



Case study

CSAT scores that soar

How Skyscanner used Unbabel to drive efficiency and increase customer satisfaction by 22.5% in under a year.



Meet Skyscanner

Edinburgh-based Skyscanner helps people to plan and book directly from millions of travel options at the best prices. Founded in 2003 as the only search engine to recognize low-cost/no-frills airlines, the business has always used completeness and independence as its USPs.

From there, Skyscanner became **the world's #1 travel search engine**, with 60M+ visitors per month, speaking 30+ languages, booking \$11.2B of airline tickets and still growing dramatically at over 40% year over year.

In November 2016, Skyscanner's became one of the UK's few "Unicorns" after being purchased for £1.46B (C\$1.7B) by Chinese travel and hospitality agency, CTrip.



Key figures

No. 1 global search engine for travel

60M+ monthly visitors

60M+ app downloads

30+ customer languages

1200+ global partners on 5 continents

40% YoY growth



Scaling Customer Service

The trajectory from 2003 to 2016's acquisition has been one of exceptional customer growth and a huge evolution in the service provided. Originally, Skyscanner users were rapidly dispatched to airline and hotel websites. This is how, in 2012, **despite traffic of 30M users per month**, Skyscanner found itself with just one customer support agent fielding inquiries manually through Zendesk. As the Skyscanner product has become more all-embracing, its customer service offering has become more involved and ever more important to deliver effectively.

When **Jon Thorne** joined as Global User Satisfaction Manager in 2013, he realized that Skyscanner's transition from a data company to a service business was generating a deluge of new customer service interactions. His challenge was:

- **To put service front and center of the business:** Skyscanner's reputation now stood on service as much as information accuracy
- **To optimize the cost and efficiency** of maintaining a high-quality customer service function as the business grew dramatically, including into new territories

In the summer of 2017, **Skyscanner's 10-person support team provided a consistently high level of service across multiple time zones and languages thanks to Unbabel.** But with over 60M monthly users, that still represents an incredibly lean customer service operation — a team which has nevertheless **managed to cut first response times by three quarters in three years.**



Before Unbabel:



First reply:

17 Hours



CSAT:

Stuck at 75%



Requests:

58% English

Go global, serve local

Quickly scaling a customer service operation to provide consistently high-quality support for international customers is a huge challenge.

Thorne's starting point was an appreciation of the aspects of each interaction that would most affect customer satisfaction, along with a commercial focus on the operational elements that could be changed to improve service without increasing budgets to match.

The problem of time zones was one reason that **first-response times were high at an average of 17 hours** (leading to a stubbornly **low customer satisfaction rating of around 75%**). The first challenge for Thorne was to grow his team to provide global coverage.

However, time zones are only one factor in global coverage — language is a huge barrier. Before using Unbabel, Skyscanner's internal analysis found that only 58% of customer support queries were in English. Once the top five languages were considered, the entire "rest of the world" language base accounted for only 20% of support requests.

This "long tail" of languages meant that providing traditional language support would be expensive to cover all the time. Languages such Romanian and Finnish had a sizeable number of customers, but not enough to make full time coverage viable — especially when considering the need to cover agents' vacation and sick leave.

Failing to provide language support, however, would be damaging to the growing brand's reputation: **how could the #1 global travel specialist website with over 60M monthly users not be able to provide the same great customer experience to a Finnish customer? Skyscanner needed a truly scalable solution for their language problem.**

1 year later with Unbabel:



92% CSAT

22.5% increase in CSAT (75% to 92%)



70% Faster

First reply in 5 hours



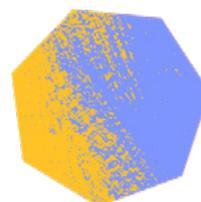
Still Growing

Live chat demand



Better Culture

Multilingual coverage



Always-on multilingual support, at scale

Growing the customer support team has certainly played a part in Skyscanner’s improved satisfaction ratings, but the value of being a multilingual player in a global business cannot be underestimated.

