

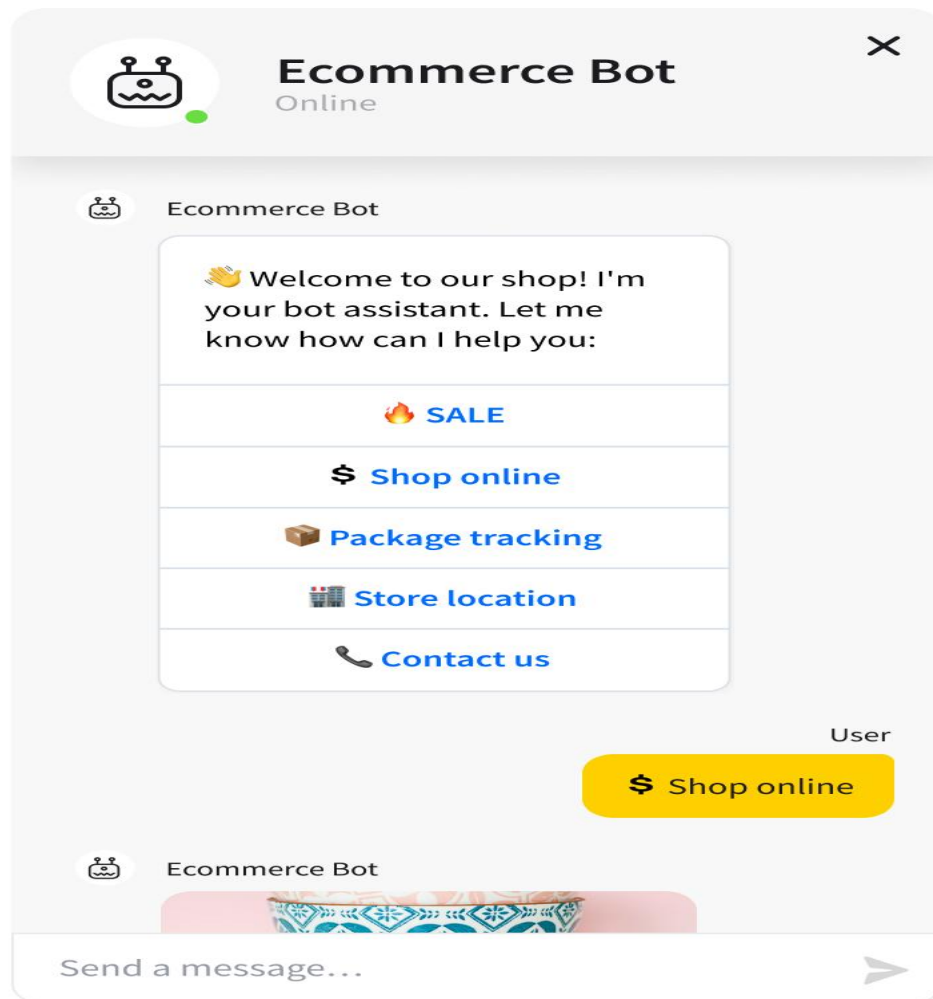
Winning Stakeholder Buy-In through Strategic Engagement

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Dynamic Business Analyst and Operations Specialist with 15+ years of cross-industry experience spanning technology, telecoms, finance, and manufacturing. Skilled in bridging business and technical teams, driving process optimization, and delivering impactful solutions across diverse industries.

Background

A business in Nigeria needed to increase customer engagement on its website while reducing dependency on call-in support. The agreed solution after requirements gathering was to incorporate a chatbot to handle basic customer inquiries online.



The Challenge

An influential stakeholder, the Head of Finance, resisted funding the chatbot project. His main concern was that the chatbot could lead to staff reduction within the Customer Service department, which was managed by his relative.

Engagement Strategy

Instead of insisting on the technical and financial merits of the project, I chose to build rapport and understanding. I discovered that the Head of Finance played lawn tennis, a sport I also enjoy. By joining his tennis club and partnering with him for doubles games, I gradually established trust and an informal connection.

Turning Point

One Saturday after a game, we stopped at a busy supermarket. Frustrated by the long checkout queue, he exclaimed, 'Why can't they introduce self-checkout?' before leaving his basket and walking out. In that moment, I saw an opportunity to draw a parallel between his frustration and our project.

The Analogy

I explained that the long queues at the supermarket were similar to the long hold times customers experienced when calling the company. A self-checkout, I said, was like a chatbot — allowing customers to help themselves quickly and efficiently. The connection clicked, and the next workday, the project received funding approval.

Outcome

The chatbot was successfully funded and implemented. It improved customer engagement on the website, reduced call volumes, and provided faster service to customers seeking basic information. The stakeholder later became one of the strongest supporters of the project.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Stakeholder concerns often extend beyond business logic — understand their motivations.
- ✓ Building trust and rapport outside formal settings can open doors to meaningful influence.
- ✓ Relatable analogies help stakeholders visualize value from their own experiences.
- ✓ Empathy and communication are just as important as technical expertise in driving project success.
- ✓ This project reduced call volume to the call center by 20%, and increased engagement on the website by 30%.