

braze

Web Messaging: ✕

What It Is, How It Works,
and Why It Matters

READ GUIDE

READ LATER

The first [website launched in 1991](#), and with that milestone came a tidal wave of generic “one-size-fits-all” marketing for the digital masses. Website experiences in those early years were designed to appeal to everyone, leaving little room to cater to individual interests and needs. And while we’ve seen web experiences become richer and more targeted over the years, there’s been a persistent gap that just hasn’t been filled—namely, the ability to speak directly to each individual web visitor.

Nearly 25 years later, in 2015, the remedy arrived: [Web push](#).

The debut of web push notifications have dramatically changed how brands can interact with their digital audiences. At last, companies could create unique experiences for every single customer by leveraging the kind of effective, personalized outreach that has long been used to engage mobile app users.

Best-in-class web messaging elevates online interactions for customers in two key ways: First by delivering truly 1:1 on-site experiences with [in-browser messaging](#) and second by allowing brands to use [web push notifications](#) to directly engage web visitors even when they’re no longer on your website.

Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Web Messaging 101	4
3. Web Messaging: Strengths & Weaknesses	12
4. Web Messaging: Benefits for Customer Engagement	16
5. Web Messaging: Use Cases and Customer Stories	17
6. Conclusion	22



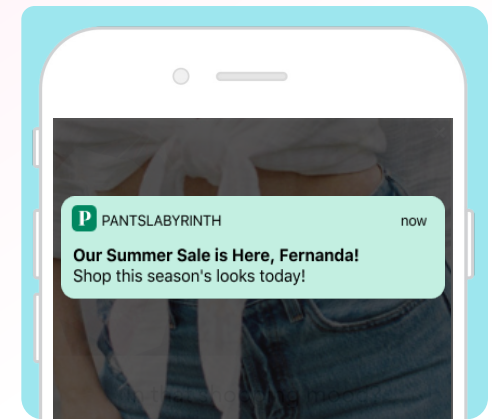
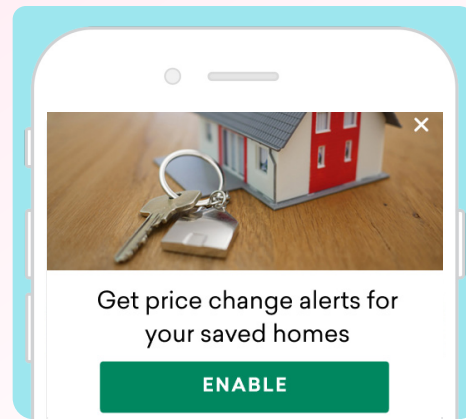
Web Messaging 101

What is Web Messaging Anyway?

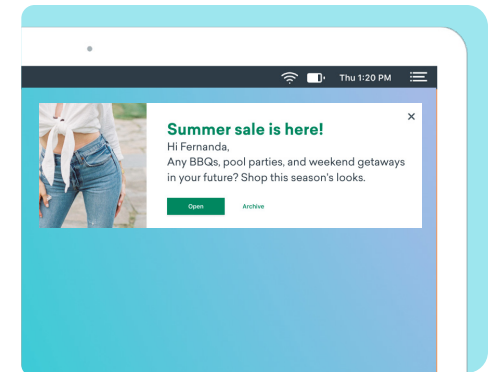
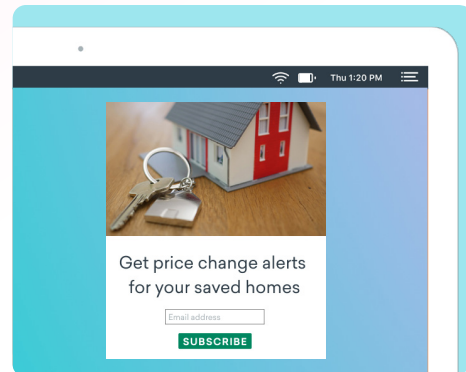
As the name suggests, web messaging is designed to help brands reach people via the web, whether that's on desktop, tablet, or mobile web browsers.

When people talk about web messaging, they're usually focused on two specific channels that have become a key part of customer engagement: Web push notifications and in-browser messaging. And if the names sound familiar, that's because they can really be thought of as browser-focused companions to their app-based counterparts: [Push notifications](#) and [in-app messaging](#). That is, web push notifications are to mobile push notifications as in-browser messaging is to in-app messaging.

App-based messaging

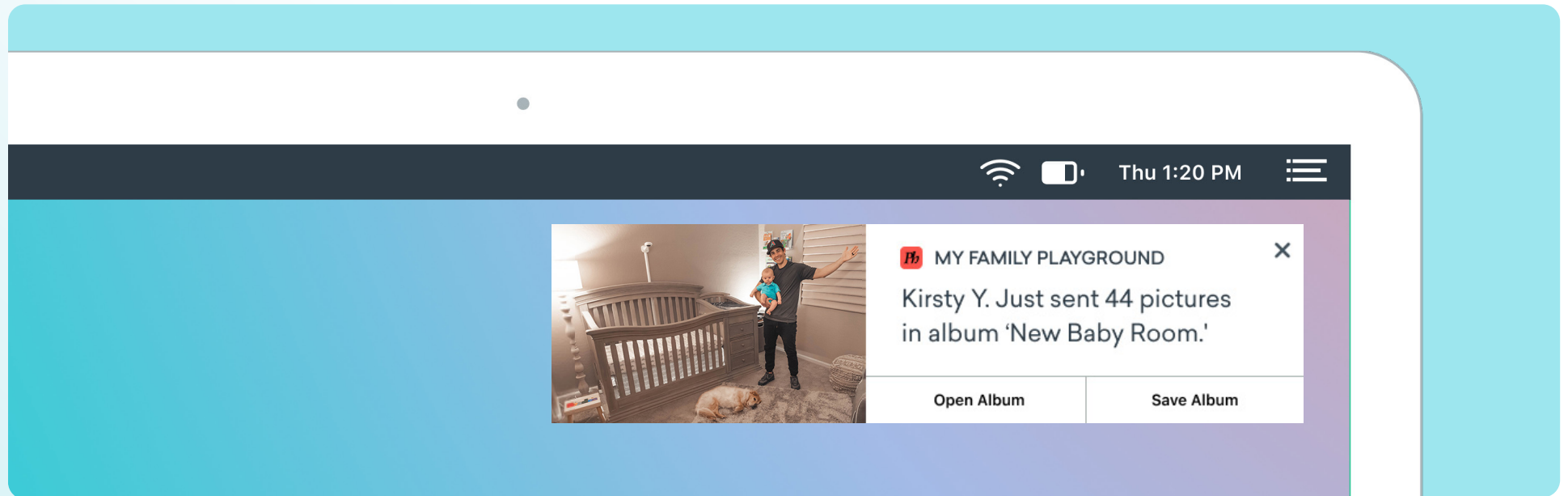


Web messaging



Web Messaging Channel	Who can it reach?	Is opt-in required?	Mobile equivalent
Web Push Notifications	Current and previous web visitors	Yes	Mobile push notifications
In-browser messages	Visitors who are active on your website	No	In-app messages

