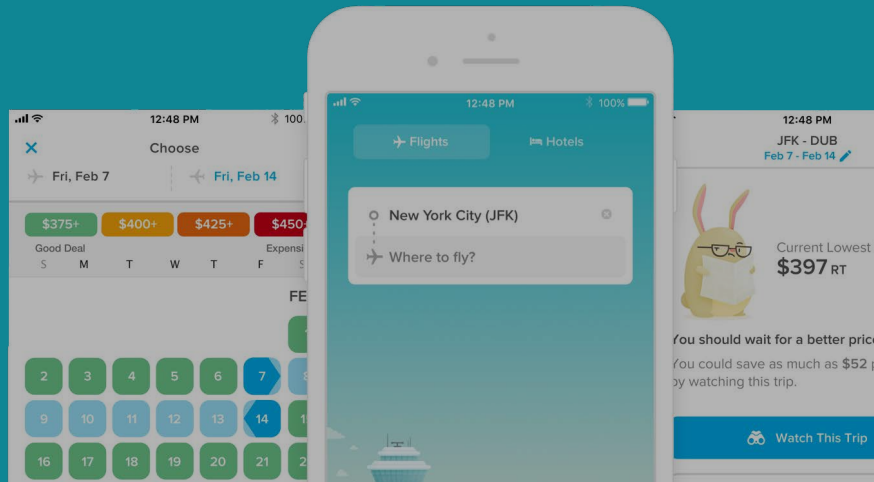# Hopper

Bringing Clarity and Visibility Into the Customer Service Strategy

The Challenge

Hopper was founded in 2007 with the mission to build a travel marketplace that always saves customers money. Hopper makes travel easier, more transparent, and more accessible for people around the world.

In the early days of the company, it was easy to find answers to support issues and product questions by shouting to colleagues across the table. However, as demand exploded, the team at Hopper quickly saw the limitations of their existing toolset. They could not dynamically route conversations based on issue type or customer data, which made prioritization more difficult. Lastly, lack of visibility into support volume severely limited their ability to accurately predict staffing needs.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Hopper's challenges with their tool stack became even more pronounced. As they saw a significant increase in requests from customers about travel plans, Hopper knew they had to move very quickly to find a new platform to support their customers.

Company Profile

📅 **Customer Since:** 2020

👥 **Number of Users:** 971

⇄ **Switched From:** Intercom

★ **Favorite Features:** Timeline, Dynamic Routing, Reporting and Customization

Success

10% Increase in CSAT

50% Reduction in First Response Times

> **Kustomer was the perfect mix of being resilient for scale but built for the needs of a modern service team — something that isn't a given with today's CRM technology."**
>
> **Jo Lai**, Head of Customer Experience, Hopper

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The Results

- Increased CSAT by 10%
- Reduced customer service software costs by 20%
- Reduced first response times by 50%
- Increased positive support experiences by 20%

If Jo Lai, Head of Customer Experience at Hopper, could travel back to 2018 and have a conversation with herself, she knows exactly what she'd say: "Don't wait until your tools prove to be inadequate and begin to impact customers. Find resilient platforms that will scale with customer needs and business growth."

It's a hard lesson to learn. Often the tools that a startup uses at the beginning of its journey aren't the ones that follow them through all stages of their growth. Finding the right tool, however, can become a force multiplier for positive customer impact.

The Engine Behind the Most Customer-Centric Travel Company on Earth

Hopper began as a startup with a mission to build the most customer-centric travel company on the planet. They make travel easier, more transparent, and more accessible for people around the world. As Head of Customer Experience at Hopper, Lai's wheelhouse contains two components. One is the customer service delivery piece, from their customer-facing team members and their leaders around the world. Lai also runs the service platform group, which is the engine that powers Hopper's various support teams: enablement and systems, workforce management, and learning and development.

