



How to Use

Gmail as a Help Desk

The Gmail sidebar navigation menu includes the following items:

- Compose
- Inbox
- Sent
- Drafts
- support@rapidroute.co
 - Unassigned
 - Mine
 - Team
- Live Chat
- Phone support
- WhatsApp support
- Analytics

The email conversation interface shows the following details:

- Subject: Need help with billing
- Sentiment: Neutral
- Sender: Sarah Thompson (saraht@cssolutions.com)
- AI Summarizer button
- Message body:

Hi there,

We're facing some financial challenges—any chance you could offer a discount on our subscription?

Hey Sarah,

Thanks for reaching out. I'm sorry to hear about your financial challenges — we'd be happy to offer you a 10% discount on your subscription.

For reference, your Claim ID is AIX7890.

Let me know if there's anything else I can assist you with.
- Send button
- AI Compose button

The support ticket details sidebar includes the following information:

- Support ticket header
- Assigned to: John
- Status: Open
- Tag: Urgent
- AI Billing button
- Claim ID: AIX7890
- Add a note... button
- Urgent tag applied by automation
- Assigned to John by automation

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Foreword

When a business starts out, setting up a shared inbox - like info@ or support@ - is one of the first steps. It's the front door for customer queries, feedback, and requests.

For teams on Google Workspace, this inbox is almost always hosted on Gmail. And for good reason. **Gmail offers a familiar interface, reliable uptime, strong security, and seamless integrations** with other tools in the Google ecosystem.

But as customer queries grow in volume and complexity, the cracks begin to show. **Gmail, by design, isn't built to function as a help desk.** It doesn't give you ownership of conversations. It doesn't track SLAs or response times. It doesn't help your team coordinate on queries, or prevent duplicate replies. And it offers little visibility into how well your support operation is running.

This creates a growing tension. On one hand, Gmail is the tool your team knows and trusts. On the other, it lacks the structure and workflows needed to support customers at scale.

So what's the answer? **Do you switch to a traditional help desk** - with all the onboarding, training, and change management that comes with it? Or do you **find a smarter way to make Gmail work for your team?**

In the pages ahead, we'll discuss how teams across industries - from customer support and finance to IT, logistics, and healthcare - are **turning Gmail into a powerful, scalable help desk.** You'll learn how to bring in automation, assign ownership, collaborate better, and use AI to reduce busywork, without leaving the inbox. Let's get into it.

How Gmail fares at managing customer conversations

There's a common saying in support circles: The best experiences are delivered by teams that work together - and help each other.

Naturally so, while managing customer service, it's important that your team collaborates with ease. But, the unfortunate truth about Gmail, and every other email client for that matter, is that they were designed for 1:1 communication.

Every time your support team uses a shared Gmail account (support@ or help@) to manage customer conversations, teamwork suffers, resolution slows down, and customers are left waiting. It also raises security concerns, since multiple agents sharing one login can compromise accountability and data protection.

Allow us to explain this better.

Delegating emails breeds clutter (and inefficiency)

The usual way most customer support teams work: an email arrives — the manager or supervisor delegates it to an agent/rep — they start working on it. **Delegation is an everyday task for support teams.**

The problem is — with Gmail, **the only way you can delegate an email to someone is by forwarding it.** And forwards unnecessarily clutter everyone's inboxes. Not just that, most emails you forward are forwarded again and more teammates keep getting Cc'd.

Building ownership for emails is tough

The best way to handle customer requests quickly is to assign every email to an “individual” — to have one person on the team “own” the email, and take it to execution.

Inside a shared Gmail account, it is **virtually impossible to build ownership**. Forwarding emails is not a structured way of assigning tasks. There’s always room for missed emails — especially when your team manages a large number every day.



”

We were missing a lot of emails. I had no way of monitoring the workflow. I didn’t know how long we were taking to reply to emails.

Nathan Strang

Director of Ocean Freight, Flexport

Collaboration is bumpy

Inside Gmail, working together with a teammate, or taking help from someone, can get chaotic quickly.

Say you’re working on a customer email and you need help. For the lack of a better option, **you forward the email to your teammate Justin**. Now, Justin wants an opinion from a product engineer - and forwards the email to Simon. Justin still keeps you in Cc so that you are in the loop. Justin and Simon exchange a few emails before it finally comes back to you.

Now that's a lot of internal emails, and it's essentially slowing down the resolution process.

Overseeing emails gets frustrating

Let's say an agent handles an email and replies to the customer. Now, **unless the agent has copied the support@ address in their reply**, there is no way the rest of the team will know of it.

The only way you would know if an email has been resolved is by asking around your team. It's certainly not the most efficient way of managing customer service.

