Microsoft Power Platform

Power Virtual Agents, At Your Service:

A Quick-Start Introduction to Creating Powerful Chatbots

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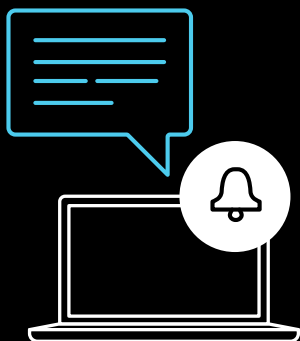
# Introduction

You might already be familiar with virtual agents, the conversational chatbots that help many companies provide online customer service. But did you know that virtual agents can help across a huge range of business tasks beyond customer service, engaging both your external customers and internal workforce?

Power Virtual Agents is a new technology from Microsoft that empowers anyone in your business to build versatile, adaptable chatbots, with no coding or AI expertise required. Power Virtual Agents can help with everything from HR to sales, on almost any site or channel imaginable—from websites to Microsoft Teams to Facebook to Microsoft Power Apps.

Power Virtual Agents makes chatbots easy to build, and you can be up and running with your first one within minutes. This e-book can give you some quick ideas on how to get started putting Power Virtual Agents to work for you.
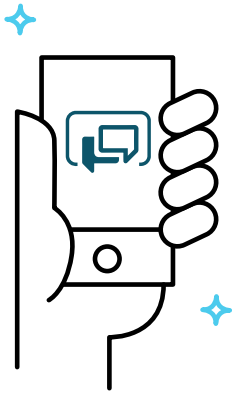
What is Power Virtual Agents?

Power Virtual Agents creates intelligent chatbots that, at first glance, look and behave like other chatbots you may have seen when looking for customer support from your favorite retailer, bank, or airline.

Users ask questions by typing in plain language, just like a real-life conversation, such as text messaging with a friend. The chatbot then replies with a conversational response, hopefully steering the user towards a successful resolution of their issue with just a few messages.

What makes Power Virtual Agents so different—and so powerful—is what's happening behind the scenes.

No code required

Power Virtual Agents is easy and intuitive to use, featuring a visual authoring canvas designed with business people in mind—the subject matter experts who are closest to the content and answers in your organization. It's simple and straightforward to create, test, and maintain a chatbot all within the same graphical interface.
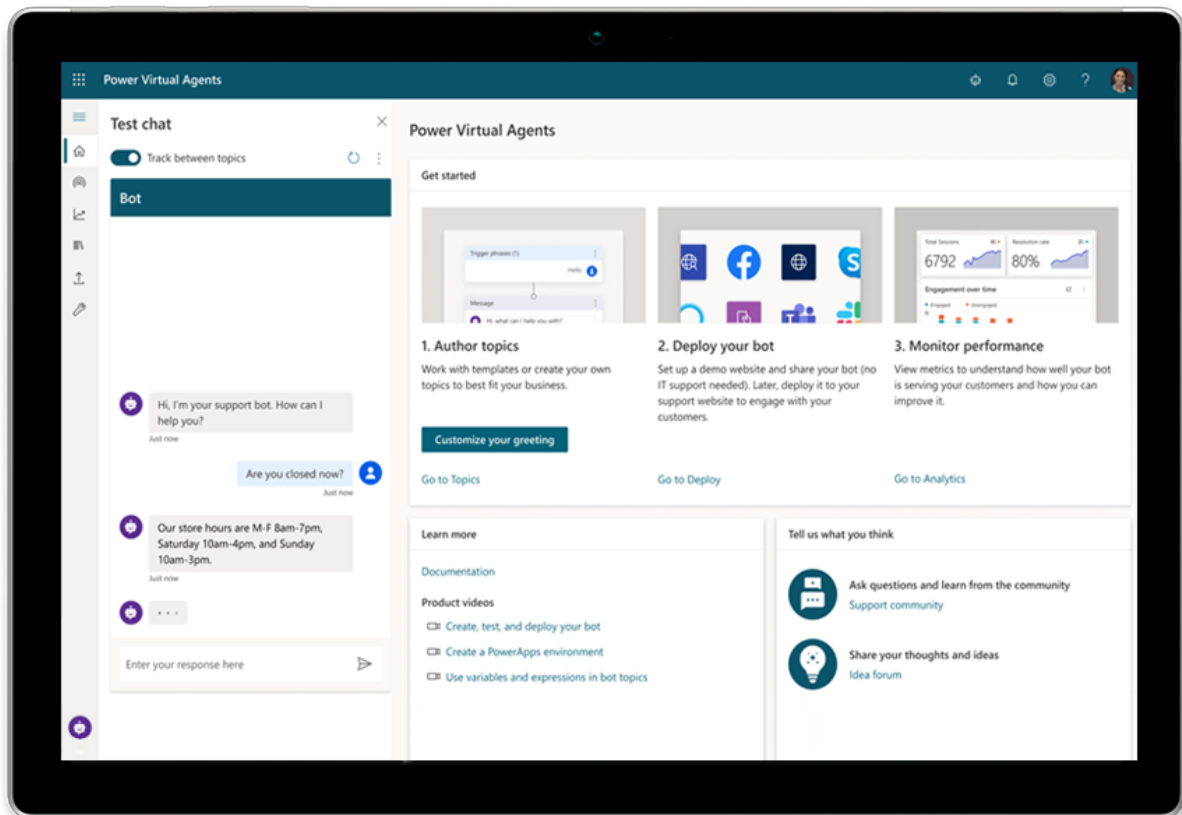
Get started in minutes

