

CUSTOMER STORY: IDEO U

ALWAYS-ON, HUMAN-CENTERED SUPPORT FOR IDEO U

“The platform being always available and always on was the biggest thing for us.
I didn’t have to manage a complex schedule.”

Jen Sims, Director of Product, IDEO U

CRESCENDO



SNAPSHOT

IDEO U

IDEO U is the online learning arm of IDEO, delivering human-centered courses that build creative leadership and design thinking skills. Their support philosophy is simple: real people, authentic help, and a people-first experience so every learner feels backed by a responsive team.

Results at a glance

85%+ of routine questions are resolved instantly. Complex issues reach human experts faster, with refunds and cohort transfers dropping from 4-5 exchanges over a week to 1-2 interactions, often within hours. Predictive CSAT is 75%, up from 56%, reflecting quicker, clearer resolutions.

CUSTOMER IMPACT

24/7

Always-on chat support coverage for course launches and beyond

85%

85%+ questions answered instantly

1 - 2

Average interaction reduced from 4-5 touchpoints to 1-2

BUSINESS IMPACT

33

33 days from kickoff to go live

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Cost < prior tools, with better performance

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Scaled support without staffing changes after a 50% team reduction

CHALLENGE

Integrated & always-on.

Before Crescendo, IDEO U cycled through chat tools that created more friction than value.

A Zendesk bot slowed their website and disrupted support flow. With no sign of product improvement, the bot was turned off. Shopify Inbox required agents to be online during narrow windows before each course, about 4 hours per day for 8–10 days. That pulled IDEO U team members away from their core focus, and the tool lived outside Zendesk with no integration. The team tracked conversations by hand, the Shopify Inbox interface was buggy, staffing was hard to predict, and ROI was unclear with the conglomerate of solutions.

In July 2024 the team became leaner. With the same pre-launch demand, IDEO U needed a support model that could scale without adding headcount and that fit inside existing Zendesk workflows.



