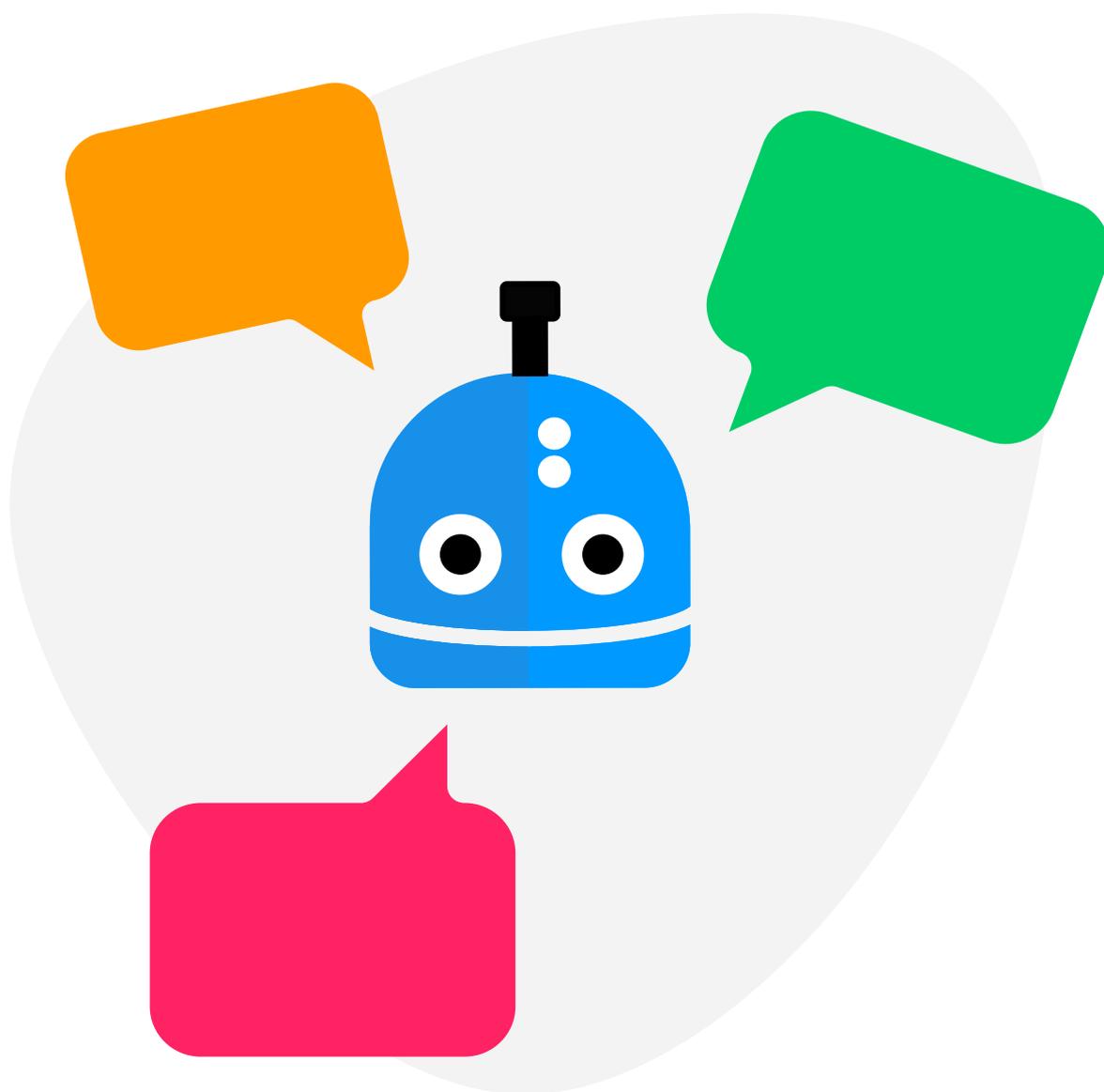


MAKING CONVERSATIONS FLOW

CONVERSATIONAL BOTS

– A smarter customer interaction using speech and text



A SMARTER CUSTOMER INTERACTION USING SPEECH AND TEXT

Until recently, chatbots have largely failed to establish themselves as the savvy contact center colleagues they were intended to be. Rather than bringing value, by handling a bulk of basic customer questions, they have been a source of frustration. They simply haven't been good enough.