Manual work slows everything down

When you're handling customer service from a regular Gmail inbox, every step becomes manual.

Let's say a billing-related email comes in. Someone has to read it, recognize what it's about, decide who should handle it, label it accordingly, and forward it to the right person. That might sound manageable for a few emails - but it adds up fast when your inbox is constantly filling up.

There's also **no way to automatically prioritize VIP queries, escalate urgent issues, or flag SLA breaches**. Your agents end up doing repetitive admin work, and customers wait longer for responses.

No integrations means lots of context-switching

Now imagine this: You receive an email from a VIP customer asking for a refund.

- You check your inbox and try to find the last conversation for context.
- You log into your CRM to view the order history.
- You ping your manager on Slack to get refund approval.
- You log into Stripe to process the refund.
- You come back to Gmail to write the reply.
- You finally update the CRM with notes from the conversation.

That's six steps and four tools for one support request. This kind of back-and-forth kills time and opens the door to mistakes. When Gmail isn't connected to the tools your team uses, your agents are forced to jump between tabs, track details manually, and piece together the customer story on their own.

”

The number of tabs we have open is insane. Switching between tabs kills productivity. I needed something that worked directly within my Gmail inbox.

Maia Maclin

Operations Manager, Morgan State University



Finding insights is straining

Customer service teams always need answers to a few fundamental questions, such as:

- What is the average time my team takes to reply to - or resolve an issue?
- Which type of problems take more time than others to resolve?
- Who in my team is doing well and who needs a little coaching?

You'd want a bit of analytics and reporting to answer these questions. But Gmail does not offer any of that. To spot patterns in customer queries and resolutions, **you'll be forced to use manually intense spreadsheets.**

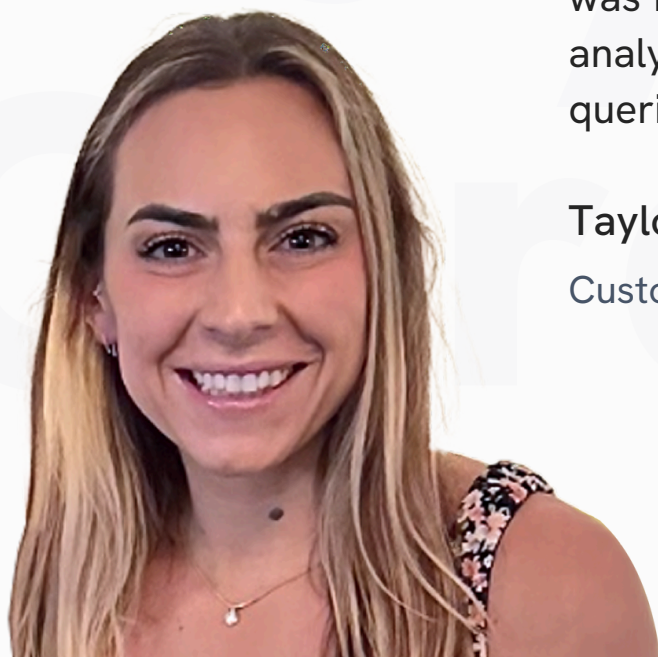
At this stage, a lot of companies start looking for something better to manage their support emails. And many end up resorting to a standalone, external help desk software. But, does that really make things better? Let's find out.

”

Our Gmail-based communication system was functional, but it lacked the in-depth analytics needed to reveal trends in email queries.

Taylor Garceau

Customer Success Manager, Cohere Health



Standalone help desk tools: Yay or Nay?

There's a plethora of help desk tools out there that promise to make customer support a breeze.

But, they come with a steep compromise: **you'll have to step outside Gmail**, into the tool's ecosystem. It's always an entirely new way of managing emails. Teams are forced to change their behavior and adopt new habits. There is always a round of training involved.

Here are a few problems support teams face when they use standalone help desk systems:

Emails turn into (impersonal) tickets

Have you ever received an email with a subject line similar to "Re: CASE76543"? Or a weirdly-formatted email that starts with "##please do not write below this line##"?

This is the **age-old practice known as Ticketing**. Most help desk tools turn customer emails into tickets that agents "resolve" in chronological order. The problem with ticketing is that:

- Agents enter the mindset of resolving tickets (as opposed to having conversations with customers)
- Customers receive robotic-looking emails that address them as numbers (and not people)

- It takes away humanness from conversations. Teams just solve problems - instead of building relationships



”

Ticketing systems like Zendesk generate emails that don't look like regular email. I wanted to interface with our customers and vendors in a manner that was familiar to them rather than forcing them to use email in a different way.