You can be up and running fast with your first chatbot right out of the box. Just point the chatbot at your company's FAQ pages and it will automatically extract common questions and answers to create chatbot content.

Intelligent interactions

Chatbots created with Power Virtual Agents use a universal language model trained on a huge amount of data and optimized for the way people use language when interacting with chatbots. That means Power Virtual Agents is better able to interpret what users mean and their goals, not just process what they type. Even if user wording doesn't match trigger phrases, chatbots can still understand and successfully launch topics correctly.

Chatbots also have flexibility in how they interact, allowing them to decide when to skip over questions, making their interactions more human.

Deployable almost anywhere

You can embed your chatbots across dozens of different channels. You might deploy one, for engaging with customers, on your website, Facebook, or Skype. Or you might put a different one, designed to help your workers, into Microsoft Teams, an employee portal, or an internal mobile app.

Connected to your systems

Thanks to integration with the Microsoft Power Platform, more than 350 prebuilt connectors let your chatbot talk to your back-end systems with a few clicks—connecting with everything from MailChimp and Salesforce to GitHub and Dynamics 365. If you have pro developers who want to go further and add custom code or more complex capabilities, Microsoft Cognitive Services and Bot Framework are just a few clicks away. They can even create new workflows or call existing APIs using Microsoft Automate.
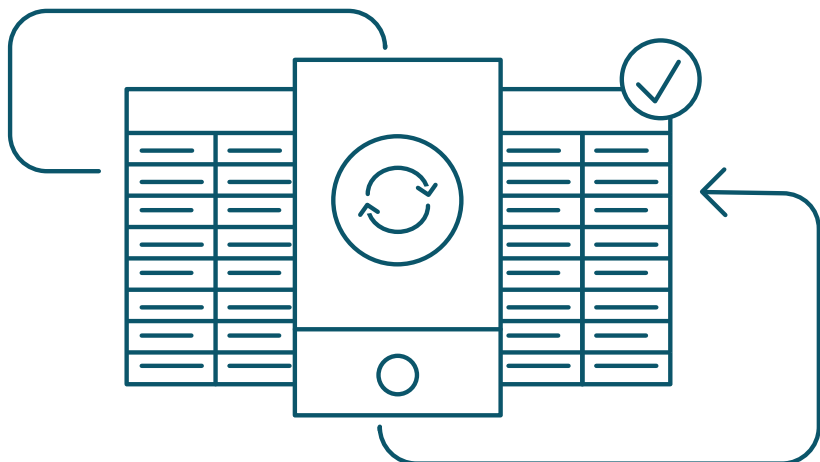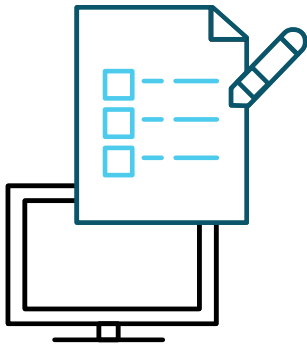
What can you do with Power Virtual Agents?