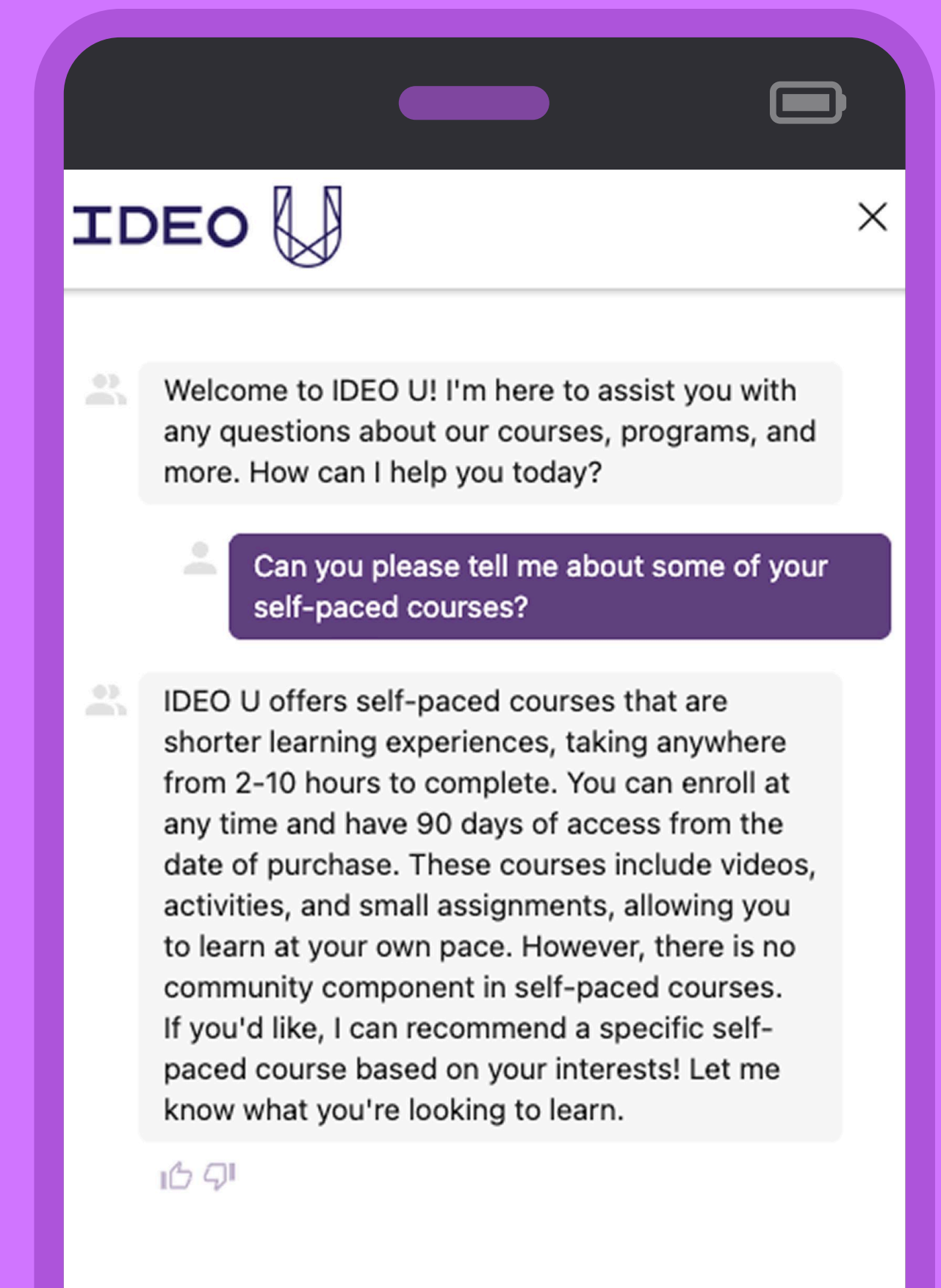
WHY CRESCENDO

IDEO U chose Crescendo because it met a tight set of requirements.

They needed round-the-clock coverage so learners could get help when they needed it, which was difficult to support with the team's unpredictable schedules. They wanted everything to live inside Zendesk so conversations, history, and reporting stayed in one place. Cost had to match or beat prior tools while delivering a better learner experience. Just as important, the rollout had to be low lift for their small team.

Crescendo led the implementation with their commitment to ongoing tuning, so quality would improve over time without daily oversight from IDEO U. The IDEO U team also valued that it was a low-risk start that could be switched off if performance quality was below their standards.

After a diligent review, the always-on availability, native Zendesk workflow, equal or lower cost, minimal lift, continuous optimization, and seamless handoff to human experts when needed made Crescendo the clear choice.



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“Honestly, it was really straightforward. We gave the Crescendo team access to our Zendesk instance, they walked me through the process, and they did all of the setup themselves, almost no extra work on our side.”

Jen Sims

Director of Product, IDEO U

SOLUTION

AI that's tuned-in.

Crescendo and IDEO U moved from kickoff to go live in 33 days

Week one focused on discovery and scoping, mapping the journeys that drive inbound volume around each course. With access to Zendesk, Crescendo configured the CX Assistants inside the existing workspace, tuned knowledge sources, and grouped high-frequency topics into clearly defined request types:

- Refund Eligibility Checks
- Cohort Move Requests
- Account Access Or Login Help
- Enrollment And Payment Questions
- Course Start Dates And Deadlines
- Certificate Or Proof-Of-Completion Requests
- Invoice Or Receipt Requests

Confidence thresholds, clarifying prompts, and human handoff rules were set so routine issues could be quickly resolved by AI, while edge cases reach Crescendo's human experts without friction. Running natively in Zendesk kept context, transcripts, and reporting in one place.

A focused two-week iteration followed. IDEO U stress tested real scenarios while Crescendo reviewed conversations daily and tuned the AI. This included tightening disambiguation prompts, clarifying refund and cohort transfer steps, and standardizing what to collect before handoff: learner email, enrollment ID, order number, course name, and start date. Launch day was simple, with no new tools for the IDEO U team to learn.

Post launch, Crescendo provides fully managed ongoing care, including human- and AI-powered accuracy audits, content updates, and calendar-aligned reviews.

As the IDEO U lead put it,
“They spun it up really quickly so we could start testing. We iterated for maybe two weeks, and then we went live. The Crescendo team continues to manage it and track it, so I don't need to check it daily. I know the team is taking care of that, which is a huge win.”

IMPACT

Human-centered support

With 85%+ of inquiries resolving without human intervention, ticket volume has fallen, easing the load on a lean team and making pre-launch periods more predictable and less stressful. Support has scaled without adding headcount. The AI Assistant's analytics regularly surface policy friction and content gaps, driving targeted website updates and keeping the knowledge base current and accurate.

PARTNERSHIP & WHAT'S NEXT

IDEO U's brand requires human-centered support that feels real, even when AI is the first responder.

“Aligning with our brand of human centeredness is most important. We want people to feel supported by a real team that is here to help, not like they are reaching out to a void.”

Jen Sims, Director of Product, IDEO U

With chat delivering consistently exceptional results, IDEO U is expanding Crescendo to email, automating routine work and freeing human experts for higher-value projects. The hybrid human + AI approach continues to deliver on the promise: always-on help for learners, measurable gains for the team, and a support experience that lets IDEO U make a bigger impact with less.