Web Push Notifications: 101



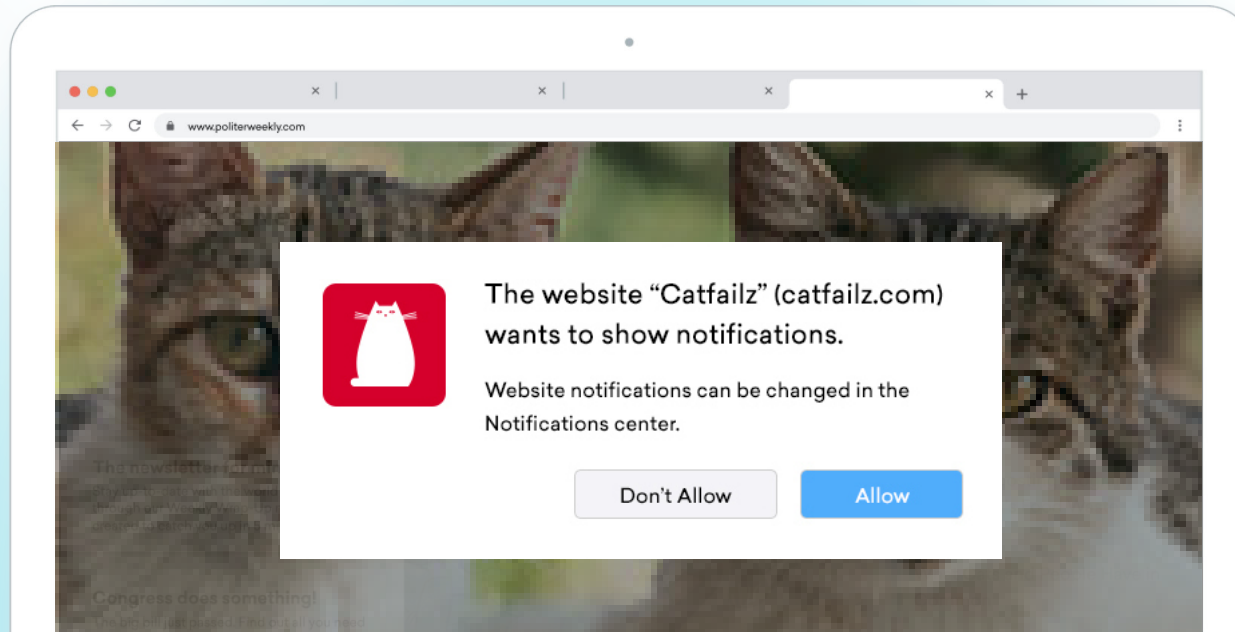
A web push notification with push action buttons

Your Google Calendar reminder that nudges you to make it to your next meeting in time. A notification that there's a new email waiting for you in your inbox. An alert letting you know that you've just received another friend request. Oh look, your package shipped. Did you see that breaking news headline that just flashed across your screen? Yes, your food is finally on its way!

These are just some ordinary, everyday examples of web push notifications that likely pass right before your eyes on a regular basis, helpful reminders and alerts that are so much a part of our routines that they're easy to take for granted—even though they've only been around since 2015.

Web Push Notifications: 101

Example of a website's system prompting visitors to opt into receiving web push notifications

