



eGain®
Innovation Brief™

8 Tips for Superior
Web Self-Service
Through Chat Bots

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CUSTOMER SERVICE AND CONTACT CENTER SOFTWARE

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Chat bots—also called “chatterbots,” “virtual agents,” “virtual assistants,” “avatars,” “concierges,” and “automated chat”—are enjoying a revival, as businesses look for new ways to differentiate themselves through superior customer service. What sets chat bots apart from other self-service interaction options is the use of natural language and emotions. A chat bot understands natural language and has a “face,” represented by photographs or cartoon figures, that can display a range of expressions. These expressions, combined with tone of the chat bot’s responses, create a distinct personality—friendly, reserved, humorous, or serious—to match the brand personality a company wants to communicate and the prevalent culture in the markets served by the business. Even some government organizations are now using chat bots to provide easy-to-use service to citizens.

The other factor driving the renewed interest in the use of chat bots for web self-service is escalating service costs. Success stories continue to emerge, and studies¹ have found that chat bots can provide memorable customer experience as well as help reduce service delivery costs.

Over the last few years, a number of best practices have emerged around the use of chat bots. Here are the top eight strategy and implementation guidelines for improving the odds of success in using chat bots to provide unique customer service delivery, foster brand loyalty, and reduce customer interaction costs.

1. For example, a study commissioned jointly by eGain Communications Corporation and a large European bank, conducted by The Usability Company in 2002.

Strategy

1. Customer service through chat bots should be an integral part of your multichannel service strategy. Make sure you don't deploy point products that need their own business rules, workflow, administration, analytics, knowledge base, and integration framework. A multichannel interaction hub solution that includes chat-bot technology is the proven approach.
2. Make sure customers can easily escalate to agent-assisted service without having to repeat content and context. This is a critical requirement, because not only does it provide a seamless multichannel experience to the customer, but it also increases self-service adoption through an easy-to-access safety net. Also, email a transcript of the entire chat session to the customer.
3. Chat bots can be effective in B2B customer service as well, although the technology has been traditionally used in B2C or G2C service (government-to-citizen). A large international bank uses chat bots to support corporate clients of treasury management applications. Go beyond conventional wisdom to innovate with chatbot service!

Implementation

4. Pick the most frequently asked questions to start with, and make sure the chat bot tolerates common spelling and grammatical errors. A best-of-breed chat bot will even go beyond literal meanings of words to understand the true intent of the customer.
5. Give the chat bot a persona that is suitable for the markets served. For example, mainstream US-based clients often implement bots with outgoing personalities. Technology and entertainment companies tend to use cartoon characters. A Japanese bank uses the face of a popular actor who features in their TV advertisements—the chat-bot implementation reinforces the brand by leveraging the same persona.

6. Use adaptive content management to sustain the relevance and performance of your content. It enables the bot to give accurate, up-to-date answers, while covering new topics of interest to customers. Adaptive content management leverages workflows with service levels to trigger content creation and maintenance tasks, based on evolving content performance as evident from “in-band” customer surveys. For example, did the knowledge base answer the questions in a satisfactory manner? Does it cover key areas of interest to the customer?
7. Pay attention to usability.
 - a. Have the bot consistently (but unobtrusively) available on every page.
 - b. Place the bot near the top of the screen, but not at the very top. Customers expect advertisements at the top of the screen.
 - c. If the bot has to be invoked with a button, label the button clearly.
 - d. Avoid pop-up windows. Consumers don't like interacting with bots if the chat window obscures the web pages they are on.
 - e. Make the chat text box large enough to contain a typical query so that users can see all of what they have typed.
 - f. If the bot mentions a particular web page, provide a link to that page.
8. Apply human-to-human communication best practices to chat bots. Implement bots that are emotionally intelligent and display empathy through expressions as well as language. Make sure you phrase error messages in such a way that they do not antagonize customers who are already frustrated because they've made “errors”!

A final word

These eight tips and best practices can mean the difference between success and failure in your chat-bot implementation. Gartner predicts that by 2010, more than 15% of Fortune 1000 companies with a website will use a chat bot for online customer service. Make sure you are ahead of the competition by getting started first!

- ▶ For information on eGain's chatbot technology, visit http://www.egain.com/products/chat_bot.asp

Related white papers in the eGain Library

eGain is a pioneer in eService, multichannel customer interaction management, and knowledge management software. The first-ever customer service software to become available in the enterprise SaaS model in 1998, **eGain Service™**, the company's software suite, is available for on-demand or on-premise implementation.

Our best practice white papers reflect the expertise we have gained from helping hundreds of world-class companies deliver stand-out customer service, while optimizing the performance of their contact centers and customer service organizations through the customer interaction hub (CIH) approach. You can view them at www.egain.com/best_practices/library.asp

About eGain

eGain (OTC: EGAN.OB) is a leading provider of customer service and contact center software for in-house or on-demand deployment. Trusted by prominent enterprises and growing mid-sized companies worldwide, eGain has been helping organizations achieve and sustain customer service excellence for over a decade. 24 of the 50 largest global companies rely on eGain to transform their traditional call centers, help desks, and web customer service operations into multichannel customer interaction hubs. These hubs enable dramatically improved customer experience, unified

multichannel customer service, end-to-end service process efficiencies, and enhanced contact center performance.

eGain Service™, the company's software suite includes integrated, best-in-class applications for web self-service, email management, knowledge management, chat and web collaboration, automation of fax and paper-based service interactions, case management, and service fulfillment. These robust applications are built on the **eGain Customer Interaction Hub Platform**, a scalable next-generation framework for case and knowledge management, and certified out-of-the-box integrations with leading call center, content, and business systems.

The first-ever customer service software to become available in the enterprise SaaS model, eGain Service is available for on-demand or on-premise deployment. **eGain OnDemand**, the hosted version of eGain Service, is a proven, robust and scalable solution that has been used by companies of all sizes, since 1998, to rapidly build customer interaction hubs.

Headquartered in Mountain View, California, eGain has an operating presence in 18 countries and serves over 800 enterprise customers worldwide. To find out more about eGain, visit www.eGain.com or call the company's offices: 800-821-4358 (United States); +44 (0) 1753-464646 (London, United Kingdom).

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