



Conversational AI Use Cases in Customer Service

Conversational artificial intelligence (AI) offers a seminal advancement in the way we interact with computers. Forget the menus, touchscreens, or mouse clicks: Customers can now just use their voice to engage with a computer, an action that requires no learning curve. Plus, the value of these conversational AI applications will improve with use as they learn on the job.

Clearly, conversational AI is set to join the ranks of groundbreaking technologies that changed the way we do business and the expectations we have as consumers—think broadband internet, software-as-a-service, and smartphones. Conversational AI affects more than just customer service, but that's where the first big wins will happen.

Consider that the forecasted growth of AI-enabled chatbots, intelligent virtual agents, and other smart customer service applications is truly staggering. Gartner predicts the business value generated by AI will reach \$3.9 trillion by 2022, just two years from now.

The return-on-investment numbers look hugely promising, and the real-world use cases show where to begin for quick wins.

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VALUE OF CONVERSATIONAL
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Conversational AI Success Stories You Can't Afford to Ignore

Among the many ways that COVID-19 has impacted consumers, their use of smart speakers and voice assistant technology is increasing. The percentage of people using these devices at least once or several times a day rose between the beginning of 2020 and the start of April, according to the Smart Audio Report published by NPR and Edison Research.

These devices have already had a profound influence on consumer behavior, driving an inclination toward screenless, more natural interactions with brands. The latest research shows that voice-driven self-service has emerged as the preferred medium of interaction in many parts of the customer journey. And by 2023, customers are expected to use speech interfaces to initiate 70% of self-service interactions, according to the 2019 Gartner Customer Service Technology Vendor Guide.

Research also shows that a vast majority of the organizations using Conversational AI solutions, such as chatbots and Intelligent Virtual Agents (IVAs), have realized quantifiable benefits. Nearly four out of five businesses are saving more than 20% in customer service costs and four staff hours a day as a result of adding an IVA to interact with customers. Furthermore, Gartner has found that organizations that implement virtual agents “report an increase in customer satisfaction and save 33% per voice engagement.”

More businesses than ever before can take advantage of these benefits now that Google and other API providers have moved speech and Natural Language Processing (NLP) into the cloud. This has increased the quality of these technologies while reducing the cost of entry.

So, how can your business begin cashing in on Conversational AI? Here are some tips and success stories to get you started.

Tools that Increase Time to Value

Conversational AI drives business value in several ways, including increased workforce productivity, improved customer engagement and retention, and reduced service costs. Donna Fluss, President of DMG Consulting,

illustrates this potential in the following example: “If the cost of a customer service call handled by a contact center agent is \$5, a 2% increase in self-service utilization for a business that receives 1 million calls per month represents a savings of \$100,000 per month, or \$1.2 million per year.”

These benefits can be achieved much faster by using a code-free, SaaS platform to build your self-service applications. Choosing a platform that provides all the components of an IVA in a single, browser-based solution dramatically reduces the complexity and cost of building advanced IVAs, which would otherwise require expensive software, a team of developers and months of professional services. Using a streamlined development platform enables you to deploy IVAs within days or even minutes. And once deployed, your IVAs can work around the clock to help you connect with new customers, support more sales across more channels, and foster unique revenue streams.

Because IVAs have natural language capabilities, they increase the complexity and amount of enquiries that can be automated. Even more powerful, the interactions are easily auditable, allowing you to keep track of what customers say to the IVAs so you can uncover new services and tasks that are ripe for automation.

SUCCESS STORY: Realizing ROI payback in two weeks

To understand the power and tremendous value of IVA-driven automation, consider the following case study.

An Inference Solutions state government customer uses IVAs to process payments for all types of services, including driver's license renewals and auto registration fees. The IVAs handle 25,000 transactions per day, with 25% of them occurring outside of regular business hours. By automating payment processing, the organization has been able to reallocate 35 full-time call center agents, saving hundreds of thousands of dollars each month in labor costs, while ensuring that payment processing complies with PCI-DSS regulations. In fact, the application yielded an ROI payback within 2 weeks.



SUCCESS STORY: Virtual concierge frees up people to do what they do best

A London Heathrow area hotel also deployed Inference Solutions IVAs to augment human contact center agent performance. Inference Solutions' IVAs are integrated into the hotel's cloud telephony service to automate frequently asked questions such as directions to the airport, checkout instructions, Internet connection problems, restaurant queries and the weather forecast.

As a result, guest call volume to human concierge agents was reduced by 40%, which allows them to focus on more complex, loyalty-building guest interactions. Additionally, average call time for the live agents decreased by 60 seconds because the IVAs can collect caller information and share it with a live agent before they speak to the guest. Plus, the average time to answer a guest call was reduced from 20 to 12 seconds. Guest satisfaction scores remained constant, proving that well-crafted AI technology can provide significant benefits to the hotel while remaining invisible to the customer.