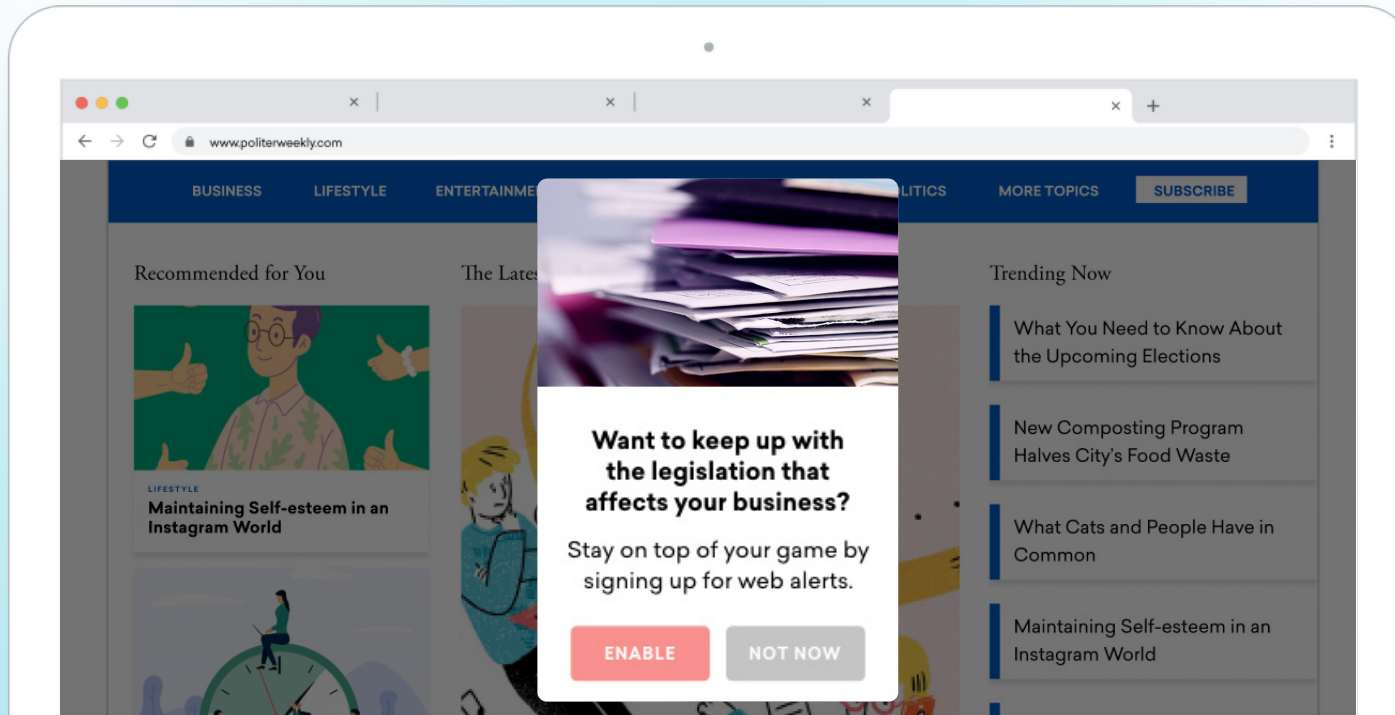


Think "push notifications, but for the web." Like mobile app push, these messages are built for short, urgent communications. With support for rich content, like images, GIFs, and [push action buttons](#) that allow customers to engage directly with these updates (think favoriting an item or replying to a message), they're versatile, too. Even better? Web push notifications are designed to be delivered to web visitors, even when they're not viewing your website. While many brands have strategies for encouraging web visitors to opt into email marketing or download the company's app, web push offers another way to keep the conversation going between web visits.

As with email marketing or mobile push campaigns, customers have to opt in to receive these notifications. While that does add a barrier, you may be surprised to see how many end up subscribing: Leading retailer Anthropologie has a healthy list of over 800,000 web push notification subscribers (more on that later).

Once customers opt in, you'll be able to send them timely, personalized messages to keep them informed about things like upcoming promotions, breaking news, and product updates.

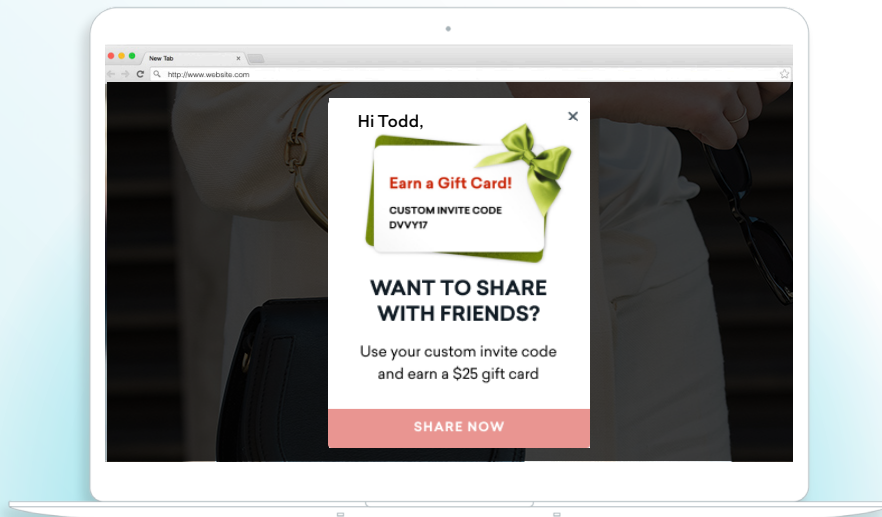
In-Browser Messages



When it comes to on-site communication, in-browser messages are your secret weapon. And just like mobile in-app messages—to which they bear, let's say, a family resemblance—this channel is known for its profound flexibility, making it easy to fit the medium to the message. And, as with in-app messages, the only people who will see these communications are people who are actively engaging with your brand's website—whether that's on mobile or on desktop.

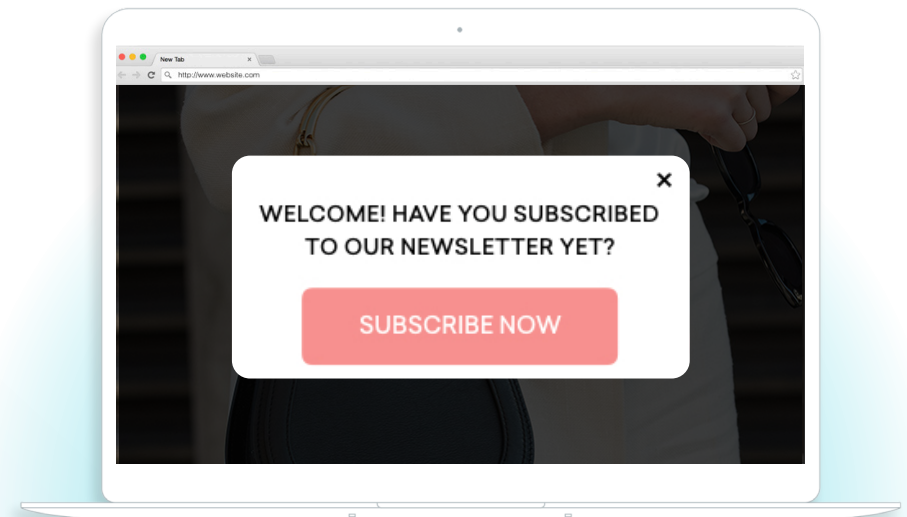
If your brand has an established mobile messaging strategy, web messaging should seem familiar; this new tool takes the messaging channels you currently use to engage and communicate with app users and makes it possible to do the same with web visitors. But for those new to in-app messaging and in-browser messaging, think of these as the new-and-much-improved next generation of older web messaging options: Web pop-ups and interstitials.