Joshua Fialkoff

Chief Operating Officer, Specialty Box

Getting the team onboard isn't easy

When teams outgrow Gmail, the natural next step is often a dedicated help desk tool. On paper, these tools check a lot of boxes - ticketing, SLAs, reporting, automation, analytics, and so on. But in reality, they come with their own set of trade-offs.

One of the biggest challenges? **Change management.** Most help desks have clunky interfaces. Getting your team up to speed can take weeks, sometimes months. That's time spent learning a new tool instead of supporting customers. And if you're working with a lean team, this switch often slows things down before it speeds anything up. (Not to mention the added cost, which can be significant.)

So while standalone help desks offer more structure than a basic inbox, they also introduce more complexity. Before you make the leap, it's worth asking: *Do you need a new platform - or do you just need to make Gmail work better for support?*



A frequent and ironic complaint is that for a company that sells customer support software, its own support can be slow and difficult to access, particularly for customers on lower-tier plans.

Zendesk user review 



The spam folder sometimes indicates active messages, but when opened, it appears empty. This makes me worry that important emails might be missed.

Help Scout user review 



Customer service can be slow to review errors, and they require a message ID to resolve the issue when not all issues are specifically email related.

Front user review 

The best of both worlds - brilliant customer service from Gmail

So, if helpdesks are bulky and make customer support impersonal, how do you manage customer communications efficiently?

While we discussed the limitations of Gmail in handling customer conversations earlier, there's no doubt that it is extremely intuitive and comfortable to use.

What if you could bring together the best of both worlds - **adding helpdesk-like functionalities to your Gmail inbox?**

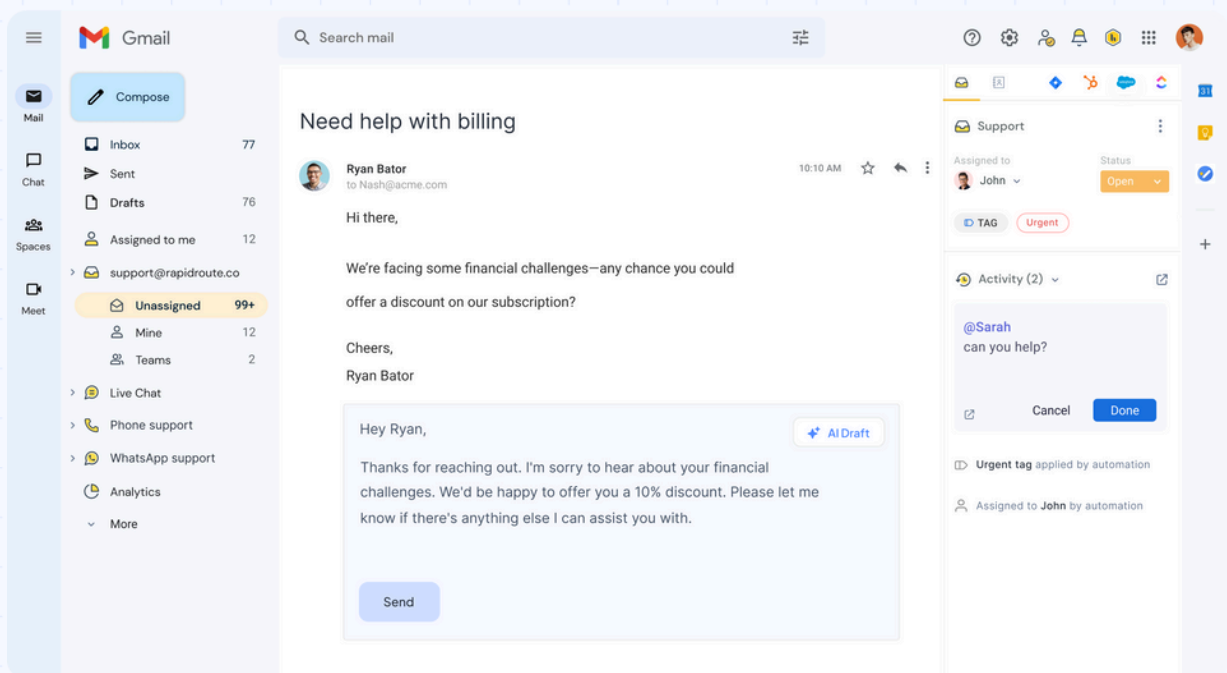
In that case, your agents wouldn't have to migrate to an external platform. They also wouldn't need significant training or hand holding as they get to work within the familiar Gmail interface.

So, how do you bring help desk capabilities into Gmail? That's where a solution like [Hiver](#) comes in.

