclusive to more expensive pricing plans (multiple team inboxes, workflows for automation, workload management)
- · Expensive for the range of features it offers

If you're like me, when you hear the word "premium," you immediately think "expensive." While Intercom certainly isn't the cheapest help desk tool on the market with its custom pricing model, it's earned its place as a premium option. And it recently rebranded to champion an Al-first approach: All is now an integral piece of every aspect of the platform, from its comprehensive knowledge base to its customizable reporting tools.

Its inbox—an AI-infused powerhouse of user-friendly features with advanced functionalities—blows many competitors out of the water when it comes to both ease of use and advanced functionality. From one shortcut button, I could access macros, custom triggers, tags, languages (including French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish), and even emojis and GIFs. Plus, the sidebar offers all the customer and ticket details I could ask for.

I found the process of creating custom bots to be really intuitive and flexible. You can add images, video clips, and more to your bot messages and create advanced paths depending on the user's actions. They can even trigger workflows with conditions and actions (both of which Intercom has a lot of).

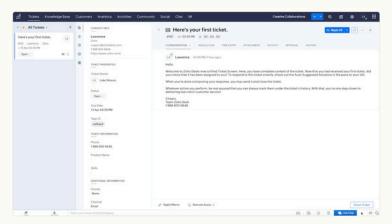
All of these premium features, on top of a solid knowledge base, custom reports, and a large collection of integrations, make Intercom a stellar choice for your help desk software, as long as your company can afford it.

And when you connect Intercom to Zapier, you can have new users automatically populate in your CRM or email marketing lists, among thousands of other automation possibilities. Learn more about <a href="https://doi.org/10.2016/journal.org/10.2016/



Intercom price: Custom

### Zoho Desk (Web, iOS, Android)



#### Zoho Desk pros:

- · Unique Al virtual assistant
- · Intuitive collaboration features
- · Great price for value

#### Zoho Desk cons:

- · Outdated and cluttered interface
- · Significant learning curve

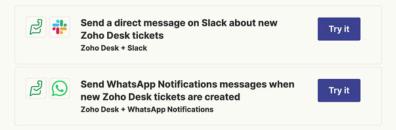
If you're looking for a more affordable solution than Intercom that still offers some "ahead-of-its-time" features, turn to Zoho Desk—Zoho's customer service solution in its <u>cloud software suite</u>.

While I personally found the interface to feel a bit cluttered and outdated, especially compared to solutions that could win an award for user-friendliness like Zendesk and Intercom, Zoho Desk's offerings make up for this.

Its <u>AI features</u> made it most deserving of a place on this list—I even felt that it beat out Intercom's. Zoho's AI-powered virtual assistant (named Zia) can intuitively generate tags for customer tickets, suggest knowledge base content that would best answer a user's question, analyze customer emotions based on their words and behaviors, and call attention to tickets with out-of-the-ordinary content.

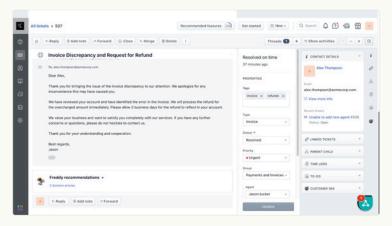
I was also really impressed with Zoho Desk's collaboration features. My favorite was the team feed, where agents can update each other and share news and comments—it felt just like using a Slack channel. There's also an agent collision detector to prevent multiple agents from unknowingly working on the same case.

You can <u>connect Zoho Desk to Zapier</u>, so you can add new contacts as subscribers, send live chat conversations to Zoho Desk, and more. Here are just a couple examples to get you started.



Zoho Desk price: From \$14/user/month, billed annually, for the Standard plan

# Freshdesk (Web, iOS, Android)



#### Freshdesk pros:

- · Advanced ticket management functionality
- · Freshchat feature that aggregates multiple support channels into one tool
- · Simple and easy knowledge base management

#### Freshdesk cons:

- · Mass import and export aren't very easy
- Suboptimal billing and project management functionalities

Try to use help desk software that's terrible at ticketing, and you'll really appreciate the ones that do it well. For an app with a pretty generous free plan, Freshworks' help desk software, Freshdesk, gives a lot of paid help desk programs a run for their money with its powerful ticket management features.