In-Browser Messaging With Personalization vs. Old Web Pop-Ups



In-Browser Message

We've probably all had a bad experience or two with web pop-ups. In the [early days of the web](#), they were inescapable, providing experiences that were ad hoc, unwelcome, and sometimes straight up creepy. But because today's in-browser messages are modeled after mobile in-app messages, they make it possible for marketers to provide experiences that are wanted and valuable

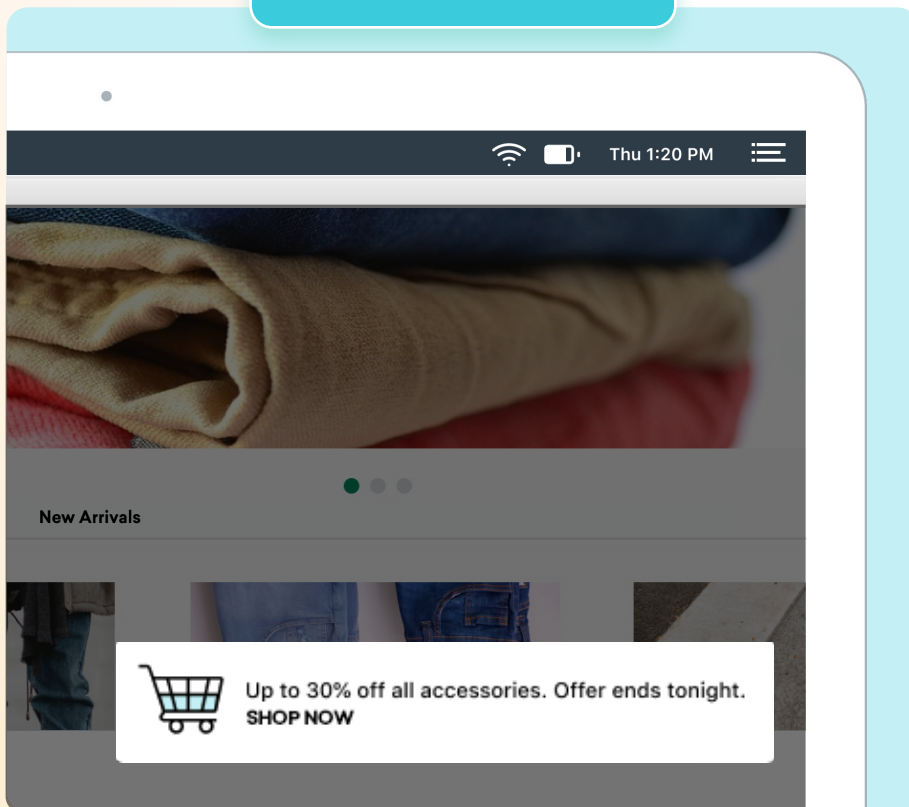


Web Pop-Up

through the use of intuitive message personalization and customer targeting. It's still important for marketers to be thoughtful about the experiences they're serving up in this channel since even a personalized message served at the wrong moment can feel invasive, but creating brilliant compelling experiences within your website is now easier than ever before.

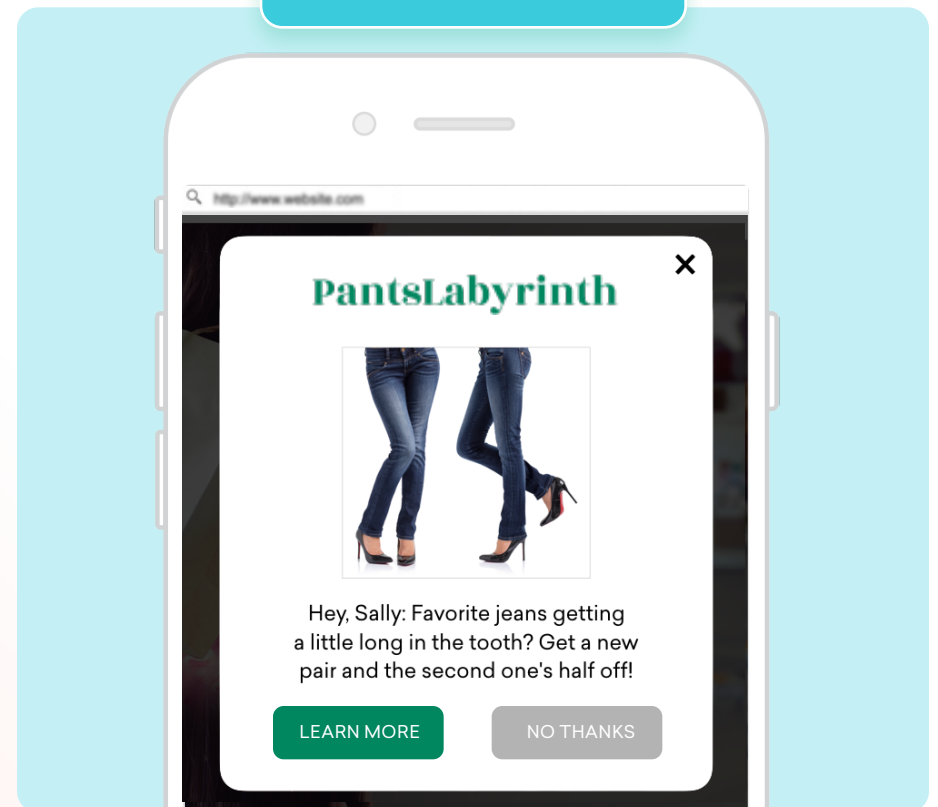
5 Types of In-Browser Message Formats

1. Slider



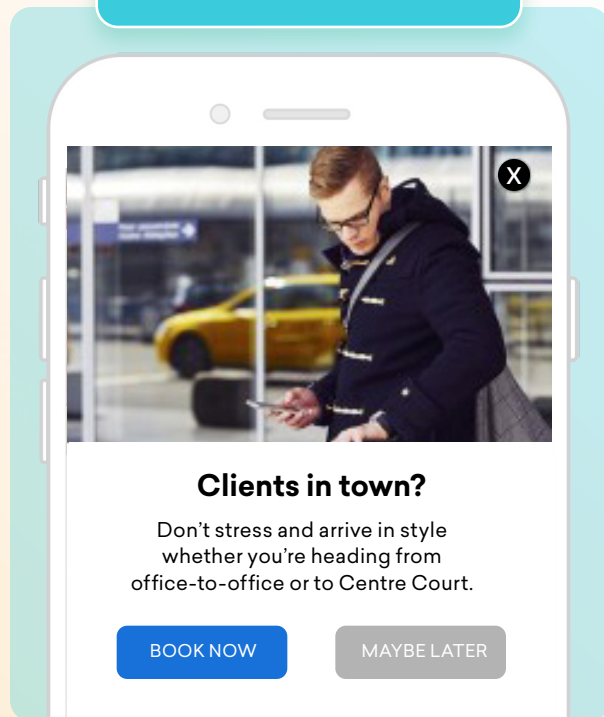
Small messages for brief need-to-know text communications