Hiver is a modern, AI-powered help desk that works inside Gmail, letting teams manage customer conversations across email, live chat, WhatsApp, voice, SMS, Facebook, and Instagram without switching tools. Setup is effortless, and your team can start resolving queries in minutes (not months).

It goes beyond basic ticketing with **automation, analytics, and integrations** that keep support efficient and transparent. You can assign conversations, set SLAs to stay on top of commitments, track performance with conversation and tag-level reports, and connect with tools like Slack, Salesforce, or QuickBooks to keep customer context in sync.

And at the core, **Hiver's AI is woven into every layer of the experience**. From deflecting repetitive queries to suggesting context-aware replies, routing conversations, and automating triage, AI works hand in hand with your team—so agents spend less time on busywork and more time solving meaningful customer problems.



Notice how the support@ inbox becomes a part of Gmail?

By investing in the right technology, your team can manage customer conversations right from their work inboxes. And in doing so, you can finally bid adieu to the constant switching between tools, and even tabs.

Here's why Hiver is the perfect solution for your team to handle your support volume:

Trusted by 10,000+ teams that use Gmail for work

For growing teams that manage a high volume of customer conversations, finding the right support tool is often a trade-off between power and usability. That's exactly where Hiver stands out. It brings help desk functionality directly into Gmail, so your team doesn't need to switch platforms or spend weeks figuring out a new system.

*One of the biggest reasons teams choose Hiver is the zero learning curve. Since it works inside the Gmail interface, your agents already know how to use it. There's **no complex setup, no need for dedicated IT support, and no time-consuming onboarding**. You can go live in minutes; not days. That also means your team can start responding to customers right away, without relying on training guides or adapting to a new way of working. It's self-serve by design, making adoption seamless.*



Very easy to implement, only a few clicks away. We use it daily in our operations team."

User review of Hiver on 

Security is another reason why Hiver earns the trust of teams handling sensitive data - whether it's customer support, finance, logistics, or IT. Emails can contain everything from billing details to internal notes, so the tool you choose needs to be airtight. Hiver doesn't store your emails; they continue to live on Gmail's secure servers.

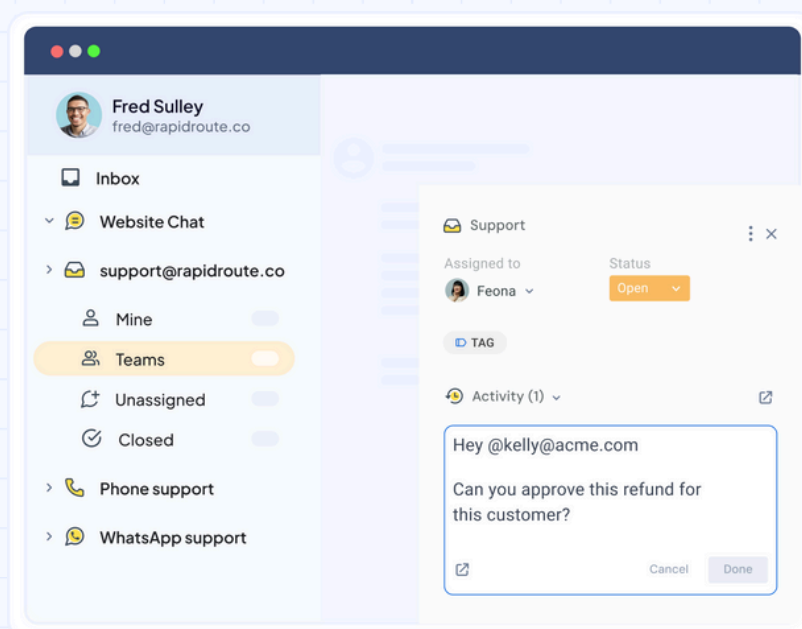
And to add to that, Hiver is a certified Google Partner, SOC 2 Type II compliant, ISO 27001 certified, and fully compliant with the EU-US Privacy Shield framework. You get the structure of a help desk with the safety and reliability of your existing email environment.

It's this balance - between familiarity, ease of use, and enterprise-grade security - that makes Hiver the go-to choice for 10,000+ teams around the world.

Fostering ownership: Never miss an email

Delegating work is a core function of any support team. If you're managing customer conversations from Gmail, it only makes sense to continue doing so - but only if your team has a reliable way to assign queries and stay accountable.

That's where Hiver comes in. **Every incoming email can be assigned to a specific team member with just a click.** This creates immediate clarity - everyone knows who's working on what, and nothing slips through unnoticed.

