

Vodafone to use artificial intelligence to speed up online queries

Wednesday 12 April, 2017

Vodafone UK has launched TOBi – the artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot – as an innovative way of offering our customers a quicker web chat service. TOBi, a virtual customer services' agent, can handle a range of customer queries including device troubleshooting, usage and order tracking amongst many others.

Recent research shows that 55% of UK consumers say that the most important factor in the ideal customer experience is getting a prompt and effective response to queries[1], highlighting the need for companies to provide faster and more integrated customer service responses. With 75% of all consumers aged 18-25 already using instant messenger everyday [2], TOBi is our answer to providing customers with the quick and easy web chat service they want.

TOBi is already available to some customers through our online web chat service. Later this month messaging will also be available through the My Vodafone app, so customers will be able to speak to advisors whenever they want and while they are on the go.

The pilot platform is powered by a combination of IBM Watson and LivePerson, in a blend of the two cutting edge technologies. This provides customers with a smooth and efficient way of having simple queries answered, before being seamlessly handed over to web chat advisors if needed. Vodafone continues to assess multiple solutions and technologies to implement the future roll out of the programme.

However, we know that sometimes customers just want to speak to a person. That's why in March we started recruiting 2,100 new UK customer services roles across the Midlands, the North of England and Scotland.

Neil Blagden Vodafone UK CS&O Director said: "If customers have a question or want to raise an issue, we know they don't want to wait. So introducing TOBi is an exciting step forward in giving our customers the quick and seamless service they want. Our ambition is to give our customers the best experience possible: TOBi is another important step in our journey to achieving that ambition."

-ends-

[1] *IBM Institute for Business Value Global Telecom Consumer survey Fall 2016:*
<https://www-01.ibm.com/common/ssi/cgi-bin/ssialias?htmlfid=GBF03804USEN&>

2 Ibid.

Notes to Editors

- Visit the Vodafone blog for an in depth look at the new platform: <https://blog.vodafone.co.uk/>
- The new platform is part of a £2 billion investment into Vodafone's network and services over the period 2016-2019.
- TOBi and in-app messaging has been piloted with live customers over the last 3 months and will gradually be rolled out to customers over the next year.
- Vodafone continues to assess and implement multiple solutions & technologies to continue to improve our customer service experience with tools like TOBi.
- More details on TOBi will follow later in the year.

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