2. Modal



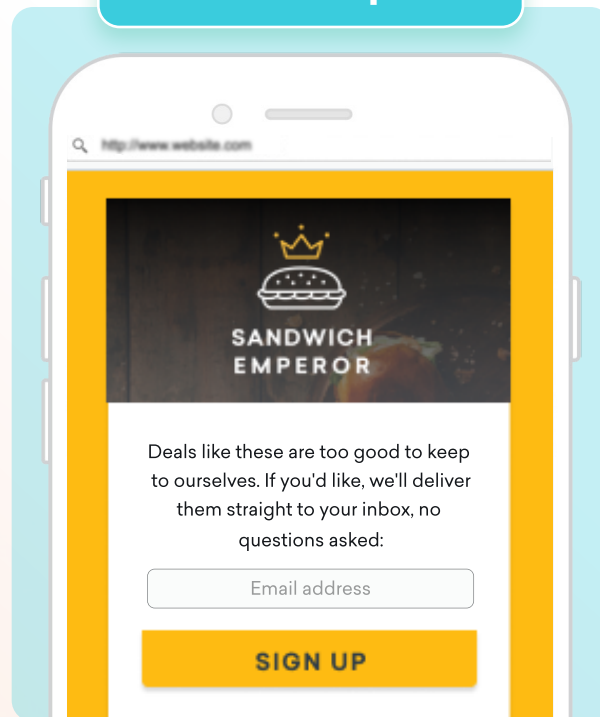
Medium-sized pop-ups that can support imagery for medium-priority messages

3. Full Screen



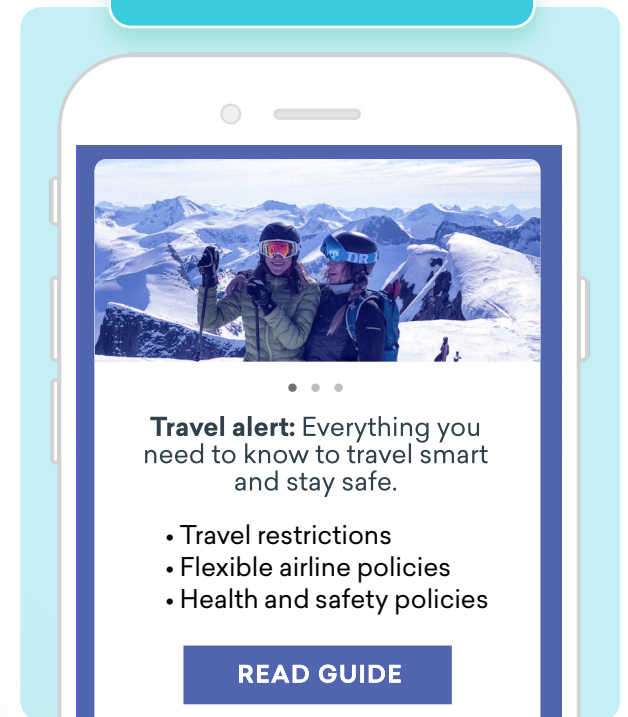
The most attention-grabbing and largest in-browser message type, capable of including large visuals and text

4. Email Capture



These custom messages make it easy for brands to nudge web visitors to share their email addresses for future outreach

5. Custom HTML



With a little coding, in-browser messages can be highly customizable and interactive to fit all your messaging needs

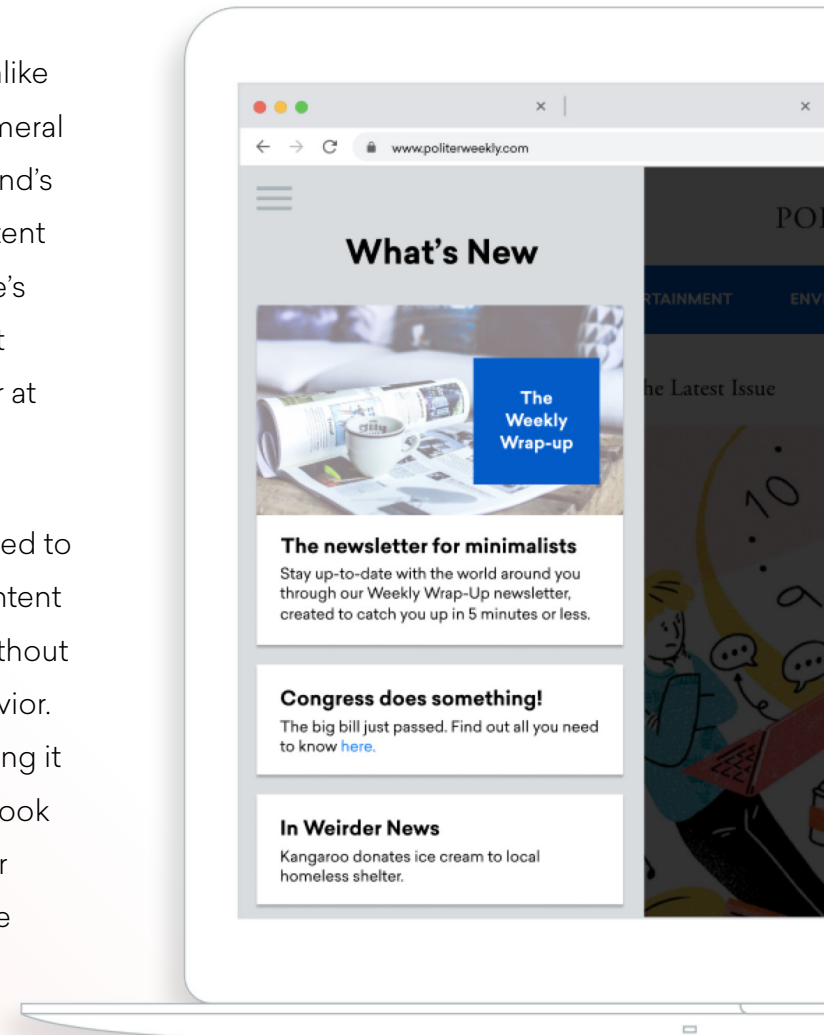
Web Content Cards

Ever close out a message from a brand, only to search for it later? [Content Cards](#) solve this problem. These cards serve up dynamic, persistent content that users can find when they need them—and this key channel works just as well on the web it does on mobile. Use this versatile messaging channel to customize content for your website, create dynamic promotional flows, provide an inbox for web push notifications, and a lot more. Web Content Cards help you build out a cross-platform, cross-channel messaging strategy and keep the conversation going wherever customers decide to engage.