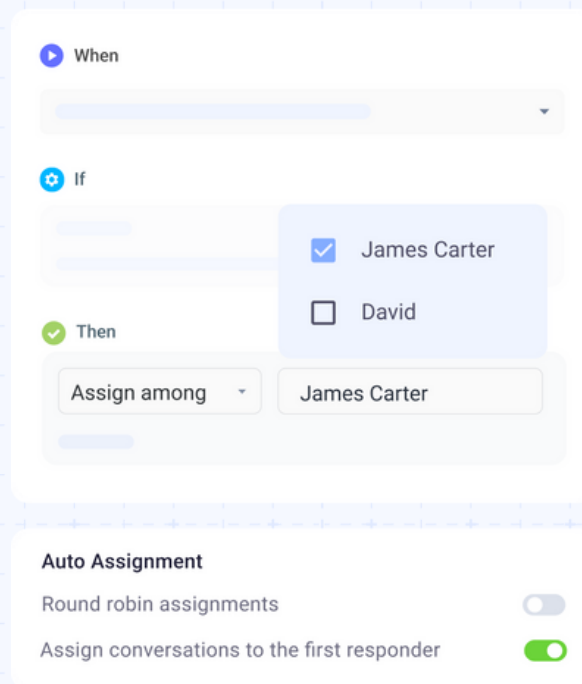


Automate workflows and stay ahead of the queue

When support volumes grow, manually sorting, tagging, and assigning emails just doesn't scale. It slows your team down and takes time away from actually helping customers. That's where [Hiver's automation](#) feature helps.

Set up simple, no-code rules that take care of the busywork - right inside Gmail. You can assign emails to the right person based on keywords, sender details, or CRM ownership. Whether it's a refund request, a shipping update, or a VIP query, it goes straight to the right person - no forwarding or Slack messages needed.

Need to balance workloads across the team? Automations can route emails based on skill, current availability, or even round-robin logic, so no one gets overloaded and every customer gets a timely response.



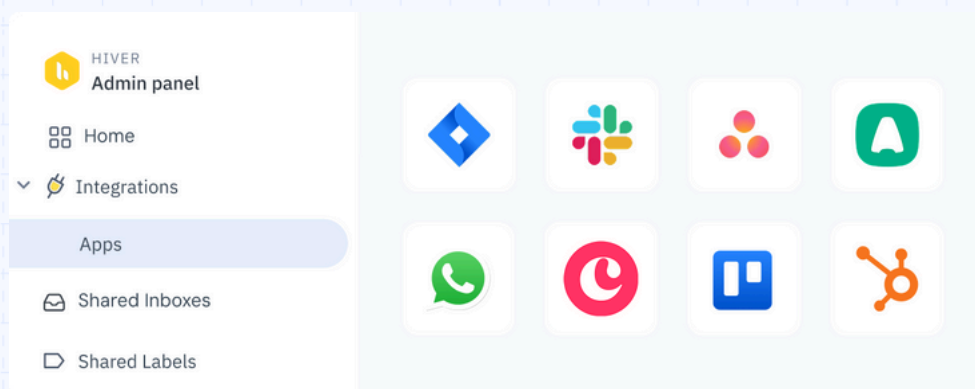
You can also automate tagging, prioritizing, and routine actions like updating status or syncing data with your CRM. This keeps your inbox organized and helps your team triage faster. And if you're working with SLAs, automations make it easier to hit reply-time goals by cutting the delay between when a message comes in and when someone picks it up.

There's even more flexibility if you use a mix of personal and shared inboxes. Let's say product inquiries land in your personal inbox, but need to be handled by the support team. You can set up an automation so that any email matching a specific criteria (like subject line or sender domain) is instantly moved from your personal inbox to a shared mailbox, with ownership assigned. No copy-pasting. No delays.

Integrate your favorite apps and work without disruption

Support teams don't work in silos, and your customer data shouldn't either. Whether you're managing tickets, checking order history, processing refunds, or collaborating with other teams, the tools you use need to work together. That's where Hiver's integrations come in.

Hiver connects with over 100 popular business apps, bringing all your customer context into one place - your inbox. You can view, update, and even create CRM or ERP records without switching tabs. Whether it's Salesforce, HubSpot, NetSuite, Shopify, or Jira, Hiver lets your agents access the information they need, right where they're already working.



Need something more custom? Hiver also supports integrations via Zapier and gives you full access to its API, so you can build custom workflows tailored to your business. Whether it's syncing customer notes, triggering actions in another app, or updating internal dashboards, it all stays connected.

