



Case study — Retail

A new direction for multilingual support at TomTom

Facing support bottlenecks and inefficiencies, the leading location technology specialist turned to Unbabel to help cut costs, streamline agent workflows, and improve multilingual customer experience.



Executive Summary

While facing challenges with seasonal hiring, TomTom realized they needed an agile tech solution to get through service peaks and unlock low-volume languages. Unbabel, the AI-Human translation platform, enabled TomTom to spin out a specialized team of "multilingual" agents, helping to reduce support costs by 20% YoY and turn-around times by over 40%. Deeply invested in customer excellence, TomTom chose Unbabel for its high level of customizability through API and unmatched linguistic resources — which ensure that quality remains consistently high and always improving over time.

Meet TomTom

Founded in 1991, TomTom has been disrupting location technologies with highly accurate maps, navigation software, real-time traffic information and services. With over 5,000 employees operating in 29 countries, TomTom continues to market best-in-class personal navigation devices while rapidly branching out into satellite-powered mobile apps. With eyes focused on the road ahead, TomTom's mission is to create a safer, cleaner, congestion-free world, accelerating into the future of mobility.



Key figures

€687 million in revenue FY 2018

2004 TomTom changes the market with first gen PNDs

22 languages supported by TomTom CS team

www.tomtom.com

Challenges and objectives

For TomTom, a growing number of competitors from the mobile sector meant their approach to global customer experience had to be more innovative and more cost-effective than ever.

But like most businesses in retail, seasonal peaks, support team turnover, and variable demand for long-tail language support made it nearly impossible to balance customer excellence and operational agility.

Penny Weemer, Customer Care Manager at TomTom, explains that a constantly evolving support workflow made it difficult to prepare adequately for incoming volumes — especially with **expensive languages like German and Dutch**.

The cumulative effect of wide dips and increases in inbound volumes had begun to take a toll on the overall efficiency of TomTom's support operations.

"We have a summer peak, so it's really hard to keep a consistent level of staffing in the languages we need throughout the entire year. We'd find ourselves with huge email backlogs, big phone abandon rate, because we weren't able to get the right number of people for our staffing at a given time. Alternatively, we might end up overstaffed during quieter periods. It's really impossible to hire the right people for four months, especially when it takes months to get them trained."



With an in-house support team located in Amsterdam, where the competition for a very small talent pool of multilingual speakers can be fierce, the financial and operational costs of multilingual support quickly pile up.

"There's a lot of other recruiters out there looking for a similar profile. German-speaking agents were nearly impossible to find — even in Germany, it's quite difficult to find, hire, and train the right person for the job."

— Penny Weemer, Customer Care Manager, TomTom

Help wanted: flexible operations

And, beyond the bottom line, **personnel inconsistencies can bring down customer experience.**

Weemer and her team knew that **off-and-on hiring wasn't sustainable.** Neither was letting support queue numbers spiral out of control as a small multilingual team did its best to chip away at customer inquiries.

Before considering tech solutions like Unbabel, Weemer describes an array of solutions that seemed likely to compromise the high quality customer experience they set out to preserve. Removing phone as a channel and changing operating hours, for example, would have given TomTom operational flexibility and resources to invest heavily in conventional multilingual customer service, hiring native-speaking agents on digital channels — but it would have come at the cost of TomTom customers who prefer voice support.

TomTom's requirements were clear: **a tech-powered solution that would cut costs while boosting the overall customer experience across channels.**

It'd also have to sit well with agents and workflows in diverse settings, including in-house teams in Pune, Amsterdam and Lodz, as well as by business service provider partners in Caeiro and Istanbul.



Slashing TAT and operating costs with scalable support translation

The initial decision to roll out a pilot with Unbabel came down to one factor: **seamless integration via API**. Weemer explains that, with other solutions, the development costs were steep. "The option to build our own translation workflow meant we could keep customize according to our needs and keep costs lower," says Weemer.

Navigating the transition to AI + human translation

Rollout of Unbabel began in June 2018. As a part of TomTom's multilingual strategy, Weemer assembled a team of some of her best support agents based in Pune.

"We have a very good in-house team in Pune, India," Weemer explains. "They're English speaking, and were already handling native English emails." Extending the range of an elite, strategically located support team was something that, in the past, simply would have seemed too good to be true.