While both in-browser messages and Content Cards are designed to allow marketers to speak directly to web visitors

when they're actively engaging with a brand's site, there's a key difference. Unlike in-browser messages, which are ephemeral in nature and appear on top of your brand's webpage to grab users' attention, Content Cards can be built directly into your site's UI and used to share persistent content and messages that don't just disappear at the drop of a hat.

At their core, Content Cards are designed to allow brands to highlight persistent content within their app or web experiences without interrupting customers' browsing behavior. This channel is extremely flexible, making it possible for you to fully customize the look of your feeds and cards—and tailor their visual appearance to match the website they exist within.



Web Messaging Strengths & Weaknesses

Web push and in-browser have a few big things in common: They both allow brands to deliver personalized messages to website visitors and both mirror existing mobile messaging channels. But once you step beyond those basics, these channels are fundamentally built for different things. As a general rule, the great strength of in-browser messages is they allow brands to further engage active web visitors who

are currently browsing around your website, whereas the strength of web push notifications is they offer brands a way to draw customers in who aren't currently visiting your site.

Because of these differences, it makes sense that the two channels offer distinct strengths and weaknesses. Let's review those now.

Web Push Notifications

✓ Strengths

- **Customers don't have to download an app** or share their email address to opt into messages, allowing for direct, impactful consumer messaging entirely via the web
- Because these notifications are short, temporary messages, **they're great for prompting customers to take urgent, immediate action**
- **Customers don't have to be on your website** to view these messages, making them a powerful tool for supporting promotional and re-engagement campaigns
- These notifications provide **a way to encourage repeat visits** by drawing customers back to your website over and over again.

✗ Weaknesses

- As with their mobile messaging equivalent, **customers have to enable web push notifications**, which means not every web visitor will choose to receive these messages
- **Many brands fail to “prime” customers to opt-in** for web push notifications—often asking first-time web visitors to agree to receive these web messages before they have a chance to browse around and get to know the website and company, which can lead to poorer opt-in rates
- **Sending too many web push notifications can turn customers off**, prompting them to opt out of receiving updates (and potentially souring them on your brand)
- These notifications, even the ones your users find valuable, can **dismiss themselves or get ignored** in busy moments.

In-Browser Messages

Strengths

- **These messages offer a great way to guide website visitors to take action**—such as reading another article, watching the next show in a series, adding a “frequently purchased together” item to their shopping cart, or, perhaps, opting in to receive web push notifications—while they’re actively browsing on your website
- **Individuals don’t have to opt into** seeing these messages, allowing marketers to serve them up whenever they’re relevant to a given user
- These messages can be highly visual and personalized to each individual user, allowing them to **catch attention and drive action** during key moments.

Weaknesses

- These communications **can only be seen by visitors when they’re actively visiting your website**, limiting their reach to individuals who are actively engaged with your brand’s digital presence
- While these messages can motivate customers to keep engaging with your website during a given visit, **they don’t have the same ability to re-engage inactive or lapsing users** who aren’t visiting your site
- Because of decades of pop-up ad misuse, **consumers may automatically “x” out of in-browser messages now**, even the good ones—so selecting the right moment and the right format is key

5 Powerful Tools for Optimizing Your Web Messaging Strategy

Before web messaging, many websites treated every customer as if they were all the same. With in-browser messages and web push notifications, brands can now engage audiences based on their specific individual interests and needs, leveraging the following technologies and tactics.

1

Segmentation

Instead of one-size-fits-all messaging, send tailored campaigns to cohorts of individuals based on common customer attributes, such as customers who recently completed a purchase or created a profile or customers within a set geographic area.



2

Personalization

Instead of addressing customers in a generic way (such as “Hey shopper!”), web push notifications and in-browser messages can be addressed individually—and this can go beyond just including someone’s first name. You can seamlessly include things like the year they became a member, their loyalty rewards points balance, or even tailor the content or product promoted in a message based on the categories they’ve engaged with most often, creating a more relevant, compelling experience.



3

Cross-channel outreach

Web messaging should be one important component of an overall marketing strategy that includes cross-channel communication, allowing you to engage with customers wherever they are, whether that’s via mobile, your website, email, or in-person experiences.



4

Real-time automation

Keeping customers informed in-the-moment is a more effective approach than delayed outreach. In our [analysis of 534 billion messages](#) sent between 2017 and 2019, we found that [action-based](#) and [API-triggered](#) campaigns that are deployed in real time—immediately following a given customer action or situational development—have higher conversion rates than traditional, scheduled campaigns.



5

Marketing analytics

Is your web messaging making a difference? Are customers spending more time on your website, making more frequent repeat visits, and converting more often? Marketing analytics will help you track your progress over time, and keep your optimization engine running.



Web Messaging

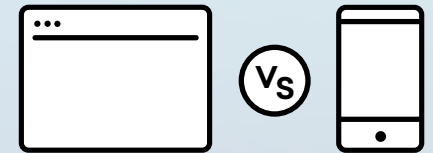
Benefits For Customer Engagement

As the old saying goes, if you want to catch fish, fish where the fish are. By the same token, brands that are looking to engage customers need to engage customers wherever they are. And about 31% of the time individuals spend with digital media is via web browsers, according to [ComScore's 2019 "Global State of Mobile" report](#), making both web push notifications and in-browser messaging two important avenues for customer engagement.

With the right approach, web push notifications and in-browser messaging can improve monetization and retention. After all, customers are more likely to spend time and money with brands that understand their wants and needs and meet them, in the moment.

With web browsing accounting for 31% of time spent engaging with digital media, brands that lack a web messaging strategy are missing out on a major opportunity to keep in touch with customers.