AI capabilities that help you do more with less

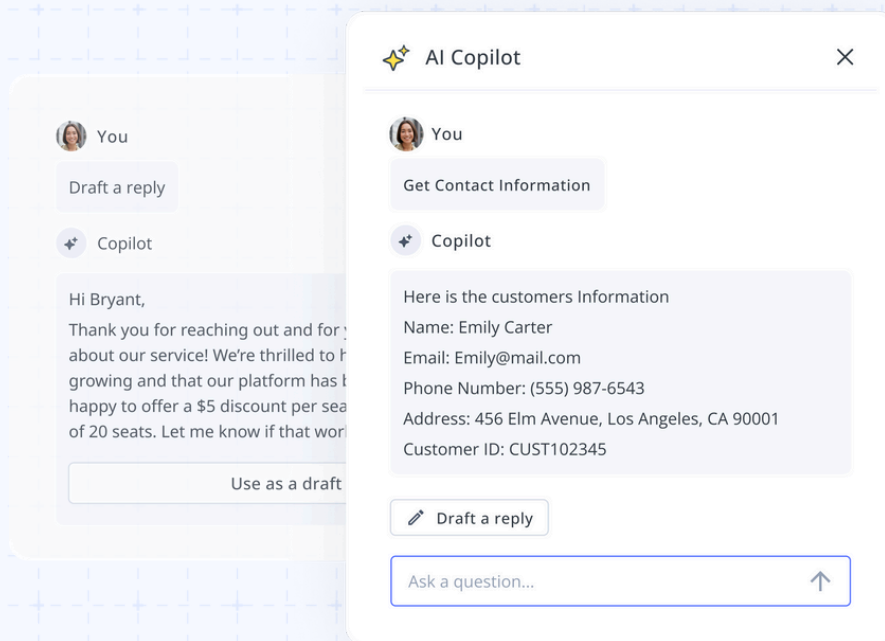
AI is playing a bigger role in how support teams work, helping them move faster, stay consistent, and reduce manual effort across the board. The right AI features can streamline everything from triaging emails to drafting responses.

For instance, when a system can automatically tag and route incoming messages or suggest the best reply based on previous conversations, agents save time and customers get quicker responses.

[Hiver](#) brings AI into every stage of the customer service journey. **It helps manage repetitive tasks, improves response quality, and creates room for agents to focus on complex conversations.** Here's how Hiver puts AI to work:

- **AI Copilot** suggests the best response to every query by pulling from your knowledge base, past tickets, and connected tools. Agents no longer have to search manually or write the same replies over and over.
- **AI-powered live chat** handles customer questions 24/7 using information from your help center, past conversations, and even external apps.
- **AI triaging** helps your team stay organized from the moment a message hits the inbox. It can automatically tag conversations based on keywords - like "billing" or "shipment."
- **AI sentiment analysis** automatically detects the tone of customer messages - positive, neutral, or negative, so your team can prioritize and respond with the right approach.

- **AI Extractor** pulls key details like invoice numbers, order IDs, or account information from emails into custom fields, saving time on manual data entry.
- **AI Compose** lets you clean up replies instantly. You can fix grammar, change tone, shorten the message, or make it sound more polished with a single click.
- **Smart email summaries** turn long threads into quick, digestible notes - making it easier for teammates to step in and respond.



Human conversations (no impersonal tickets)

At the end of the day, the support you provide has to be human and personal in order to truly drive customer loyalty. This is where **having a customer support solution that doesn't turn queries into ticket numbers** - like what conventional helpdesks often do - can make a huge difference.

A solution that treats genuine customer queries as they are empowers your agents to have personal conversations with customers. Without random ticket numbers associated with queries, **agents can empathize better with actual customer painpoints** and provide more relevant answers.

Eventually, they start looking at their jobs as something much more than just hitting a monthly quota of resolving 'X' number of queries. Instead, they look at queries as opportunities to truly delight customers and do what it takes to put a smile on their faces.

”

Hiver helps us have natural conversations with customers. It's so much better than the 'here's your ticket number—stand in line' model we had before.

Scott Gellatly

General Manager, itGenius



Reporting that tells a story

Fast replies are important - but they're only part of the equation. A strong support setup also needs visibility, feedback, and tools that help your team and your customers stay in sync. Hiver brings all of this together, without adding extra complexity.

You can [track what's happening](#) across your shared inbox in real time. See which tickets are open, where things are stuck, and how your team is doing on key metrics like response time, resolution time, and CSAT.