But that is about to change.

Tech is rapidly getting better and is catching up with our vision in many ways. We can now apply artificial intelligence to make customer interactions smoother and better. From having been a series of unconnected sessions across a range of channels, the customer interaction of the future is a seamless conversation where the historical data always follows along. A conversational bot can alternate between speech and text and is a key player in what we call the omni-channel experience.

So, what's so different with today's conversational bots compared with first generation chatbots? Well for starters, they understand natural language, are self-learning and provide relevant and personal responses based on context. Rather than pointing in the direction of the information jungle, they will guide you to exactly where you want to be, and if you prefer, they will help you on your journey. In addition, they realise when their skills are no longer enough and refer the matter to a living person.

Two clear indicators that it may be time for a conversational bot are when customer service must deal with the same issues repeatedly or if customers want answers to simple questions outside of office hours. A good bot takes the pressure off customer service while at the same time improving customer satisfaction and, for many organisations, this leads to improved efficiency and accessibility. It's worth mentioning that a key factor for successful introduction of a bot is that it is seen as part of the digitalisation journey and can fit within the framework of a larger automation initiative.

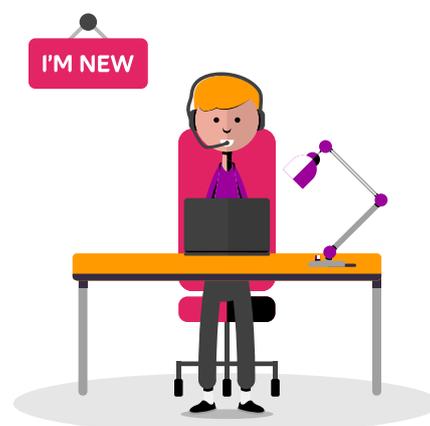
In this white paper we talk about the doors that open once a modern conversational bot is embedded into the collective brain of your business operations. We also explain what to think about to ensure that the introduction is as successful as possible, making the bot useful to both customers and colleagues alike.

WELL-PLANNED ONBOARDING

For a bot to be a success, it needs help from someone who is fully up to speed on customer interaction and how everyday life transpires in the customer service operation. We therefore recommend that the bot resides in the customer service organisation.

Treat the bot as a new colleague. A common reason when the introduction of a conversational bot fails to meet expectations is that it doesn't get the help and support it needs initially. To be successful, the bot must have a dedicated mentor by its side, teaching it to swim properly before it is thrown in at the deep end.

The person coaching the bot, in addition to having extensive experience of talking to customers, should be creative, eager to learn new things and like problem solving. For example, if delays in queues to agents suddenly see a dramatic increase, the coach would ideally find out the reason why and quickly come up with a way of using the bot to alleviate the problem. Sometimes you need to tweak things on the fly and the bot coach may have to accept that you don't always achieve exactly what you intended.



MAKE TIME FOR TRAINING

To become a valuable employee, the bot needs help building its knowledge base and honing its linguistic skills. The person or team responsible for coaching the bot needs to analyse questions it has trouble with, and even though a bot will never be able to answer all possible questions, it always has potential for improvement. When the bot is initially launched, it's good practice to train it daily, and later scale down to once a week once it starts performing well. Also remember to train the bot in interacting with different types of customer groups who express themselves in differently and have different needs.

GIVE THE BOT A PERSONALITY

Although most people are aware that a bot is not a living person, we still expect to get answers that feel a bit more personal than, for example, the ones you get from a traditional FAQ. Of course, it may be a good idea to give the bot a sense of humour, but go easy with the jokes. Give it a reasonably strong personality but make sure that it is consistent with your brand. Aim for the bot to adopt a tone in line with the one used by its human colleagues use in their customer interactions.