The growth of Hopper's customer support team is a classic startup story. When Lai started at Hopper, the customer support team was co-located out of a single boardroom at Hopper's Montreal HQ. If anything changed in the support process, if anyone needed help with a customer, or if anyone had a product question, it was easy to shout across the table to their colleagues. The team could experiment
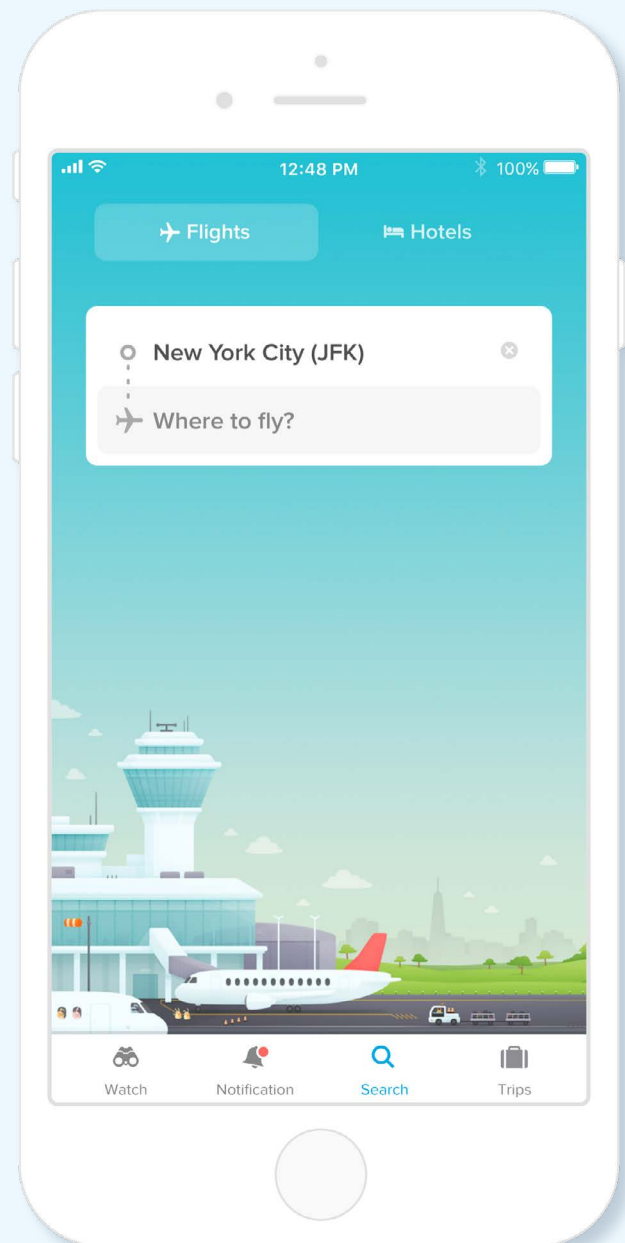
> "Fostering a connection between a customer and customer support agents is a meaningful value proposition."
>
> **Jo Lai**
> Head of Customer Experience, Hopper

and move (and fail) fast, which led to an exciting period of learning.

At Hopper, people see the company as a fintech-driven travel marketplace. They never wanted to run a huge operation with hundreds of people taking phone calls day in and day out — that didn't feel true to Hopper's more innovative inclinations. If a customer books travel through the Hopper platform in a super smooth, data-driven way, why would that customer want to wait on hold at all?

Today, Hopper's customer service organization comprises more than 800 people. As they grew, Lai knew they had to work differently and find an approach that matched their startup spirit.

Without Routing and Prioritization, Hopper's Customer Service Tools Fell Short

Hopper's efforts have always emphasized automation and self-service. To achieve these capabilities, they experimented with a lot of tools, throwing stuff at the wall to see what stuck. They learned a lot about their customers that way. The team at Hopper recognized, for example, that the average Hopper customer wanted freedom and flexibility to determine how and when they could get in touch with the company. They wanted full control of their own requests and to submit them directly in the app. Lai's team went full throttle into that space to meet customers where they were. They quickly gutted their phone system and put in a new chat system to support their users' preferences.