If you need to plan staffing or spot workload imbalances, the data's right there. **And if your team tracks unique metrics, you can customize reports to dig into exactly what matters to you.**





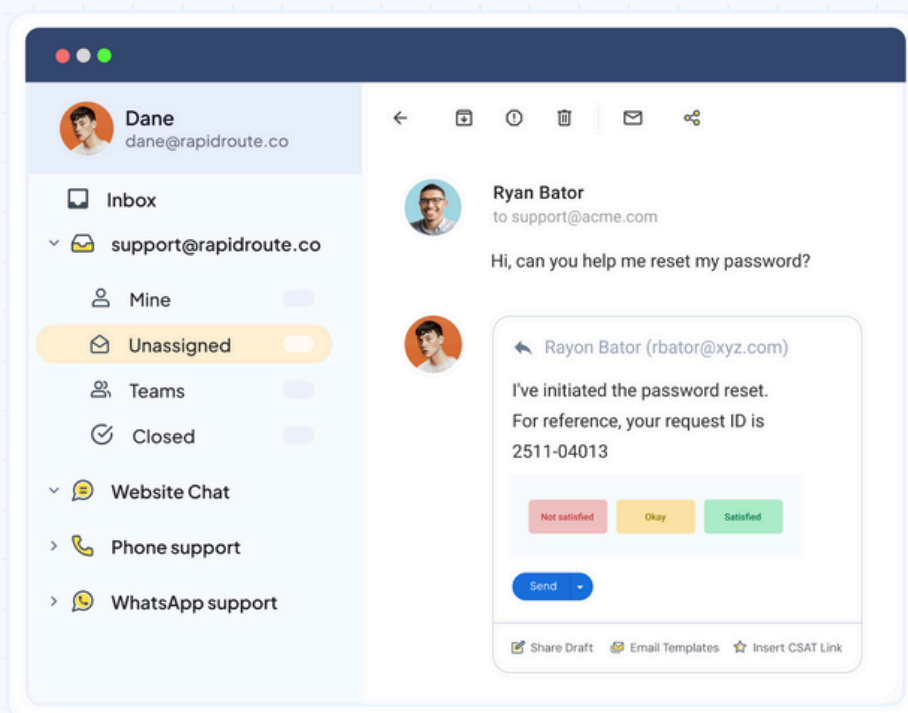
I use SLAs and analytics to coach the team and set expectations. Tracking overdue emails and response times ensures we stay on track and meet deadlines.

Maia Maclin

Operations Manager, Morgan State University

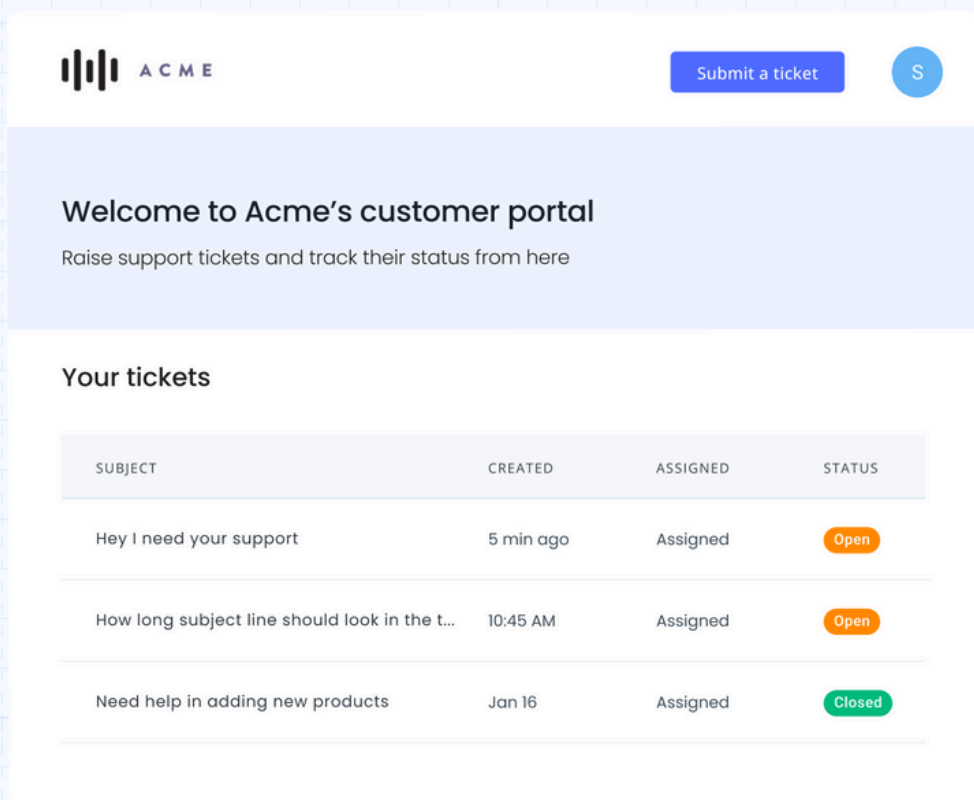
Plus, everything your support team will love, and need in one place

Want to know how customers feel? Hiver makes that simple too. You can send [CSAT surveys](#) automatically - after a resolution, after each reply, or whenever it makes sense for your workflow. **You control the timing and the questions, and you get honest, actionable feedback** that helps you improve service and train your team better.