SUCCESS STORY: Delivering an optimized takeout experience

Pizza Hut operates 270 franchise outlets in Australia, which are all connected by a central phone number. But Pizza Hut had an issue with the way its legacy call routing system handled incoming calls, leading to lost revenue and poor customer satisfaction. With its limited ability to route calls based solely on location, the franchise was paying high lead generation fees, with low conversion rates of calls to orders.

In addition, the old system provided limited visibility into customer experience. For instance, while it provided information on call abandons, it did not show at which part of the interaction the caller dropped off. Lacking critical insights made it difficult for the team to optimize performance of the application.

Using Inference IVAs, the new system gives customers the option to have questions answered, or ask for pick up or delivery. Once the customer makes a choice, they are asked

to say their address and postal code, so the IVA can route the call to the customer's local Pizza Hut restaurant. The system's speech recognition is based on Google speech-to-text, providing an accurate and conversational experience for customers. It also uses Google's mapping data so that a customer can geo-locate based on landmarks and be directed to the nearest restaurant location. The platform also integrates with IBM Watson for sentiment analysis. Overall, the new system has been more accurate, improving customer satisfaction.

The IVAs handle upwards of 3,000 calls per day, routing up to 85 calls per minute during peak times. The system remembers customer interactions so that subsequent calls from the same phone number are automatically routed to the customer's preferred restaurant. Because the IVAs are provided through Pizza Hut's carrier, Telstra, all incoming calls can be connected as local calls, reducing transit costs.

Consolidated reporting enables the Pizza Hut team to continuously improve the application.

Next Steps

With these types of benefits, it's no wonder that Gartner has forecasted that business value derived from Artificial Intelligence will reach \$3.9 trillion in 2022 and that virtual agents will account for more than a quarter of that value.

Inference Solutions makes it easy for you to unlock some of this value within your own business by giving you access to latest and most advanced Conversational AI technologies, along with a way to easily package and deploy those technologies as self-service applications. And you won't need a team of developers to help you build and deploy them. Virtually anyone with a few hours of training can learn to build some of the most advanced self-service applications with speech recognition, text-to-speech, voice biometrics and more.

Reach out to us and [schedule a demo](#) so you can begin writing your own Conversational AI success story. For more information, visit <https://www.inferencesolutions.com/>.



Conversational AI Comes of Age

The vast majority of customers today are used to automated customer service experiences that can give them instant recommendations and accurate answers. Customers want to interact with brands in a way that feels organic and accessible, and often, they want to have those experiences as conversations, rather than chat sessions.

Savvy companies have taken note and are finding ways to incorporate conversational artificial intelligence (AI) into their customer service offerings. In doing so, they're tapping into their customers' desire for connection and offering consumers a way to get in touch that satisfies their desire for quick answers and around-the-clock responsiveness. By bringing in AI, organizations have also been able to funnel more of their basic, but necessary, customer inquiries to automated channels, which in turn allows their live agents to concentrate on complex customer interactions.

As enterprise adoption grows, businesses continue to prove the success of incorporating conversational AI solutions into existing customer support solutions. If your organization has been waiting to move on AI-powered chatbots or has been looking to optimize AI offerings for improved customer service, the technology is here, and the time is now.

AI on the Frontlines of Customer Support

For many businesses, one of the main draws of conversational AI solutions is that they take the pressure off live agents to answer every question. Instead, by employing technologies such as intelligent virtual assistants (IVAs), enterprises can scale their customer service systems in a way that allows them to address customers without increasing contact center headcount. At the same time, they create time in their agents' days to allow them to focus on higher-value work.

IVAs can also help businesses by providing another channel through which customers



can access their brand. Given how diverse the typical enterprise customer base is, being able to deploy conversational AI that can be either text- or voice-based is a huge advantage. By having IVAs that are flexible in their communication mode, you as a business can offer a more robust and effective multichannel, cross-system platform. Better still, with continual advancements in natural language processing and natural language understanding, IVAs are up to the challenge of handling the vast array of language from customers.

At Verint®, we've seen customers such as Amtrak and the US Army incorporate IVAs into customer service with great success — driving down contact center volume and increasing their employee and customer satisfaction rates.

AI as an Employee Resource

Of course, while conversational AI brings value when deployed at the front lines of customer service, IVAs can also be powerful tools for your agents to leverage in their own, more complex customer interactions.

As more employees work remotely, they need support to help them address the complicated questions that customers ask. AI can help streamline the information-gathering process and intelligently respond to employee questions, so that your staff can resolve customer issues quickly.