"Taking an English speaking team and making them able to support multiple languages at once opens up all manner of possibilities. You could have one agent assisting Brazilian, Finnish, and Polish customers where with traditional support you would have had to rely on three inconsistently utilized native agents."

— Penny Weemer, Customer Care Manager, TomTom

Weemer made sure to train and coach Unbabel agents in regionalisms and empathy so they could hit the ground running, and improve the quality of service in every language they might cover.

"We trained Unbabel agents in the tool, and in the regional differences so they would know how things like repairs would be in other regions," says Weemer.



World-class linguistics resources and continuous improvement

Even as Weemer worked to ensure that her team was ready to engage with customers from around the world, the **Linguistics Resources team at Unbabel worked closely with TomTom to compile a number of resources, ensuring the transition was smooth and translation quality consistently high**. Through a mixture of glossaries, translation

memories, and support templates, Unbabel provided Weemer's support team with the tools they needed to succeed at their job.

Unbabel's continuous self-learning MT meant that translation speed and quality only improved with the passage of time.

"Unbabel not only works with pre-translated terms and sentences that we have provided, but also learns with every support interaction," says Weemer, "with a helping hand from the linguists at Unbabel, of course."

Happy agents, satisfied customers

"The agents love being part of the Unbabel project," says Weemer, "They're even picking up some useful phrases in the languages they are supporting."

A motivated team, equipped with a powerful solution, makes a big impact on overall efficiency and satisfaction.

"With Unbabel, language is no longer a limitation. Since we started using Unbabel, we've seen a reduction in support costs, while increasing customer satisfaction and drastically reducing email TAT by 42% and chat abandon rate by 10% year-over-year."

TAT improvements with Unbabel:

- Overall Email TAT from 2.7 days to 1.9 days

- BR email TAT reduced from 7 days to 2.5 days

- IT email TAT reduced from 4 days to 2.5 days

You can chalk up those massive savings partly to equally **dramatic reductions in turn-around time**. But ultimately it's been Unbabel's warm reception with TomTom customers that has impressed Weemer.

Customer satisfaction scores for email are up 12% on average across all languages since 2018, while the Unbabel-enabled support team recently notched 80% CSAT on chat, which is higher than their native team CSAT.

Unbabel had wiped the language barrier off the map, allowing TomTom to provide **faster and more personal customer support in 22 languages**.

"We had a Dutch customer who was so happy with the service provided that he wanted to take the agent out for a coffee to celebrate," Weemer recounts. "He didn't seem to notice that he wasn't talking to a Dutch native in the Netherlands, but an agent in Pune using Unbabel."

Weemer notes that the high quality of the translation, combined with the transformative impact on operations, speaks to Unbabel's broader potential.

"Unbabel can definitely answer a lot of contact center challenges. You can build a team with your best agents, regardless of the language they speak, and deliver great customer experience, while improving TAT and reducing costs."

— Penny Weemer, Customer Care Manager, TomTom

Key takeaways

Seasonal hiring doesn't solve the volume problem.

- If in the thick of the moment, seasonal hiring seems like a viable way to address fluctuating volumes, in practice it rarely produces real impact.
- Training alone can take months — and you don't want to rush it.
- Completely scalable, Unbabel allows TomTom to provide multilingual support in 22 languages, including low-volumes languages, without increasing headcount.

Why go for language skills when you can have people skills?

- While it's important to meet customers where they are — that is, in their native language — language skills don't have any bearing on a support agent's ability to meet customers needs.
- Unbabel's unique blend of machine and human translation means that language is simply a non-issue in support workflows.
- TomTom has harnessed seamless translation to create an elite team of Unbabel agents, wiping out support bottlenecks in the process.

The flexibility of a tech-powered solution can't be beat.

- Working with Unbabel, TomTom has readied its support team for whatever peak season throws its way — whether that's long-tail languages or spikes in the languages they thought they had covered with native agents.
- That flexibility wouldn't mean much if the quality wasn't there — but best-in-class linguistic resources has propelled TomTom's support operations to new success.

The Unbabel effect:



Contributed to 20% reduction in support costs YoY



42% reduction in overall email TAT



10% decrease in chat abandon rate



12% increase in CSAT after a year

At Unbabel, we believe language shouldn't stand in the way of relationships. Learn how we can help you serve customers in any language, with fast, fully integrated translations of the content powering your support operations:

<https://unbabel.com/customer-service/>

