AI Virtual Agent

Virtual agent allows client to scale operations and technical support to focus on more complex tasks

Client: The client is a multi-billion dollar software company headquartered in Europe with products distributed across the globe. Within the organization, Essextec worked with the team responsible for a computer aided design (CAD) product with more than 3 million licensed professional and educational users.

Challenge: With over three million users and a fast-growing line of products, the client faced the challenge of scaling their technical support operations to meet the increasing demand. Additionally, the technical support team found that they were spending too much time in two areas that were ripe for innovation: (1) answering basic user questions that should not require human involvement and (2) researching installation guides and knowledge bases to find answers to complex or unique user issues. The client had evaluated basic chatbots as a solution but found that they fell short of expectations in natural language comprehension and querying unstructured information needed to respond to certain issues.

Solution: Essextec built a virtual agent that is capable of addressing a high volume of technical support issues. For the most commonly asked questions, Essextec used natural language models to comprehend user intent. In other words, Essextec developed the solution to be able to understand different ways that users may phrase the most common questions and programmed it with responses approved by the client to follow a pre-defined support script. This accounted for more than half of the inbound inquiries.

Addressing rare and unique issues which require human agents to research installation guides and knowledge bases was an additional challenge. For these types of issues, Essextec leveraged IBM Watson® Discovery, a cognitive search tool, to "read" the same materials that a human would and determine which articles would be most relevant to the issue. The tool would then serve those articles to the user in an easy-to-read format.

The virtual technical support agent developed by Essextec using IBM Watson® Assistant was able to answer common inquiries, guide customers through multiple installation processes, troubleshoot, and quickly find answers to complex questions. Our developers followed best practices regarding conversation flow and UI design to optimize the experience for the user.

Benefits: The virtual agent enables our client to scale their technical support operations by responding to a growing number of user issues — without having to increase the size of their team. This is possible because the solution has fully automated responses to the most basic user issues and also provides a self-service option that reduces the number of complex, unique issues that humans need to resolve. While there will always be a need for human technical support agents to respond to issues that are particularly thorny or to be available to users who simply desire empathy on the other end of the phone, virtual agent solutions can be a great option for organizations looking to manage their costs as they grow.

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