

CUSTOMER STORY

How a Canadian Home Furnishings Retailer Pivoted to Digital Sales

Learn how The Dufresne Group quickly adapted to new challenges brought on by COVID-19.

Customer engagement in the era of COVID-19

“

I. Love. That. Bot. It's generating leads for us every single minute.”

Norm Alegria,
Director of Guest Care

Customer engagement has changed as services digitize. The modern customer expects to make most, if not all, of their purchases online. Still, there are industries like furniture where the in-person experience is a deciding factor in the sales process.

So, what happens when in-person experience suddenly vanishes?

Norman Alegria can tell you. As Director of Guest Care at The Dufresne Group, a Premier Canadian Home furnishing retailer with both Ashley Home Stores and Dufresne stores in Canada, Alegria's focus has recently shifted from keeping customers happy, to helping keep the business going during COVID-19.

This is the story of how the Dufresne Group used Acquire customer engagement tools to improve service before the pandemic and grow the business in the era of COVID-19.

Their Success

1,000 
sales conversations
per day in first 2 weeks

50% 
reduction in on-site
repair appointments

2x 
faster response time

100% 
increase in virtual sales

Tools Leveraged



Live Chat



Video Chat



Cobrowse



Chatbots

Before COVID-19: Video chat for furniture repairs

“

We increased our speed to guests from 10 days to 5 days, which is significant for the customer experience.”

Norm Alegria,
Director of Guest Care

It all started with [Acquire Video Chat](#) for their repair technicians and their guests. Last year, before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Alegria was looking for a way to reduce costs on furniture repairs while improving customer engagement online.

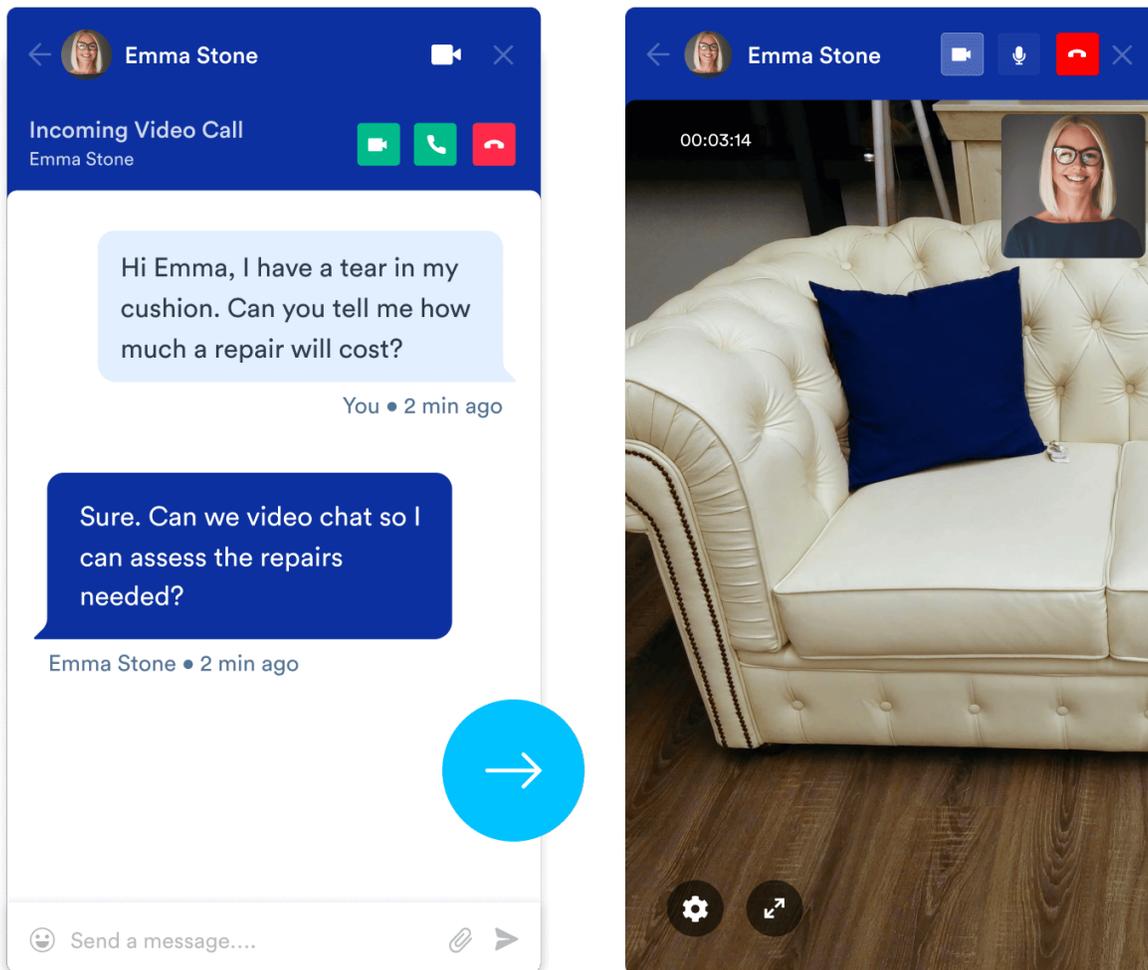
Each furniture repair required two on-site visits: one for assessment and the other for the repair work. The team's (Melanie, Arron and Norm) goal was to bring initial technician inspection visits down from 250 a week to 125. With each visit costing a significant amount of money, the repair budget was “getting out of control,” Alegria said. Adding more team members was not a fiscally sound option.