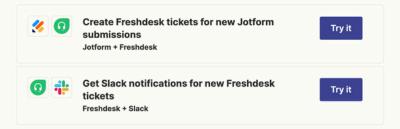
It really shines when it comes to ticket assignment—you can assign tickets based on an agent's skillset and workload, or just distribute tickets evenly across your team. No more taking time out of your agents' day to ask about their bandwidth before dishing out tickets.

Freddy AI, Freshdesk's new AI assistant, can analyze incoming tickets, identify patterns, and automatically route them to the most appropriate agent or team for resolution. It can also suggest relevant knowledge base articles or solutions to agents while they're responding to tickets. These functionalities aren't unique to Freshdesk, but they do a great job of supporting an already robust platform.

Freshdesk unifies all of its support channels (including WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook Messenger, email, and more) via Freshchat, keeping tickets and conversations in one place. With built-in time tracking, entire teams can also track how long they spend with customers and work toward improving resolution times.

The app can also turn responses to customers into knowledge base articles, making it super easy to build a help center without manually building out a new Q&A page.

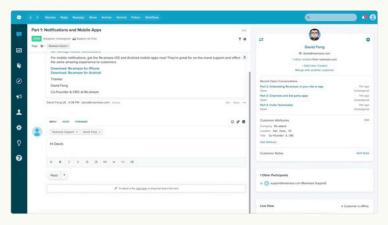
<u>Freshdesk also integrates with Zapier</u>, so you can connect it with your scheduling tools and any other apps you use to keep track of appointments, jobs, and technicians. Learn more about <u>how to automate Freshdesk</u>, or try one of these pre-built workflows.



Freshdesk price: Free plan available for 10 agents/month; from \$15/agent/month

# Best help desk software for eCommerce companies

### Re:amaze (Web, iOS, Android)



#### Re:amaze pros:

- · Client profile enrichment
- · Advanced eCommerce integration functionality
- · All-in-one social media integration

#### Re:amaze cons:

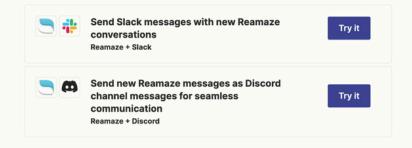
- · Outdated knowledge base editor
- Subpar mobile experience (frequent app crashes)
- · Confusing shout box format

Email isn't always the quickest way for your customers to get their problems solved—Re:amaze (by GoDaddy) can help them get answers right inside your app. When you build your help docs in Re:amaze, you can take advantage of its dragand-drop-style editor, and then embed your content into your website or app, right alongside Re:amaze's chat widget. Whenever a customer gets in touch, you'll see their account inside your app, with all the data on their past purchases and support tickets, so you never have to ask for extra info.

I appreciated the shared status page for agents and customers. The customer support app lets you know when there's a shortage or technical difficulty—considerate for both parties.

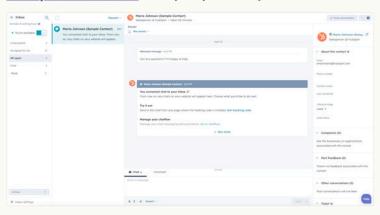
The platform also has some valuable team features. For motivation, there's a leaderboard view showing how well agents are doing in relation to one another. Plus, you can see when team members are viewing or replying to customer conversations, avoiding agent clashes. Plus, Re:amaze integrates with eCommerce platforms and also offers a chatbot and live chat option.

You can also <u>connect Re:amaze to Zapier</u> to enhance your other communication platforms. Here are a couple examples.