It's probably easy to imagine how chatbots created with Power Virtual Agents could engage your customers, answering questions and multiplying the power of your existing employees to meet customer needs.

Here are a couple more ideas beyond customer service, based on how real-world companies are using Power Virtual Agents right now:
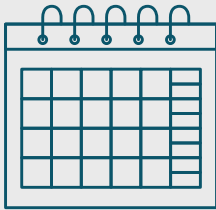
Idea 1:
A digital assistant for employees

Idea 2:
A smart, interactive field service guide

Idea 1:

A digital assistant for employees

One of our customers used Power Virtual Agents to create a personal digital assistant for its employees. This assistant helped with a wide variety of tasks, from onboarding and scheduling to managing benefits and getting IT help.

The company's workers juggle many things at once, balancing day-to-day tasks, meetings, projects, and deadlines. But a siloed array of workplace applications—for example, BlueJeans for communications, Docker for files, and Workday for HR solutions—meant that workers often had a disjointed experience that decreased productivity.

Power Virtual Agents empowered the company to create a single solution that integrated well with their entire ecosystem. With their new digital assistants, workers can now schedule a meeting, update their timecard, make benefit selections, and get employee information—all from a single chat interface embedded in the employee portal, also available on iOS and Android.

And because it's powered by Power Virtual Agents, the digital assistant is easy to update with new topics and fresh content. There's no need to build and train new models for every new topic being added.

Idea 2:

A smart, interactive field service guide

Another company needed to ramp up over 10,000 new employees every year for seasonal work at customer sites. The company has deep expertise in its services, with extensive knowledgebase articles and even image-recognition technologies for helping identify and diagnose customer problems.

The company is using Power Virtual Agents to turn even newer field technicians into instant experts, drawing on the company's collective knowledge through an intuitive, conversational interface. Armed with these resources, technicians can work more efficiently and resolve customer issues more effectively.

The chatbots it has created can help capture data from field visits, too, and because they are internally connected to the company's back end, this data can be used to create feedback loops and further improve future visits, increasing customer satisfaction, loyalty, and retention.
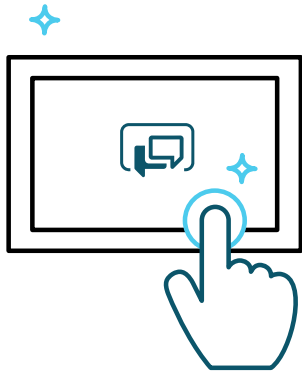
How to get started with Power Virtual Agents

We all want to respond to customer and employee needs more effectively, rapidly, and at scale. Power Virtual Agents provide a quick, low-investment, no-code way to do that, empowering your workers—the people who know the content and answers in your organization the best—to create and maintain their own virtual agents.

The best way to get started is with a free trial of Power Virtual Agents, which lets you start building your first chatbot in a matter of minutes. As you mature in your journey, you may be interested in adding the power of Bot Framework Skills to your Power Virtual Agents authoring experience. To do so, simply leverage your existing Azure subscription, or start a new one to begin integrating Bot Framework Skills.

You can quickly create your first chatbot and then expand into more intricate conversational topics.

Get started today

Check out our <u>Microsoft Mechanics video</u> to get a high-level understanding of Power Virtual Agents and some of its most important capabilities.

Try Power Virtual Agents

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