Increasingly, enterprises are using conversational AI as a resource for employee training. Because of the variation in employee understanding and expertise, many training programs today teach to the lowest common denominator to ensure that everyone gets the baseline information they need. This approach can make training feel clunky and slow. Fortunately, through AI, enterprises can break out of the one-size-fits-all approach and move to more personalized training without much additional investment.

IVAs can make training more nuanced and responsive by answering employee questions as they come up. Additionally, because these AI solutions understand employee inputs, they can spend more or less time on a topic, as well as easily revisit training topics on an employee-by-employee basis. This attention to employee support from the very outset can pay dividends down the line when it comes to customer satisfaction, as your agents can confidently and quickly address dynamic customer needs.

Verint has extensive experience helping organizations incorporate conversational AI to simplify, modernize, and automate their customer-focused operations. Contact us to learn more. ■

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The Transformational Value of Conversational AI for Customer Service

THE PAIN

What is the secret to customer loyalty? The answer straight from ~50,000 consumers, according to a massive survey conducted by Gartner, was: Make it easy to get service.

To find the recipe for “ease,” Forrester asked 5,000 consumers (on our behalf) about their biggest pain points in getting good service. They pointed to lack of contact center agent knowledge and inconsistency of answers, followed by ineffective websites. When we asked over 500 agents about their biggest hassle in being able to deliver good service, the culprit was, not surprisingly, the difficulty in finding the right answers.

THE CAUSE

Customer queries are getting more complex. Agents and self-service systems need to have conversations with customers to resolve their issues and provide advice. This would mean asking the next best question and performing the next best action, based on historical and real-time context, situational knowhow, and compliance requirements—which would require agents to have a 20-pound brain!

Contact centers have attempted to address this through non-stop training, something today’s millennial and Gen Z agents despise. But, stay-at-home orders from COVID-19 have made training and collaboration very difficult.

THE CURE

The answer lies in leveraging conversational AI and knowledge to guide agents and self-service systems through their dialog with the customer. It is like using a GPS to get from Place A to Place B, using the best route, while complying with requirements such as avoiding the freeway and not turning the wrong way into one-way streets. Conversational AI enables contact centers to scale effective, efficient, and compliant customer service and sales

across in-house, gig, and outsourced agents, a real challenge amid the COVID-19 crisis.

THE METHOD

When done right, conversational AI can transform customer service. Here are some best practices for success:

- It is about the **content and knowledge that customers need** and not what you have or think they need. Digital customer interactions can provide an accurate picture of what is needed.
- Don’t try to boil the ocean. **Use the 80-20 rule** to prioritize where conversational AI is needed.
- **No one AI-technology hammer works for all business-need nails.** For instance, while it’s better to use machine learning for use cases with low business risk (e.g., making contextual promotional offers on an eCommerce site), you are better off using supervised or curated learning when the risk for the business or the customer is high, such as for management of high-value assets or a life-and-death treatment decision for a patient.
- Go with a **vendor who has a proven track record** of success and best practice expertise in this domain (you don’t want a vendor to learn AI at your expense).
- Make sure to **use a common AI and knowledge engine across all customer touchpoints** so that repeat contacts don’t flood your contact center—you can ill-afford it in this crisis!

CONVERSATIONAL AI AT WORK

Here are sample metrics and real-world examples from our clientele. Note that the business value of conversational AI goes way beyond these metrics.

First-Contact Resolution (FCR)

FCR is a key customer-focused contact center metric that significantly reduces

consumer effort. While FAQs, search, topic-tree browsing help with simple queries, more sophisticated technologies like conversational AI are essential to resolve issues of medium to high complexity at first contact. A premier telco client improved FCR by 37% with eGain’s conversational AI. In fact, now, any agent is able to handle any call, the “holy grail” in contact center customer service!

Average Handle Time (AHT)

AHT without FCR increases customer effort and defection. Happily, conversational AI can transform both seemingly conflicting metrics. A premier banking client reduced AHT by 67% while improving FCR by 36% by leveraging conversational AI to guide customers to answers, while complying with industry regulations!

Annual Training Hours (ATH)

A global bank secured the #1 spot in customer service NPS and reduced ATH by 50% even as it expanded to 11 countries with mostly novice agents in its workforce!

Some technologies improve customer service on the margins, some enable incremental improvement, but only a handful actually transform it. Conversational AI clearly falls into the last category.

NEXT STEPS

Contact us today to discuss how we can get you going with conversational AI for customer service. Or, request for a product demo if you are in a hurry! ■

About eGain

eGain omnichannel customer engagement solutions power digital transformation for leading brands. Our top-rated cloud applications for messaging, virtual assistance, social, mobile, web, and contact centers help clients deliver optimized customer journeys. To find out more about eGain, visit <http://www.egain.com>.