# Best help desk software for CRM integration

# **<u>HubSpot Service Hub</u>** (Web, iOS, Android)



#### **HubSpot Service Hub pros:**

- · Wide range of integration possibilities
- · Data consolidation across multiple HubSpot products
- · Shared inboxes across departments

#### **HubSpot Service Hub cons:**

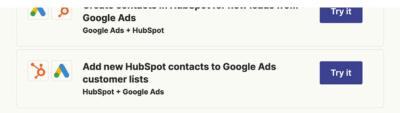
- · Steep learning curve
- · Packed with features and functionalities that can be overwhelming to new
- · Expensive for its value

If you use HubSpot for anything else—sales, marketing, or operations—HubSpot Service Hub will give you a complete picture of every interaction a customer has had with your company, across all departments. You'll have an inbox shared by Support, Marketing, and Sales, which will make your customer experience feel seamless and allow you to provide personalized customer support at every touchpoint.

HubSpot has all the standard features you'd expect from a customer support app —and met all the criteria I laid out above—but it definitely took me some time to maneuver around the app comfortably. I not only had to learn how to work in the support app, but I also needed to be familiar with sales and marketing terminology. Of course, if you're already using HubSpot, this shouldn't be an issue. Service Hub is built on the HubSpot CRM platform, so if you have a working knowledge of the CRM, then you'll get the most out of it.

HubSpot incorporates all the AI functionalities that I've come to expect from these solutions (what a world we live in that I can just "expect" AI), like AI-powered chatbots and analyzing customer interactions and feedback to generate insights. But it also features a unique take on this technology through the "conversations inbox," which uses machine learning to prioritize and route incoming customer inquiries to the appropriate team. Its format, as an inbox, is a cool but complex approach, one that falls in line with its wide feature range and steeper learning curve.

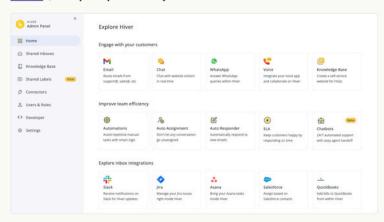
Overall, Service Hub will deliver incredibly rich profiles for you—which means a better experience for your customers. And you can connect HubSpot to Zapier to automatically find, create, or update a ticket when trigger events happen in the other apps you use most. Learn more about how to automate HubSpot, or get started with one of these pre-built templates.



**HubSpot Service Hub price:** From \$20/month for two users, billed monthly, for the Starter plan

# Best help desk software for consolidated email app integration

# **Hiver** (Web, iOS, Android)



#### Hiver pros:

- Unique solution in the form of an extension (lighter than apps and webpages)
- · Advanced integration with email apps
- 24/7 support via chat and email

#### **Hiver cons:**

- · Results in a messy and cluttered inbox
- Requires a dedicated inbox for customer support so as not to overwhelm users
- · Automation rules have limited criteria

Hiver was certainly the most unique app I researched and tested—if you could even call it an app. Don't get me wrong—it exceeds all the criteria of great help desk software. I hesitate to call it an app because it's actually just a browser extension that integrates and merges with your Gmail account.

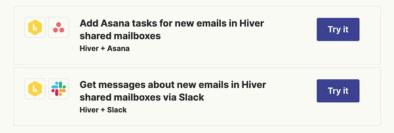
Nearly every browser extension I've ever downloaded has had its glitches, whether those be blank pages that require me to clear my cache or important data going \*poof\*. But I was thoroughly impressed with how seamlessly Hiver and Gmail came together.

With Hiver, my shared inboxes and views were located in their own category under my Gmail inboxes, a notifications inbox housing my mentions and to-dos appeared on my top bar, and I could access everything—live chat, analytics, and my knowledge base—all from my Gmail account. Everything worked great. And if something were to go wrong? Hiver offers 24/7 chat and email support to help you resolve bugs.

The biggest issue I could foresee with Hiver is a very cluttered Gmail. Since shared inbox tags are all located in the same area as general Gmail tags, emails could come piling in with eight different tags, causing decision fatigue and confusion. For this reason, I feel this solution would work best for teams that can dedicate an entire inbox to customer service work, leaving all other

communication to another inbox.