Hiver also gives your customers a place of their own. You can set up a [branded customer portal](#) where **they can raise queries and check ticket progress** without having to follow up. Everything from the logo to the URL can reflect your brand. Ticket forms are customizable too - so your team gets the full context up front, and customers don't have to repeat themselves.

And then there's the [knowledge base](#). It **helps customers help themselves** - whether it's a quick how-to or answers to common issues. Agents can share articles in replies, and customers can search for what they need before even reaching out. That means fewer repetitive tickets, faster resolutions, and more time for your team to focus on the conversations that actually need their attention.



The screenshot displays a customer portal for 'Acme'. At the top left is the Acme logo, and at the top right is a 'Submit a ticket' button and a user profile icon with the letter 'S'. Below the header is a blue banner with the text 'Welcome to Acme's customer portal' and 'Raise support tickets and track their status from here'. Underneath is a section titled 'Your tickets' containing a table of support tickets.

SUBJECT	CREATED	ASSIGNED	STATUS
Hey I need your support	5 min ago	Assigned	Open
How long subject line should look in the t...	10:45 AM	Assigned	Open
Need help in adding new products	Jan 16	Assigned	Closed

How different teams deliver great customer service using Hiver

From IT service management and logistics to HR, healthcare, and travel, teams across industries rely on Hiver to manage high-stakes communication, all from the simplicity of Gmail.

Whether it's handling support tickets, resolving internal IT issues, managing vendor emails, or responding to time-sensitive customer queries, Hiver helps teams stay fast, accountable, and collaborative, without switching platforms.

The logo for Flexport, featuring the word "flexport." in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font. The "flex" is in a dark blue color, and "port." is in black. A small red dot is positioned at the end of the period.

Hiver helps Flexport resolve customer emails **50% faster**

Flexport is a Softbank-backed freight forwarding and customs brokerage company based in San Francisco, California.

The challenge

Flexport's team was using Gmail to manage customer conversations, and was forced to forward emails to team members for assigning work. **Building ownership for emails was not easy that way, and there were frequent misses.**

The solution

With Hiver, the customer service team at Flexport overcame the lapses of Gmail for good.

- They now assign emails with ease (no forwarding) and build ownership for each request. With every email accounted for, the team has stopped missing emails.
- Their manager has insights into team members' performance: how many conversations they handle in a given time, the average time they take to resolve emails, and more.
- Team members collaborate faster without sending more emails or switching to chat applications.



”

With Hiver, I have much better visibility into where an issue is on the resolution path. And we've stopped missing emails. It is essentially like having an additional person on my team.

Nathan Strang

Director of Ocean Freight, Flexport



Hiver helped Kiwi.com achieve a 100% SLA completion rate

Kiwi.com is a Czech online travel agency that works with customers across the globe. Presently, they are one of the five biggest online sellers of flight tickets in Europe.

The challenge

The team was using Gmail lists to route incoming emails to members. Each incoming email was sent to every member's individual inbox. **Establishing who had to work on what was not easy.**

At the same time, it was hard for David (the manager) to oversee his team's workflow. He had no visibility into the ownership and status of emails.

As a result, the team sometimes missed the 24-hour SLA.

The solution

With Hiver, Kiwi.com turned their email lists into Shared Inboxes. It helps team members stay on the same page about what's going on.

Okay, so here's how Hiver's shared inboxes fare against Gmail lists

Email lists	Hiver's shared inbox
Each incoming email is sent to every team member's personal inbox.	Each incoming email is sent to the shared inbox.
Every member accesses a "copy" of the same email. (Sam deletes an email - Ralph can see it).	Members access the same email "synced across inboxes." (Sam deletes an email - it is deleted for everyone).
Even when someone has replied to an email, the rest of the team would not know about it.	When one person replies to an email, everyone on the team can see that.

David and his team's lives have become easier since they started using Hiver:

- With rule-based automations, emails are assigned to members with zero manual intervention.
- The entire team is always on the same page about who is working on what, and every email's status.
- The time they used to spend establishing who has to work on an email — or the time David used to spend finding out the status of emails — is saved now.



”

I can see how much workload my team members have, their response time, and average time to close it. We never miss the SLA of 24 hours. Hiver helps my team grow faster.

David Pinto

Key Account Manager - APAC, Kiwi.com



Turn your Gmail inbox into an AI-powered help desk

Get unlimited users on Free plan ✦ No credit card needed

[Get it free](#)

[Book a demo](#)