

Chatbots

Derived from “chat robot”, "chatbots" allow for highly engaging, conversational experiences, through voice and text, that can be customized and used on mobile devices, web browsers, and on popular chat platforms such as Facebook Messenger, or Slack. With the advent of deep learning technologies such as text-to-speech, automatic speech recognition, and natural language processing, chatbots that simulate human conversation and dialogue can now be found in call center and customer service workflows, DevOps management, and as personal assistants.

Benefits of a Chatbot

Efficiency through Automation

Chatbots can combine the steps of complex processes to streamline and automate common and repetitive tasks through a few simple voice or text requests, reducing execution time and improving business efficiencies.

Flexibility

Chatbots can be built to respond to either voice or text in the language native to the user. You can embed customized chatbots in everyday workflows, to engage with your employee workforce or consumer engagements.

Broader Customer Engagement

A winning customer experience can be a significant differentiator for a business. Chatbots can be deployed into the channels that your customers and prospects are

already engaged, like Facebook Messenger, so you can reach them in familiar environments to respond to their requests faster and meet their expectations.

Chatbots vs. AI chatbots vs. virtual agents

The terms *chatbot*, *AI chatbot* and *virtual agent* are often used interchangeably, which can cause confusion. While the technologies these terms refer to are closely related, subtle distinctions yield important differences in their respective capabilities.

Chatbot is the most inclusive, catch-all term. Any software simulating human conversation, whether powered by traditional, rigid decision tree-style menu navigation or cutting edge conversational AI, is a chatbot. Chatbots can be found across any nearly any communication channel, from phone trees to social media to specific apps and websites.

AI chatbots are chatbots that employ a variety of AI technologies, from machine learning that optimize responses over time to natural language processing (NLP) and natural language understanding (NLU) that accurately interprets user questions and matches them to specific intents. Deep learning capabilities allow AI chatbots to become more accurate over time, which in turns allows humans to interact with AI chatbots in a more natural, free-flowing way without being misunderstood.

Virtual agents are a further evolution of AI chatbot software that not only use conversational AI to conduct dialogue and deep learning to self-improve over time, but often pair those AI technologies with robotic process automation (RPA) in one interface to act directly upon the user's intent without further human intervention.

Common chatbot use cases

Typical use cases include:

- 1)Timely, always-on assistance for customer service or human resources issues
- 2)Personalized recommendations in an e-commerce context
- 3)Definition of fields within forms and financial applications
- 4)Intake and appointment scheduling for healthcare offices
- Automated reminders to for time- or location-based tasks.

Summary

- ☐ 1)Pick a solution that can accomplish your immediate goals but won't limit future expansion. Why does a team want its own chatbot? How is this goal currently addressed, and what are the challenges that are driving the need for a chatbot? Does it offer templates to help your organization scale up and diversify chatbot offerings in the future, or will other teams need to develop something else from scratch? Does the pricing allow for efficient internal expansion?
- ☐ 2)Understand the impact AI has on the customer experience. Chatbots are an extension of your brand. The right AI can not only accurately understand what customers need and how those needs are being articulated, but be able to respond in a non-robotic way that reflects well upon your business. Without the right AI tools, a chatbot is just a glorified FAQ.
- ☐ At a technical level, a chatbot is a computer program that simulates human conversation to solve customer queries. When a customer or a lead reaches out via any channel, the chatbot is there to welcome them and solve their problems. They can also help the customers lodge a service request, send an email or connect to human agents if need be.
- ☐ If this reminds you of a telephonic customer care number where you choose the options according to your need, you would be very correct. That phone tree is also a chatbot, though a very primitive one. Modern chatbots do the same thing by holding a conversation with customers. This conversation may be in the form of text, voice or a hybrid of both.

As with all AI tools, chatbots will continue to evolve and support human capabilities. When they take on the routine tasks with much more

efficiency, humans can be relieved to focus on more creative, innovative and strategic activities.

Wherever you are in your journey as a business owner, using chatbots can help you improve customer engagement, expand your customer base, qualify leads at the outset and expand to global markets easily. With so many advantages, it makes sense to start using chatbots for your business growth right now.