That’s when a lightbulb went off. What if the first visit was done remotely, by video? “We needed to be more creative with our solutions, and we needed something that would benefit both our guests and our team”, Alegria said.

That initial exploration led to Acquire Video and eventually the full Acquire Platform, which includes live chat, cobrowsing, and chatbots.

The team achieved their goal of reducing inspections to 125 a week. Their technicians used video assessments to survey everyday wear-and-tear issues, from leveling furniture to “grape juice on the sofa.” They also improved service speed.



The Dufresne Group uses Acquire video chat for sales and repair conversations.

During COVID-19: Turning video and live chat into a sales lifeline

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In less than two weeks, that number grew to 1,000 chats and sales growth followed, in new business. Virtual sales increased one-hundred fold over the same period.

Fast forward to 2020, in the thick of COVID-19. There is a significant downturn in in-store visits. No more house calls for furniture repairs. No one was buying furniture the old way.

A new challenge presented itself for The Dufresne Group: how do you sell through coronavirus?

Alegria was struck with another aha-moment. If video chat could service customers remotely, then surely it could be a way to sell to customers remotely?

Alegria was right. He transferred the repair department's Acquire licenses over to sales with immediate results.

On the first day of launching live chat and chatbots on the website's home page, the team (new chat task force; Bryan, Amber, John, Pat and Melanie) received 100 chats in new business.



How Dufresne uses Acquire to improve the customer experience

Dufresne uses the entire Acquire Platform to stay in touch with customers both pre and post-purchase in a number of ways. Here's how:

Cobrowsing for customer service

Alegria's team uses cobrowsing to "help bridge the gap" between the online and in-store customer experience. Although they cannot duplicate their in-store experience, they can replicate it, with cobrowsing, reps are able to highlight features, assist with payments on screen, and draw attention to important product information, such as returns policies, terms and conditions, and furniture measurements.