According to Lai, even though they learned a lot, they committed time to various platforms that were not sustainable or well suited to them, and they still had a long way to go to increase efficiency. On a surface level, Hopper's systems combined user and purchase information, so a customer and their booking would appear as one unit of work. However, the way Hopper's systems amalgamated this data made it difficult to predict overall volumes and specific workloads. They could not answer questions about how many repeat bookers they had or how many units of work should be assigned to an agent.
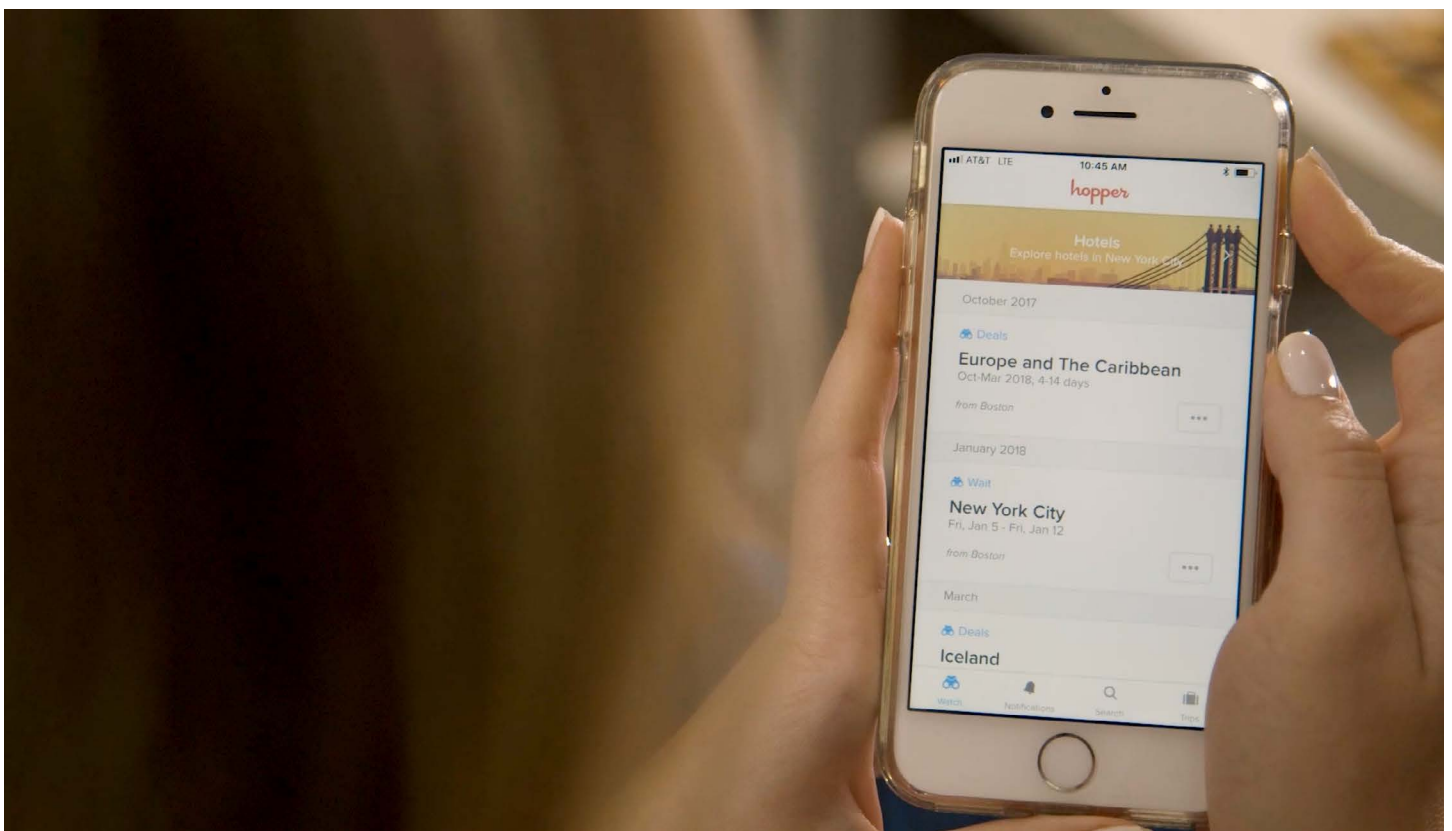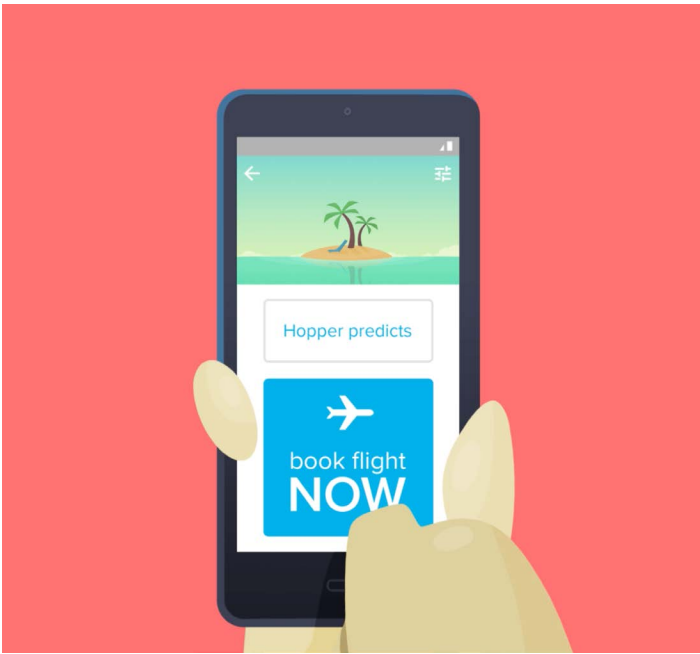
Their existing toolset didn't allow them to dynamically route conversations based on issue type, customer type, or other custom parameters. It was impossible to prioritize based on how pressing a customer issue was, or route a request to the most qualified agent. Travel is a complex business, but Hopper's system addressed everything on a "first come, first served" basis, meaning the person who wanted to request a specific room four months from now would be prioritized if they called first, rather than someone who was at their gate having trouble checking in.

