

## Humans not replaceable by chatbots

The contact centre industry is experiencing trepidation at the announcement that Facebook will be making use of chatbots via Messenger to deal with customer queries. The concern is that the development and inclusion of intelligent tech will replace humans in a contact centre.



There are many opinions on the matter, but many industry experts maintain that while the advancements of technology are remarkable, for the near future there will remain an important place for people, with the help of automation, in a contact centre.

The reality is that systems, such as the ever-frustrating IVR, are starting to take a backseat in favour of more innovative and user-friendly solutions. This can be seen as a positive move as response times are reduced and query resolution increased through advanced tech solutions. However, when it comes to artificial intelligence (AI) developments, it is likely to be the implementation rather than the new technology alone that will make or break the introduction of chatbots into a call centre.

Bruce von Maltitz, co-founder of 1Stream, explains, "With the move to an omni-channel approach in a contact centre where a customer can engage on a variety of platforms, adding an additional channel, such as Messenger, is relatively simple."

Most contact centres are already managing multiple channels through which customers are able to make contact, and with integrated cloud-based solutions, this has become even easier and more streamlined. A chatbot, in the form of Messenger, would simply be an additional channel that can be incorporated into a contact centre's operations.

"While the inclusion of Messenger is straightforward, ensuring that chatbots increase efficiency and improve customer experience may not be quite as simple."

The key is to avoid a chatbot becoming just another automated responder that cannot adequately answer a customer query and therefore creates more customer frustration rather than enhancing the experience.

Currently, the level of AI such as a chatbot is unlikely to be able to deal with all possible scenarios that will be presented to a contact centre. Therefore, a chatbot could be used to solve simple or routine issues, while for more complex situations, the human element is still essential.

"The strength of a contact centre lies in the partnership of technology and the human element. There is a place for technology and automation, such as chatbots in a contact centre, to simplify and speed up processes. However, for the next 5 to 10 years, this technology will not be sufficiently sophisticated to replace humans who will still need to manage the more complex situations," concludes von Maltitz.

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