Mobile App Engagement vs. Overall Web Engagement



Time spent on line [grew 43%](#) YoY in 2019—and while mobile and tablet apps account for a considerable share of digital media usage 31% still takes place on web browsers, including tablet websites (1%), mobile websites (7%), and desktop websites (23%).

People aren't downloading apps the way they used to. Only about one-third of respondents downloaded at least one new app in 2019, down from nearly half (49%) in 2017. So while mobile apps dominate online time, only a handful of brands are benefiting from that engagement. That's where the mobile and desktop web can help brands without a strong position in mobile app engagement gain inroads with customers.

Web Messaging

Use Cases & Customer Stories

When to Use Web Push



When You Want to Bring ‘Em Back (to Your Website)

It's not enough simply to send a push notification and hope it will drive visitors to your website. You've got to give them a reason to visit. That may mean dangling discounts, evangelizing exclusives, or otherwise highlighting your brand's value-add.



When It's Urgent (Really)

Web push notifications are great, but you shouldn't necessarily be sending them every day. Instead, they should be reserved for big announcements or key updates, such as when a banking customer hits their credit limit or when there's breaking news. When the message can't wait, web push is the perfect channel.

When to Use In-Browser Messages



To Get New Customers Acquainted with Your Website

Using in-browser messaging is a great way to walk new users through your website's features and demonstrate the value of engaging with each.



When You Have New Features to Show Off

Updated your website? Walk new and returning visitors through the product changes to get them up to speed—and to showcase the value these changes can provide.

Web Messaging

Use Cases & Customer Stories

When to Use Web Push



To Keep Customers Informed

Reminders for upcoming events, status updates about deliveries, new dating app matches, a direct deposit landing in the bank, and key social network activity updates (friends added, profile views, and more)—these are the stuff of highly engaging web push notifications.



Major Changes to Your Website

Rolling out new benefits to your subscribers? Offering a new free trial on your website? Updating your terms of service? These are the kinds of updates that may make sense to highlight via web push on a one-off basis.

When to Use In-Browser Messages



To Get Active, Loyal Users to Further Their Engagement

Have multiple web properties? If you've got customers who loyally visit one of them, a cross-promotional in-browser message is the perfect way to persuade them to broaden their horizons. After all, that web visitor who practically lives in your news website's entertainment section might be interested to know you've got a whole site dedicated to film and TV.



To Highlight New Content or Promotions

In-browser messages can help make sure the important things—whether that's a new category you've added to your blog or a new limited-time offer—stand out.

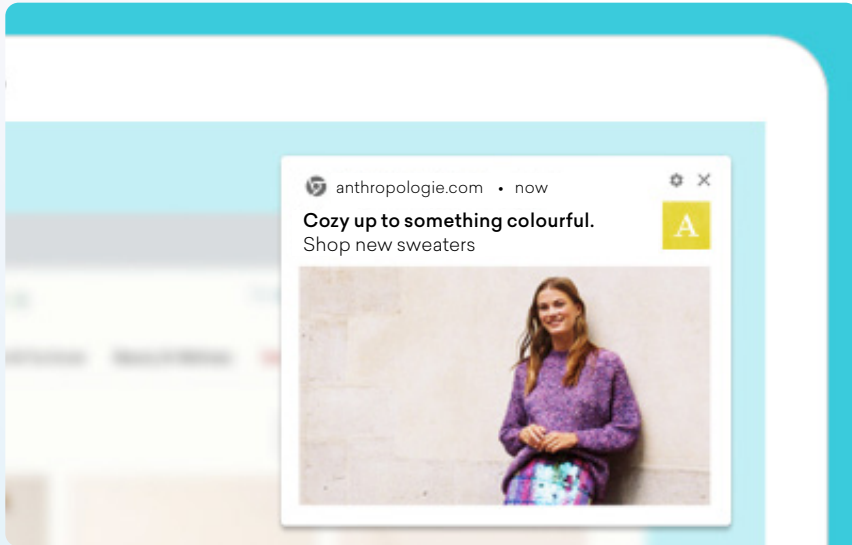
Web Messaging

When Should You Use In-Browser Messages and Web Push?

Marketing Need		Web Messaging Channel
Encouraging Customers to Visit Your Website	→	Web Push
Reaching Customers with Urgent Outreach	→	Web Push
Driving Transactional and Activity Messaging	→	Web Push or In-Browser Messages
Onboarding New Visitors	→	In-Browser Messages
Influencing How Customers Navigate Your Website	→	In-Browser Messages
Cross-Promoting Your Other Websites	→	In-Browser Messages

Anthropologie Case Study

How Anthropologie Leveraged Web Push to Boost Conversions Nearly 18% Above the Industry Average



Recognizing the need to meet its customers where they are, Anthropologie turned to Braze to begin experimenting with offering web push notifications as a way to keep shoppers engaged between web visits. Their goal: Keep customers informed about new products and promotions.