By late 2019, Hopper was at a critical inflection point with their tool stack. They had systems that didn't quite work the way the Hopper team worked. They had more customers than ever before, but they couldn't accurately predict how many staff members they needed to serve those customers. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and Hopper's problems became even more pronounced. As Hopper saw a significant increase in requests from customers about their travel plans, Lai knew they had to move quickly to find a new platform to support their customers.

Finding an Extensible Platform to Grow with Hopper

Hopper's enablement team selected eight different tools to evaluate based on a 300-point criteria table that broke

down every aspect of Hopper's business and what the team needed from a CRM platform. A few of Lai's industry peers had good things to say about their recent **Kustomer** implementation, so Lai added that platform to the mix, too.

A top priority was finding a partner who could move fast with Hopper. The team wanted a partner who could move quickly, but who also had a thorough understanding of how contact centers work and the importance of data models. After evaluating platforms on the team's criteria, Kustomer landed in the top three. From there, Hopper had to determine which team would bend and flex to meet their needs and expectations.

Kustomer stood out for a couple of reasons, the first being how much the team was willing to customize. There are bigger, more legacy platforms out there, but highly innovative companies like Hopper require a great deal of flexibility and customization. Lai's teams also carried the responsibility of seeing firsthand the customer impact from using ill-suited tools during the early stages of the pandemic. Kustomer was ready to dig into the code and ensure their platform fit Hopper's needs.