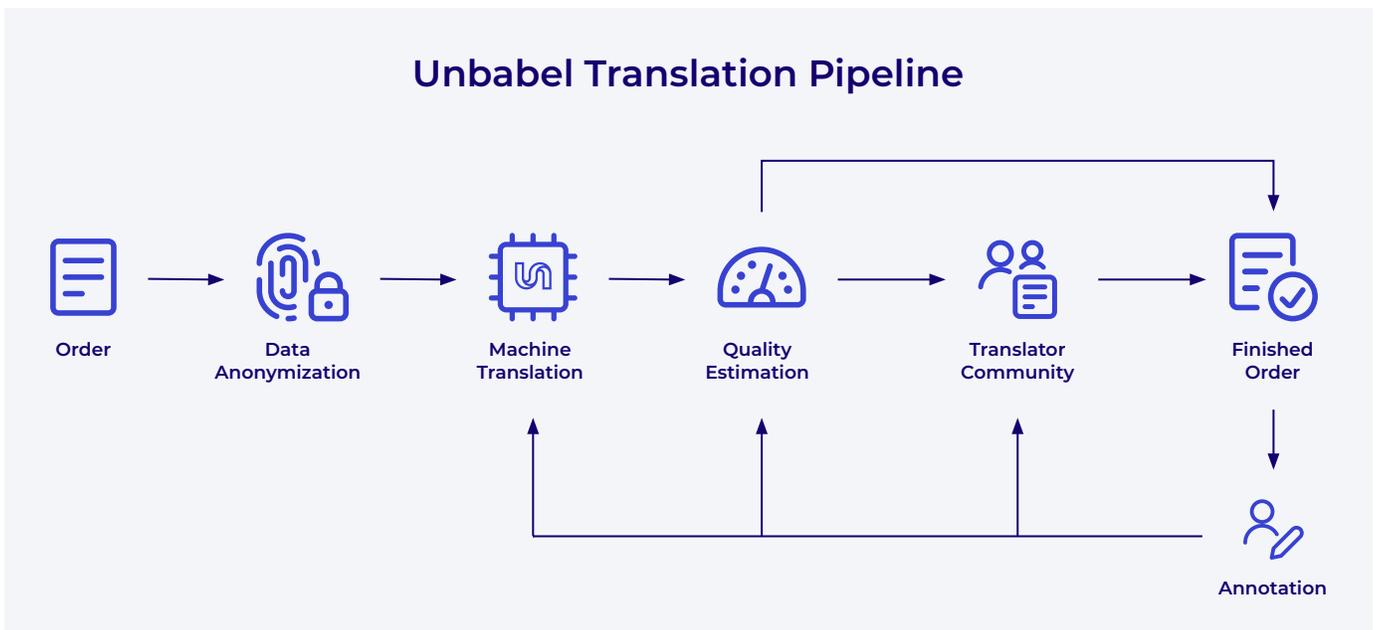
Unbabel brought its **uniquely scalable approach to translation** to Skyscanner’s delivery challenge. This began with Unbabel for Zendesk Support, which allowed Skyscanner to handle multilingual interactions with the same workflow as any other customer. For Skyscanner’s Jon Thorne, **it means the business can scale without the costs of customer service rising at the same rate.**

Assessing the impact of Unbabel their first year, Thorne says, “To be honest, we were skeptical at first — **it seemed too good to be true.** We had reservations about the reliability and speed of translations, particularly given the reputation of the rest of the industry.

“It doesn’t just cut the cost of support, it’s binary: it means we can provide support in scenarios where previously we simply couldn’t.”

— Jon Thorne, Global User Satisfaction Manager

“But integration with Zendesk was super easy, and to mitigate the risk, we tested Unbabel with languages for which we had strong existing cover in the support team. **Everyone was impressed.** Then we branched out into other languages where we at least had local language specialists elsewhere in the business. Again, the feedback was positive. And so now **we’re ‘hands-free,’ with Unbabel integrated into our workflow.** “It doesn’t just cut the cost of support, it’s binary: it means we can provide support in scenarios where previously we simply couldn’t.”



Key Learnings

Multilingual language support is crucial.

High-growth, global businesses are most at risk of stretching service resources — language is a key component of this.

AI is here to help you perform better.

AI systems constantly learn from their environments. This means that the more you use them, the more effective they become.

Being the nice guy isn't enough.

Customer satisfaction is not exclusively tied to effort and resource. Assess interactions from the customer's point of view and deploy solutions where they are most effective.

3rd party solutions let you scale faster.

Successful businesses deploy integrations: the best third party solutions in layers to support their core business.



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

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