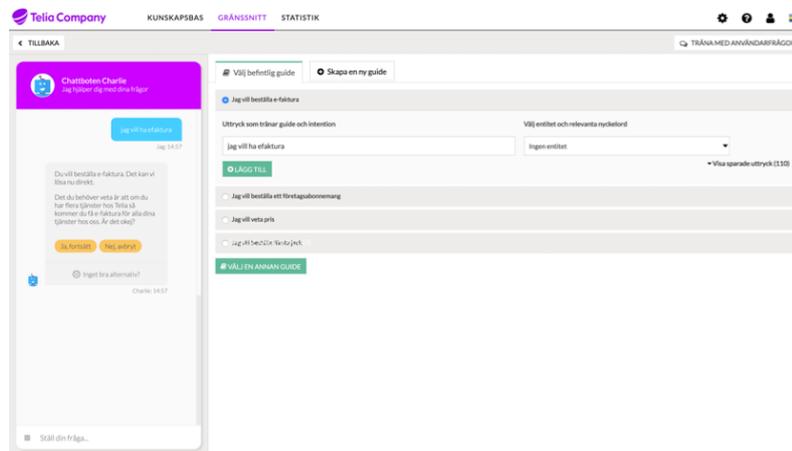
START SMALL

For the bot to live up to expectations, it is often sensible to let it start its career in a well-defined area. Rather than claiming that “the bot has answers to all your questions” it is better to give it a more modest scope to begin with. Perhaps the bot can start by answering questions on invoicing. It would start hidden and pop up only when the customer searches for invoices or clicks on issues involving invoicing.

As the bot gains experience, its responsibilities can be extended, and it can move to a more visible place on the screen. It's important to give the bot a task that it can cope with, as customers have very little patience with things that do not work perfectly on first attempt. Trust is quickly eroded and takes time to rebuild.

The bot is most efficient and useful if it can not only answer questions but also complete actual tasks in internal systems. However, it is usually a good idea to keep it simple at first. By doing so, you can collect statistics about the issues that customers are facing, and you can focus your attention on areas that have the greatest impact when building integrations.

Once the first bot has learned the ropes, you can extend its scope or launch additional bots in other parts of the business. When you have a group of chatbots that help customers with a range of issues, you may consolidate them and feature the new, super-competent bot on your home page.



It should be easy to train the bot.

TALK OR TYPE?

Just as we see children who try to swipe between the pages of books and tap the pictures, we believe that in the future they will be saying “open” to the box of chocolates. Voice control will soon be the most natural thing in the world. Today we already have smart speakers, and it is only a matter of time before there are bots everywhere to help us get things done, both by talking to us and by offering other digital services.

A voice bot is the ideal option for helping with tasks the customers want done while on the move, with hands and eyes occupied with other things. Load your travel card as you prepare pancakes, order food to the door when you are in the car or book a trip while out taking a walk.

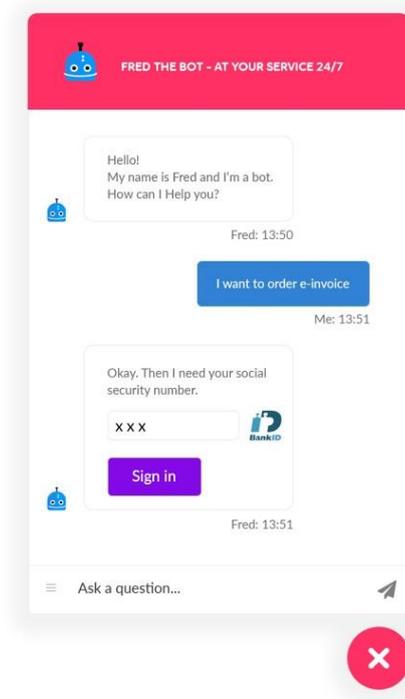
However, you would probably not buy a new autumn jacket or choose the right mobile phone using a voice bot. You would want to look at images and confirm your selections using keystrokes. A chatbot is also better suited for sharing big chunks of text with the customer. In most cases, the customer wants to be able to quickly browse the content, and focus on the sections that feel relevant, rather than having to spend several minutes listening to the whole text being read to them.