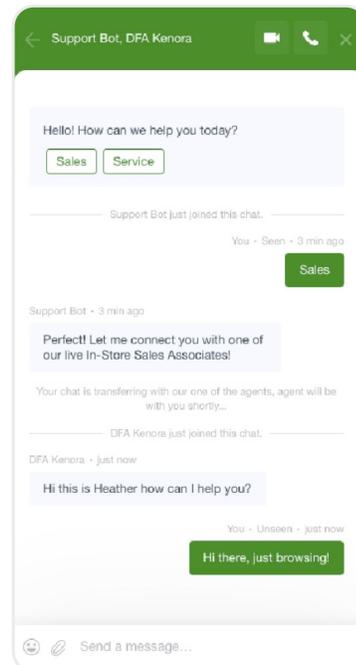
Video tours of furniture

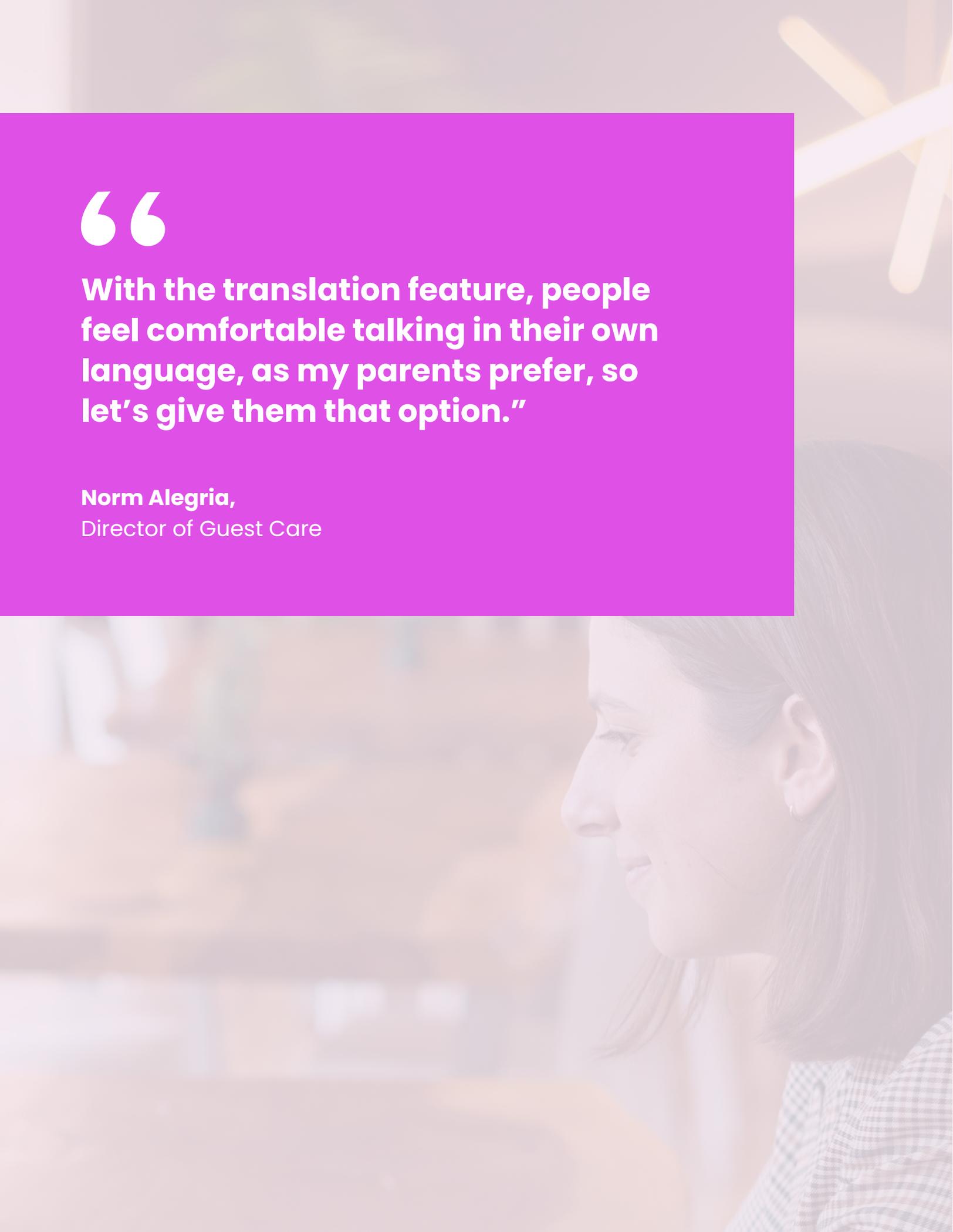
Video has played an important role in Dufresne's customer service strategy with onsite visits. With the pandemic keeping customers at home and social distancing in full force, video is helping Dufresne conduct product walk-throughs. Customers can shop from the comfort of their home — a win for customer experience.

"The fact that we can demo a product in the showroom, so the customer doesn't need to come is in accordance with social distance," Alegria said. "We are adhering to health official guidelines while being open for business."

Chatbots 'round the clock

The Dufresne team is engaging customers and driving sales conversations with Acquire chatbots. The bots capture contact information when the team is out of office. That's why the sales team has been able to keep sales going 24/7 during the crisis.





