

Helping Music Fans Get Their Beloved Band Merch . . . ASAP

Online marketplace scales customer support team amid rapid growth and transformative global partnerships

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CLIENT

Online retailer of music merchandise

INDUSTRY

E-commerce, music, entertainment

TRANSFORMATION

- **First-touch response within 8 hours**
- **24-Hour response time for 700 to 1,000 weekly support tickets**
- **Support team expected to grow from 2 to 20 agents within 2 years**

The Challenge

Merchbar is an online marketplace that houses the world's largest collection of official music apparel and merchandise, highlighting 35,000+ artists. Products run the gamut from T-shirts and hats to vinyl records and headphones. The e-commerce startup works behind the scenes, partnering with companies like Live Nation and Universal Music Group to dropship products to customers.

Engulfed by hundreds of help tickets daily, Merchbar needed to scale their **11-person** support team rapidly. The holiday season was quickly approaching, and Merchbar needed to build out a team that could handle the high volume of tickets and coordinate proactively with multiple suppliers.

As an online marketplace, Merchbar is constantly balancing its role working with external suppliers and servicing its customers. Playing the middleman slows down the process, often disappointing fans dealing with delayed orders, cancellations or failed deliveries.

Merchbar Fan Support Manager Sarah Murray, who started as the only full-time employee managing customer support, would often sense customers getting angry or frustrated when orders didn't go smoothly. She understood why. Merchbar customers are a particular breed of customers: hardcore music fans, excited to see their merch arrive on their doorstep.

"It's special to get a piece of merch from your favorite band," Murray explains. "We're trying to show the fans that we care about the whole process of buying a record, for example, and we really value that experience. That's why we want the process to be super seamless."

Specific Goals for the Online Specialty Marketplace

Merchbar was ready to grow their customer support team through outsourcing, and they had a long list of must-haves for their ideal partner. As they weighed their options, they identified their top customer support goals:

- **Consistent Follow-up with External Suppliers**
At Merchbar, serving customers often means advocating for them. Team members need to follow up consistently with external partners, including suppliers, distributors and retailers
- **Speedy Email Responses with a Caring Voice**
In addition to the 24-hour response time required for all customer emails, Merchbar wanted agents who understood music fans on a deeper level. The team members would have to be well-trained on escalations and communicate with empathy.
- **Flexible and Cost-Effective Solution**
As a startup, Merchbar needed a budget-friendly partner that could meet their immediate needs and be able to accommodate fast growth.

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Building Trust and Growing with Enshored

New Partnerships with YouTube and Spotify Catapult Growth

Merchbar partnered with Enshored eight weeks before the 2018 holiday season. Enshored assembled and trained a team of two at first, which allowed Merchbar to meet the holiday season sales spike. Little by little, the extended team began taking on higher escalation tickets and grew to seven support agents.

Nine months into the Enshored partnership, Merchbar became YouTube's only official music merchandise partner. **Considering Merchbar already had an existing partnership with Spotify,**

its elevated profile intensified demands on customer support. Meanwhile, Enshored was equipped to adapt and scaled Merchbar's team.

"We knew Enshored could spin up a team fast enough to meet our demand," Murray says. "It's been great for us to increase our support capacity while we focus on other projects and grow as a company."

Results

First-Touch Response within 8 Hours

When the support team hears from a customer for the first time, agents realize how critical it is for customers to hear back right away. That's why they respond within eight hours of receiving the ticket.

24-Hour Response Time for 700 to 1,000 Weekly Support Tickets

Oftentimes, help tickets require about three to four interactions to be fully resolved. Customers sending follow-up messages hear back from agents within 24 hours. Even with the high volume, Murray doesn't feel like she needs to spot-check her team's work.

"I can trust them to get everything done correctly," Murray says.

Bigger Responsibilities over Time

At first, the new support team started handling inquiries about orders of \$50 or less. As the agents proved themselves to Merchbar, they began to take on greater responsibilities. Now the agents manage orders of \$150 or less. Four support agents are dedicated to resolving high-escalation tickets from irate customers.

Never-Ending Empathy and Positive Attitude—No Matter What

When something goes wrong with an order, Merchbar's passionate music fans can easily become angry. Luckily, Merchbar's customer support team knows how to handle delicate situations.

"People want to be heard at the end of the day, and Enshored's agents are really great about saying, 'I understand your frustration here. We're going to do our best to make sure we get everything settled,'" Murray says. "It's hard to be positive when you deal with a lot of frustrated people day to day. The Enshored crew is so positive and they really care about their work."

"I can trust them to get everything done. I know that it's going to get done correctly, and I'm not going to have to spot-check it."

Sarah Murray | Merchbar Fan Support Manager

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Enshored specializes in outsourcing to many of the fastest growing companies in the world. Our tailored outsourcing services and experience building handpicked teams mean we can meet your customer support, content moderation, back office support, sales and marketing and other needs. Our teams truly become an extension of your business.

Contact Enshored today to learn more about how you can find creative solutions to your outsourcing needs.

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