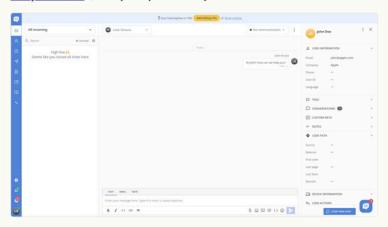
Hiver also integrates with Zapier, though it does gatekeep that integration for subscribers to its \$39/user/month Pro plan. If you do subscribe to this plan, you can <u>connect Hiver to Zapier</u> to receive notifications of shared inbox activity via your favorite communication apps or automatically add customer data to your CRMs. Here are some examples.



Hiver price: From \$15/user/month, billed annually, for the Lite plan

# Best help desk software for solid automation on a budget

#### HelpCrunch (Web, iOS, Android)



#### HelpCrunch pros:

- Very good price for value
- Inbox automation features
- · Customizable chatbot templates

#### HelpCrunch cons:

- · Basic help desk features and functionalities
- · Lacks customization features
- No drip email marketing functionalities

HelpCrunch was a pleasant surprise among low-priced help desk software options. It included everything great help desk software should, including a customizable knowledge base (with a language translation feature in the Pro plan), practical inbox features, like customizing what information shows on tickets before you open them, and reporting features (though I found these to be relatively basic).

But where HelpCrunch really stands out is its automation features. The platform enables you to create your own custom inboxes for tickets, with specific rules that automatically route specific tickets to those inboxes. For example, you can have all emails tagged "feature request" flow into an inbox dedicated to these requests, keeping your shared inboxes nice and tidy.

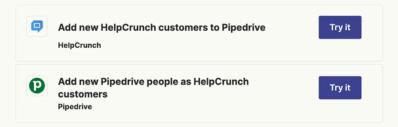
The platform also allows you to create auto messages that will send in different

ways depending on the rules you set. For example, these can take the form of a follow-up sent to a customer or lead after a certain amount of time. These messages can include custom attributes, so they speak to individuals by name, providing a personalized experience.

HelpCrunch also offers chatbots you can customize, either using pre-existing templates or building your own flow from scratch. This can save your team time and energy by assisting customers with complaints that don't require agent intervention.

Overall, I was impressed with HelpCrunch. That said, it almost didn't make this list because I found load times to be quite long, and I ran into some frustrating glitches like screen freezes as I tested the app's features. If these get patched (or you can overlook them), it's a great budget option with some solid and unique features.

Plus, you can <u>connect HelpCrunch to Zapier</u> to pull contacts from your CRM into HelpCrunch or the other way around—among many other options.



HelpCrunch price: From \$12/user/month, billed annually, for the Basic plan

# Automate your help desk solution

I'm personally impressed by how far customer support apps have come—I always assumed help desk solutions would go to the same purgatory that cubicle walls ended up in. But these tools have kept up, even jumping on the AI train pretty quickly.

Help desk software can make customer service infinitely more efficient, which is good for your agents and your customer. If that software integrates with Zapier, you can <u>automate your customer support team</u> even further. <u>Build your own Al chatbot</u>, and then connect it to all the other apps you use, so your customers' inquiries can trigger events in your support software.

You can also use Zapier Agents to build your own Al agent that handles your customer support workflows. Connect all your data sources, then automate responses to common questions via email using your FAQ and knowledge base, route complex inquiries to the right team while handling routine support automatically, and track your most important support metrics—no code required. Learn more about how to use Zapier Agents.

#### Related reading:

- · The best live chat apps for customer support
- · How to build an effective customer support knowledge base
- · 5 ways to thrive in your customer support role
- · What is a customer portal?
- The best customer portal software
- The best Zendesk alternatives

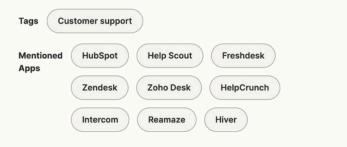
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Maria Bell is a San Francisco-based content marketer and freelance writer. She works with B2B small and mid-sized business software companies like Lusha, Workiz, and StyleSeat on thought leadership content. You can see her work at Mariabell.co.



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App comparisons

Zendesk vs. Zoho Desk: Which ticket app is best? [2025]

#### Zapier tutorials

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#### Automation inspiration

7 ways to use Zapier's Zendesk integration

#### Automation inspiration

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