800K+

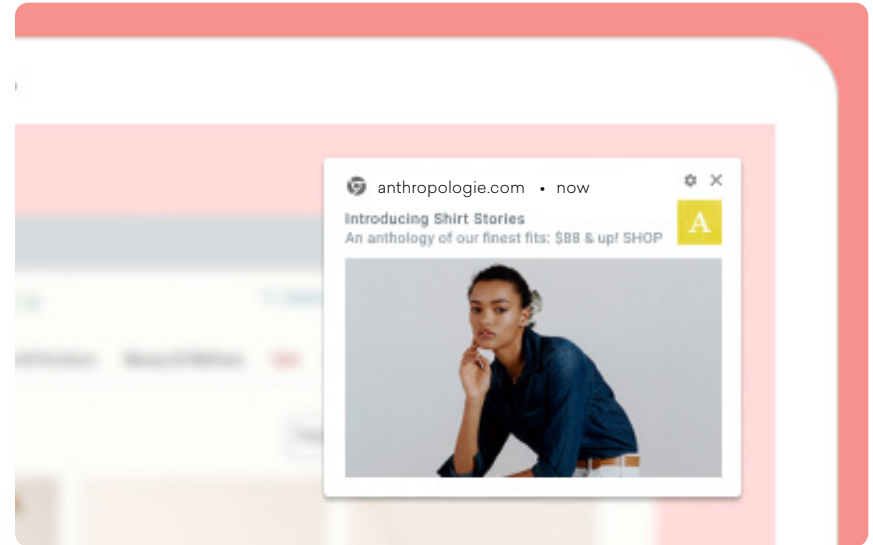
WEB PUSH
ENABLED
CUSTOMERS

22%

HIGHER CLICK-
THROUGH RATE THAN
INDUSTRY AVERAGE

17.5%

HIGHER CONVERSION
RATE THAN
INDUSTRY STANDARD

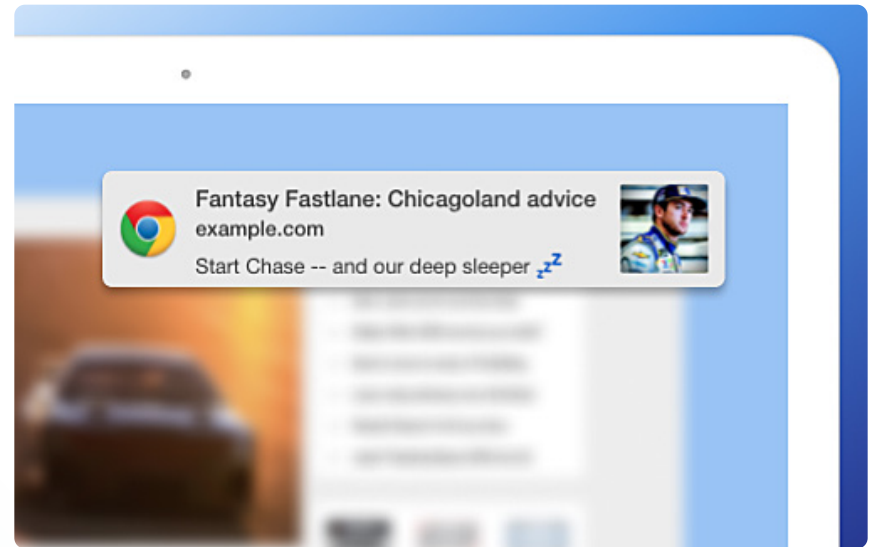
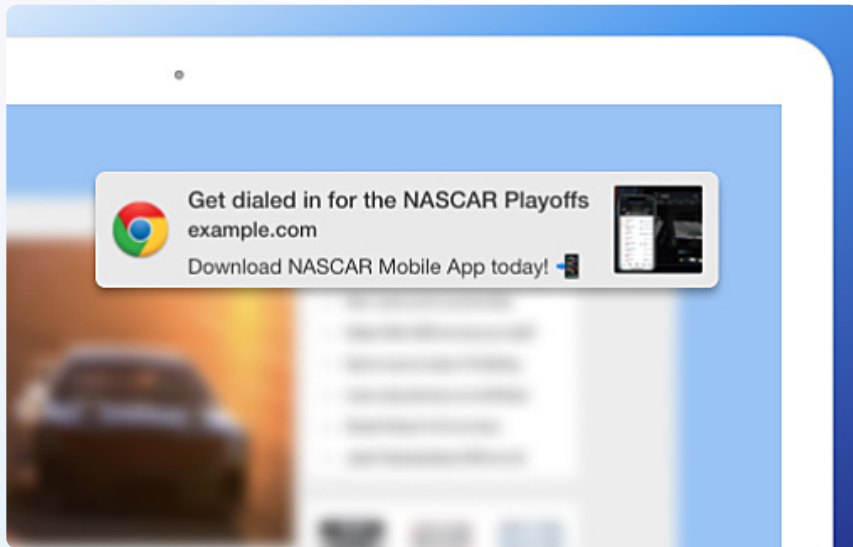


By adding creative graphics and product images to its messages and implementing [A/B testing](#) to determine the winning campaign variants, Anthropologie has been able to drive web push click-through rates 22% above the industry average and conversion rates 17.5% higher than the average. Not only that, they've grown an audience of over 800,000 web push notification-enabled subscribers, making this channel a powerful new way to engage their customers.

Read the full case study [here](#).

NASCAR Case Study

How NASCAR Leveraged Web Push to Deliver Open Rates of Up to 13.5% and Increase App Downloads



Fans flock to NASCAR.com to stay up to date on live coverage, news, standings, schedules, and driver stats and, thanks to web push notifications, the brand is able to keep more of these loyalists coming back time and again for updates. As a result, the sports organization has scored enviable open rates and successfully driven users to deepen their engagement by downloading the NASCAR mobile app.

Read the full case study [here](#).

Open Rate of NASCAR's Web Push Notifications Campaigns

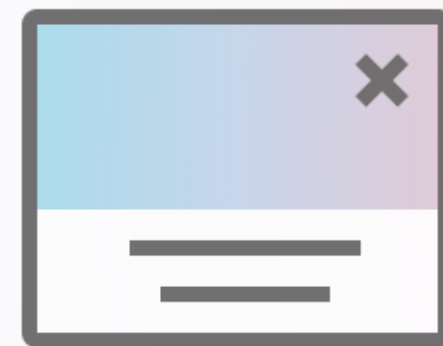


Conclusion

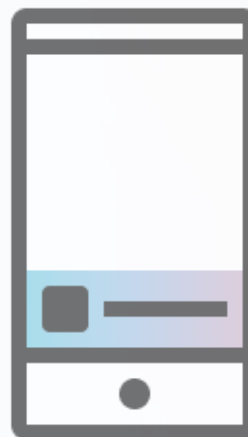
Interested in getting started with web messaging? Don't forget to place web messaging within the broader context of cross-channel engagement. More than three-fourths of individuals begin an online activity on one device and later tackle it on a different device before finishing the task, according to an analysis conducted by [Google](#). In other words, customers are living in a [cross-channel](#) world, and it's up to brands to meet them in where they are.

Not every channel will be right for every situation, but pairing web messaging with email and mobile channels makes it possible to reach each user on the device or platform they're currently using—and reduces the risk that your outreach goes unnoticed. As a reward, brands that successfully maneuver messaging via multiple channels see a significant boost in engagement. Get the full picture in our, [our cross-channel engagement data report](#).

Web Messaging's Key Channels



In-Browser Messages



Web Content Cards



Web Push Notifications

braze

Get in touch to learn more

[BRAZE.COM/CONNECT-WITH-SALES](https://braze.com/connect-with-sales)