Another differentiator was Kustomer's many-to-many data model. This would allow Hopper to link information across different platforms, pushing hundreds of different attributes from their backend systems directly into Kustomer and making the platform an extension of Hopper's core technology. Lai's team could see every element of a booking and what was happening with their customers in a way that they couldn't previously. The team liked that the Kustomer timeline gave a 360-degree view of a customer's journey, from their first interaction with the app to contacting Hopper through various channels. All of this could be viewed in a centralized location, where previously, agents had to piece together that picture from different systems.

Kustomer also addressed Hopper's pain points by dynamically routing conversations in the right priority to the right people. And critically, if a customer reaches out to
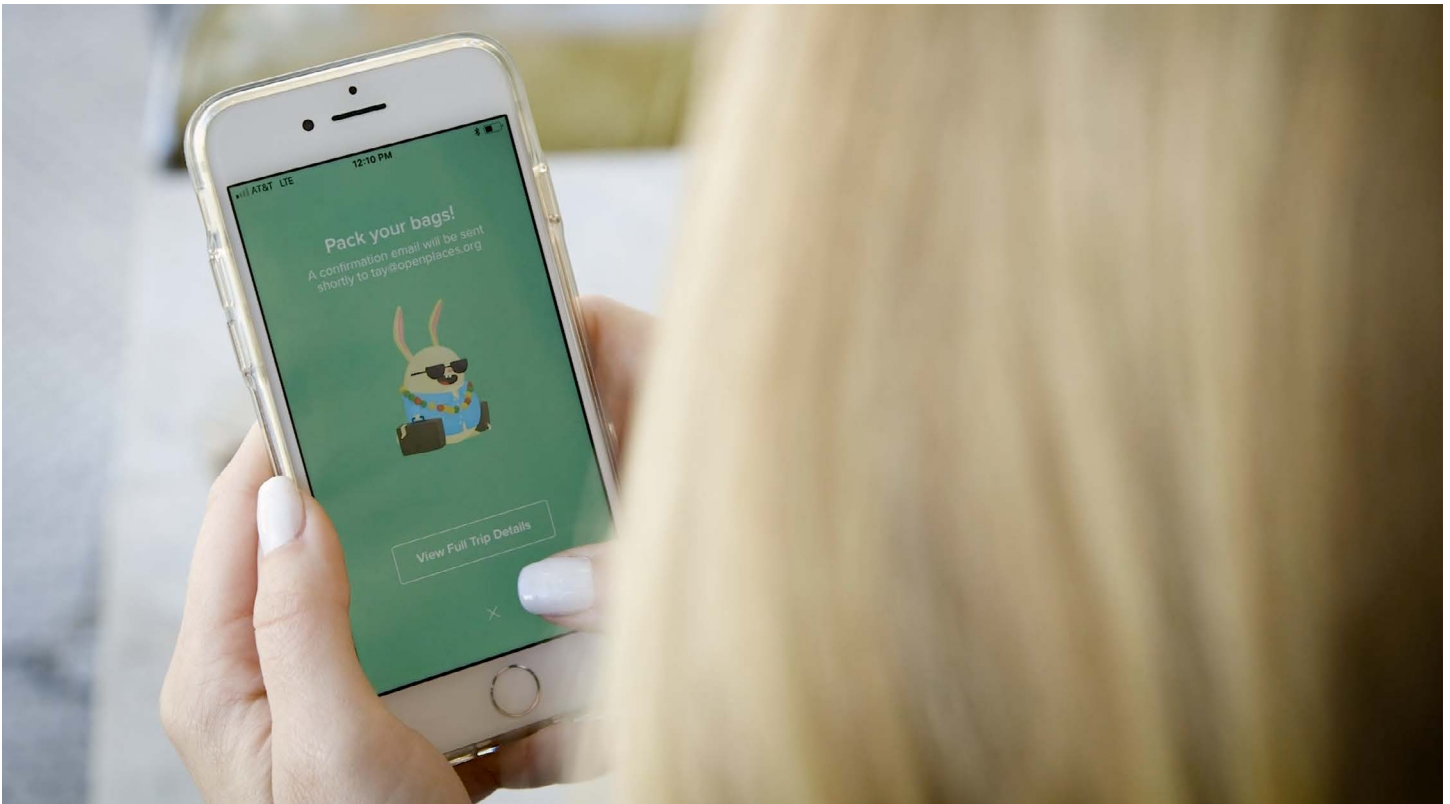
support after their initial contact, they will be routed to the same agent they spoke to before. That's a little thing, but those little things add up to a lot. According to Lai, fostering a connection between a customer and customer support agents is a meaningful value proposition.

