



ARTICLE

# Chatbots and Humans: Why They're Better Together

Just say hello. When you strike up a conversation with a chatbot—an application that emulates a human conversation using a chat or speech interface—you can do anything from checking the status of an order to asking about an airline’s baggage fees.

A rapidly increasing number of enterprises are embracing intelligent chatbots to replicate the effectiveness of their best customer service agents and reduce customer frustration and wait times. According to analyst firm Gartner, the use of chatbots (called virtual customer assistants by Gartner) will triple through 2019 as enterprises seek to increase customer satisfaction and reduce operating costs.<sup>1</sup>

Does this mean that human agents won’t be needed anymore? Will enterprises be able to close their contact centers? The answer is no to both questions, at least in the foreseeable future. In fact, chatbots need humans and humans need chatbots. Why? Because humans help chatbots learn, and chatbots help human agents deliver a great customer experience.

## Customer satisfaction and cost-savings drive the chatbot revolution

Before we explore the chatbot/human synergy in more detail, let’s look at why chatbots are becoming a ubiquitous part of customer experience. Companies across industries—communications, retail, banking and finance, media, insurance, travel and hospitality, and more—do the following with intelligent chatbots:

- 1 Satisfy customer expectations**—Customers already start their experience online and prefer the convenience and speed of self-service. Chatbots are an excellent way to help them get what they want faster and with less effort than other self-service alternatives such as lists of frequently asked questions.
- 2 Increase contact volume**—As calls, email, and chats increase, so do operating costs. Chatbots help companies deflect interactions because customers can self-serve efficiently effectively. The right chatbot can even help customers resolve complex transactions, and if it can’t complete the transaction, it hands it off to an agent with full context to reduce call length and customer frustration.
- 3 Support a growing number of digital channels**—From Google Allo to Facebook Messenger to WeChat, the ever-increasing number of digital messaging and social channels makes being everywhere at once extremely challenging. Chatbots help enterprises create a presence in virtually any channel and manage them more effectively by being wherever their customers are.
- 4 Boost customer satisfaction**—Customers are frustrated with long wait times for calls, convoluted and confusing website FAQs, and delayed email responses. They want their problems solved or their questions answered easily and quickly without waiting to speak to someone on the phone. Chatbots help them do that, which in turn makes a measurable impact on customer satisfaction metrics such as the Net Promoter Score.
- 5 Improve insight into the customer journey**—Chatbots generate true “voice of the customer” data through their conversations, which you can use to improve the chatbot experience, the knowledge and effectiveness of your agents, and your overall customer service program.

<sup>1</sup> “Seven Decision Points for Success with Virtual Customer Assistants,” Gartner, July 26, 2016

## Enterprises need intelligent chatbots for maximum synergy

Not all chatbots are created equal. Consider the more than 30,000 branded chatbots that have been released for Facebook Messenger in just more than a year.<sup>2</sup> Most of these chatbots are not intelligent enterprise-grade chatbots designed to seamlessly handle all different types of customer service questions and transactions. Instead, many are simplistic and casual, far better suited to delivering an entertaining consumer experience than solving customer issues quickly and accurately.

When it comes to intelligent chatbots, it's extremely difficult to build one yourself. Do-it-yourself chatbots usually suffer from limited scope, lack of understanding of customer context and intent, inability to integrate with popular enterprise information systems, greater risk of failure, higher costs, and longer time to deploy.

To reap all the benefits of a synergistic chatbot/human strategy, you should look for a provider of intelligent chatbots specifically designed for enterprise customer service. An intelligent, enterprise-ready chatbot is:

- 1 Personal and transactional**—It delivers user-specific responses and guides users through the steps they need to complete a task or a transaction.
- 2 Aware**—An intelligent chatbot understands what customers are trying to do and helps them get to a resolution via the quickest method (which could be by chat or even by phone).
- 3 Not Human**—Intelligent chatbots don't pretend to be human. They differentiate the experience so customers understand they are not interacting with a live agent, which helps build and maintain trust in your brand.
- 4 Ready to hand off the interaction to a human when needed**—Intelligent chatbots recognize situations where a live agent is necessary, seamlessly hand off the interaction, and share the context with the chat or voice agent. The customer should not have to repeat any information already given to the chatbot.