“

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Norm Alegria,
Director of Guest Care

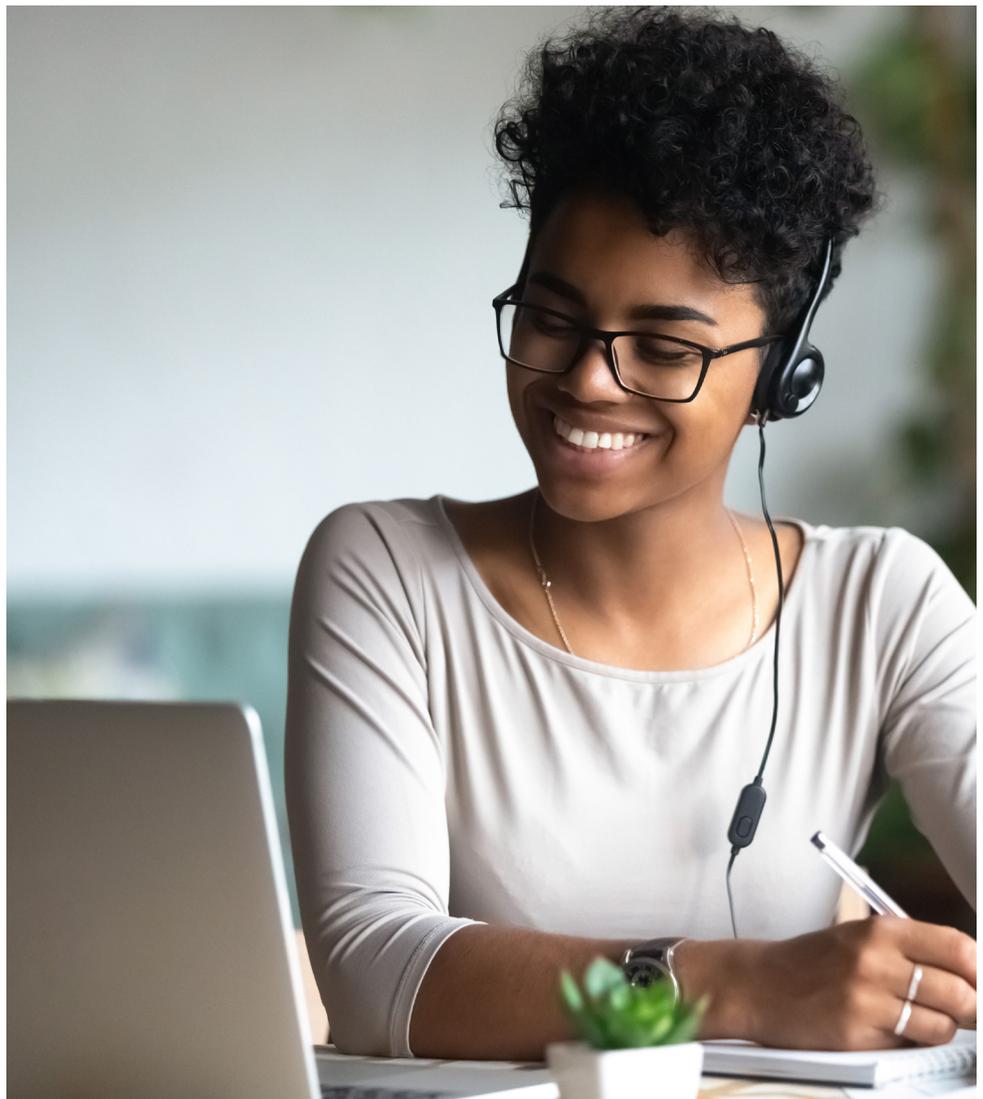
Features for customer and agent experience

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Alegria is also fond of Acquire's voice-to-text feature, which enables customer service agents to respond to text-based messages using their headsets. Another useful function is the auto-translation in live chat. This makes it easy for people to reach out to them in any language they choose.



It's not just about revenue, though

“

We will overcome this and we will win.”

Norm Alegria,
Director of Guest Care

With Acquire in place, The Dufresne Group not only hit their original target of reducing onsite repair visits, but also opened a door for digital sales that had not existed before. They are changing the home furnishing industry.

And perhaps greatest of all for Alegria was restoring some semblance of business stability in an industry heavily impacted by COVID-19. The impacts of Acquire are motivating his colleagues with the feeling that “we will overcome this and we will win.”

“I find that absolutely inspiring. It drives our team every day. It feels amazing, awesome, encouraging, to see the hope in the eyes and voices of our team again—virtually, of course,” he quipped.