Think about whether tasks are best suited for speech or on-screen text, or perhaps a combination of both? It's quite possible to start using speech and then switch to text and then, for example, allow the customer to confirm an agreement by pressing a button or typing “yes”.

BUILD A DIALOGUE

The chatbot experience should be designed as a dialogue. The person talking to the bot should feel like he or she is part of a conversation. The bot should provide answers to questions and follow-up in a relevant and natural way whenever necessary.

A common mistake is allowing the chat bot to provide answers that are way too long and exhaustive. Keep in mind, the person who is talking to the bot wants an answer to a question rather than a lecture on the subject. If the customer wants more information, he or she will ask another question. Responses need to focus on clarity rather than going into every little detail. Bear in mind that what works in writing isn't necessarily the best information in a spoken answer. In other words, the chatbot response may need to be adapted before being used by the voicebot.



THIS IS THE BOT AT WORK!



HOW

You have a question; the bot has an answer. Based on the customer's question, the bot offers a description or an explanation of something, for example "what is an e-invoice".



GUIDE

You have a question; the bot points you to the right contact or page. For example, if the customer asks, "How can I solve poor image quality?", the bot links you to a troubleshooting page on the web. If the customer instead enters "I want to cancel my subscription", he or she is directed to chat with or talk to a customer representative.



DO

If you want to perform a task, the bot helps you. If the customer enters "I want to start paying by e-invoice", the bot can retrieve the necessary information about the bank, log the customer in and send the order.

BOTS MAKE YOU SMARTER

By listening to and analysing conversation between the chatbot and your customers you gain insights into important information about everything from how various things work to tips on how you can develop your business. Perhaps there is a way of providing information proactively so that the question doesn't even have to be asked in the first place? By analysing the questions customers ask, you can understand what lies behind them and address the root cause. Perhaps invoices need to be specified more clearly?

Through the chatbot conversations, you can also learn about the things that are important to your customers. For example, if a shop notes that a lot of questions are being asked about organic ice cream, it may be time to expand your offering.

The bot can also help you mitigate the consequences of a mistake. Something that otherwise might risk customer service being overloaded by worried or upset customers. By quickly teaching the bot what to answer regarding the incident, customers can get a fast and reassuring response to their concerns. A quick, alert and courageous customer service together with a chat bot that can learn new instructions easily makes for a strong team.

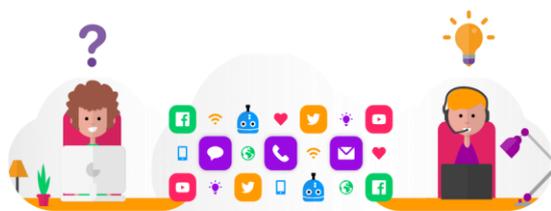
ARE BOTS THE FUTURE HOME PAGE?

It is quite likely that the bot of the future will help online visitors design their own experience. When you add a bot that asks, "What can I help you with?" to your home page or subpages, the website becomes a conversation that is tailored to the history and behaviour of the visitor. Rather than trying to navigate a site, visitors are helped by a bot that learns their needs and points them to the information or service they are looking for. In speech, in text or a combination of both.

We think that the web as a place for customer interaction will continue to grow in importance and be part of a multi-channel experience. The web of the future will be owned by the customer dialogue designers, not by the marketing departments.

Considering how quickly we ditched scheduled TV in favour of on-demand streaming, getting used to a dynamic web experience will likely be similarly fast.

By getting on board now, you will get a head start for the future. No one knows where we will be in a year's time, so incorporating the right competence into the organisation sooner rather than later is the smart move.



TELIA ACE - MAKING CONVERSATIONS FLOW

MORE INFO

Do you want to learn more about the customer interaction of the future?

Let us show how your customer conversations can flow seamlessly by booking a free demo at: showcase.ace.teliacompany.com