## Chatbots work with your human agents

You might think that the purpose of a chatbot is to replace human agents. But that's not the case. The goal is to replace common, repetitive work with automation and free up the human agents for higher-value engagements.

Chatbots stop the drudgery and set the stage for an effective, personalized conversation. Why turn humans into automatons when you can take advantage of their creativity and problem-solving skills to truly differentiate your brand?

That's why chatbots make humans even better at what they do. Humans can be more human: getting right to the conversation and skipping the data-taking front end of the interaction that frustrates customers.

<sup>2</sup> Josh Constine and Sarah Perez, "Facebook Messenger Now Allows Payments in Its 30,000 Chatbots," TechCrunch, September 12, 2016

Chatbots help your human agents work more effectively and efficiently by:

- 1 Minimizing menial or repetitive work. For instance, an agent shouldn't be required for a password reset.
- 2 Mining agent interactions to learn new customer intents and agent solutions. Machine learning helps the chatbot increase its effectiveness and accuracy, which deflects even more interactions away from agents.
- 3 Reducing average handling time by suggesting responses while the agent is chatting with the customer.
- 4 Maintaining the context of previous interactions, thus avoiding "starting over" with customers.

When your chatbot works seamlessly with your live agents, everyone benefits. It's better for customers, better for agents, and better for the bottom line because it reduces operational costs by deflecting interactions, provides continuity of experience, and delivers the best customer (and agent) experience.

## When chatbots aren't enough, a human is there

For agents and chatbots to complement each other in the customer journey, they have to work together as a team. Intelligent chatbots must recognize when a handoff is appropriate or required and then do it in such a way that the conversation continues without loss of context.

Why would a chatbot need to hand off the interaction to a human agent?

- Customer's request is not understandable.
- Customer can't handle their own request with self-service due to rules or policies.
- Customer's request is better served by an agent.
- It's a high-value transaction and your company wants a live agent to close the opportunity.
- Customer explicitly requests a human.

Handoffs to humans are also valuable learning opportunities for your chatbot. By mining the transcripts of human agents interacting with customers, your chatbot gains the intelligence it needs to better understand customer intent and provide customers with more accurate and helpful responses.

## Vodafone's chatbot helps both customers and agents

Telecommunications company Vodafone's award-winning virtual agent "Hani" is an intelligent chatbot that answers 80,000 questions per month and deflects 75 percent of its interactions away from the contact center. Vodafone contact center staff also use the chatbot to access accurate, up-to-date information on Vodafone products and services.

## Companies still need humans more than ever

When futurists announce that software robots will automate people out of jobs, it's an easy leap to think that chatbots will automate your agents out of their jobs.

We've found—at least at this stage of artificial intelligence for customer experience—that companies need humans more than ever for customer service. But they don't need them to handle a password reset. They need them to be more human, to be available to take on more complex issues and questions, and to turn difficult customer interactions into opportunities to create more brand advocates.

Chatbots help agents be the best they can be by handling more menial, repetitive parts of customer service, helping them resolve issues faster, and freeing them up to do what humans do so well: communicate with each other and build rapport.

**Let [24]7 help your organization  
achieve extraordinary results.  
Contact us today.**

 [www.247-inc.com](http://www.247-inc.com)

 [queries@247-inc.com](mailto:queries@247-inc.com)

 USA +1.855.692.9247  
CA +1.866.454.0084  
UK +44.0.207.836.9203  
AUS +61.2.90025780

### About [24]7

[24]7 is redefining the way companies interact with consumers. We help you attract and retain customers, and make it possible to create a personalized, predictive, and effortless customer experience. For more information visit:

[www.247-inc.com](http://www.247-inc.com)