Kustomer was the perfect mix of being resilient for scale but built for the needs of a modern service team — something that isn't a given with today's CRM technology. Many platforms are either anchored in the old way of doing things or they're so new that everything ultimately feels like smoke and mirrors, where data gathering is a mess and nothing makes sense. Kustomer's product vision demonstrated a commitment to data-driven customer service.

A CRM transition is no easy task. It takes significant lift and touches every part of the organization, impacting every person's roadmap. Kustomer's sales, enablement, and engineering teams were crucial in helping Lai's team make a case throughout the organization for why the platform was the right fit.

When it came time to deploy, the Kustomer team became an extension of Hopper's amazing in-house implementation team. Together, they created a powerhouse that evaluated and tested everything so Hopper could roll out in a fast-paced but intentional way.

Higher-Quality Service at a Lower Cost

In the few months since implementation, Hopper has already seen positive results. By switching to Kustomer, Hopper removed the redundancies of 13 different layers of technology and cut their customer service software costs by 20%. Right before they implemented Kustomer, Hopper rarely met SLAs. Today, they meet them constantly. Simultaneously, Hopper saw their CSAT go up by 10%. The team is not only spending less on tooling, they're also providing customers with better service in a timeframe Lai could not have fathomed when the team started this journey.

Kustomer provides greater visibility into workloads, which helps with dynamic routing. If Hopper is running a product experiment, for example, they might say that certain

keywords should trigger the call to be moved to a certain group of agents. And now, if a customer is scheduled to travel in a few hours, they become the support team's highest priority.

Enhanced visibility into Hopper's contact volume means Lai's team can finally optimize the number of agents during each shift. According to Lai, when you grow as quickly as Hopper has, the tendency is to throw not enough or too many people at the problem. With better visibility, Hopper can strategically plan and move agents around as needed.

A Unified Customer View Boosts Agent Satisfaction

Kustomer has also improved the lives of Hopper's frontline travel experts. Hopper needs to meet customers where they are, whether it's via email, chat, our app, or social media. Instead of Hopper's agents needing to be in all of these different places to serve customers on their channel of choice, agents can now see all communications within Kustomer. That omnichannel element is so seamless, Lai thinks the agents have forgotten there are different channels at all.

Agents have a greater understanding of their workload and are more efficient when tackling it. Lai sees this in the employee satisfaction surveys conducted before and after the transition to Kustomer. Agents are significantly happier with Kustomer because all of the contextual information they need is easily available, which makes it simpler for them to help customers. They also have greater continuity in their work, all of which improves the customer experience.

Armed with more data about agents' work, Hopper created a performance improvement and career development program for agents. Kustomer unlocked these employee programs that Hopper knew boosted team morale and output, but previously could not formalize because they didn't have the data they needed.

With Kustomer, Hopper found an extensible platform that can grow with their business. Lai wishes that they had hopped on this flight sooner, but they're making up for lost time, fast. Kustomer has helped Hopper gain clarity and visibility on their operations and how they can better serve their customers.

Let's Chat

For more information about the Kustomer platform, schedule a demo at **Kustomer.com** or call **(212) 497-1188.**

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