Conversational Commerce:
Using Bots to Reinvent Retail

SnatchBot

CONVERSATIONAL COMMERCE: CHANGING CUSTOMER SERVICE

Superior customer service has always been at the forefront of any brand's strategy; yet today, those that are able to provide an out-standing experience for the consumer seem to be in the minority.

Today's customers want more than the traditional one-sided trans-action; they want a two-way interaction. They want to connect and engage with their brands. Enterprises that are doing this effectively are already discovering the merits of a personal, actionable conver-sation through higher profit margins and an increased rate of loyalty and, by extension, advocacy.

Humanizing the conversation between consumer and brand is be-coming an integral factor in an effective marketing strategy. This sort of personalized customer engagement is known as "conversa-tional commerce," and with advancements in automation and NLP (natural language processing), the union of bots and conversation-al commerce is quickly becoming a dominant digital strategy.

Omni-channel explained

The term "omni-channel" refers to multiple channels working seamlessly together toward the same end. However, having multi-ple channels is not considered omni-channel if the channels do not work together.

For example, if you are a retail business, you may have a physical store, a website, a social media presence, telephone support, and perhaps even a mobile app. However, if a customer is shopping online, can they transition smoothly to the mobile app? If they encounter an issue, can they change over to telephone or text-based support in real-time without losing data or having to explain their problem again and again?

This integrated consumer experience is what many enterprises are currently approaching—using each of their platforms to engage customers seamlessly across various channels. The omni-channel approach, however, must account for every device and platform by which a customer may engage with an enterprise.

Engaging the modern consumer

Superior service is a goal for any industry that deals with consumers—retail, banking, insurance, telecom, utilities, and many more all strive to engage, and more importantly, retain, customers.

Traditional methods, however, are not only becoming quickly outmoded, but are even costly compared to the omni-channel experience. But before we can examine the ways in which omni-channel marketing can be advantageous, first we have to ex-amine what the modern consumer seeks:

- ✓ Customers want fast, easy ways to get their questions answered and their needs resolved.
- ✓ Customers tend to prefer self-service.
- ✓ Customers want a choice in communication channel.
- ✓ Customers want real-time access, regardless of location or device.

Next, let's look at a couple of general facts according to recent studies in modern enterprise relations:

- ✓ Customers tend to decrease spending or even abandon brands after a single poor service experience.
- ✓ With widespread usage of social media, customers are three times more likely to relate service experiences, good or bad, to friends than five years ago.
- ✓ Customers that feel engaged by a personalized approach are more likely to respond to offers, spend more, and return again.

All of this equates to a fairly simple concept: Customers that feel engaged in an interaction, and not just a transaction, are not only more likely to spend more, but also more likely to become advocates for a brand.

Make it personal

As mentioned earlier, modern consumers prefer self-service. This means they have the tools and outlets necessary to solve their own problems and answer their own questions—and we don't mean website FAQs.

The traditional "one-size-fits-all" style of service is no longer applicable; consumers want businesses to be both proactive and personal in their approach. For example, a consumer shopping in a brick-and-mortar location may receive offers and alerts that are not only relevant, but actionable based on their purchasing history and preferences. This sort of personalization cultivates loyalty and increases the likelihood that a particular customer will become an advocate.

Being proactive does not mean flooding an email inbox with special offers that will be dismissed as junk mail or sending one-way text messages relating a sale. Being proactive and personal means being contextually aware of a consumer in real-time, and creating an engaging interaction between them and the brand, and this is where bots come in.

How bots turn users into customers

Bots, also called chatbots, are automated programs that transform traditional experiences into personalized, conversational, and satisfying interactions.

Here are just a few things that consumers can do with bots:

- ✓ Perform transactions, like purchases, quickly and conveniently in a simple message-based interaction.
- ✓ Access customer service anytime, from anywhere, across multiple channels, like voice calls, text, email, website, or mobile app.
- ✓ Request and receive updates and alerts on inventory.
- ✓ Receive real-time, personal, and actionable offers based on contextual awareness.

Those are just a few of the advantages that some retailers are already enjoying by employing omni-channel capable bots. But the benefits go beyond business-to-consumer relations; many enterprises are deploying bots for internal use, to perform tasks like:

- ✓ Reducing overhead by automating common customer service questions and issues.
- ✓ Replacing costly third-party and custom apps.
- ✓ Connecting systems separate systems to streamline workflow.
- ✓ Providing staff with a collaborative workspace that makes multitasking, communicating, and file-sharing easier than ever.

Contextual awareness

The traditional GUI (graphical user interface) uses windows, icons, and menus to make the connection between human and computer. Not only is this a one-way approach, but frustration tends to be prevalent when consumers can't get questions answered or issues resolved.

Bots, however, use text and/or audio commands to draw context from a user's response and reply accordingly. While the technology is still being fully developed, there are many bots out there today that "speak our language" and are intelligently able to identify the needs of a consumer.

Research indicates that in almost any industry, up to eighty percent of customer service inquiries tend to be repetitive—which makes an ideal use case for bots. And in the event that a bot is unable to answer a request, it could ask for clarification or, if escalation is necessary, seamlessly transfer a consumer to a human counterpart.

The "human channel"

While bots can already do some amazing things, they're still not at the point of being able to process any request, which means that human customer service agents, salespeople, and the like are still very much necessary.

The problem with these engagements is that even when an enterprise offers a self-service channel, they don't offer the consumer a way to seamlessly transition between the channel and a human agent. This hearkens back to the omni-channel approach, and is an important component in creating engaging, satisfying interactions between consumer and enterprise.

When a user can be transferred from an automated channel to the applicable department without losing the context of their interaction, it will result in higher satisfaction, fewer redundancies, and brand loyalty.

Currently, the SnatchBot bot-building platform is the only one the market that allows you to sync across channels, which means that a user can start a conversation on Facebook Messenger, continue on a website, and end on a voice call with a live agent without interruption.

Anticipating the needs of the customer

We've said before that bots are contextually aware, and as such, they can anticipate the needs of a consumer and send offers and communications based on their particular history and preferences. In this manner, a decision to purchase becomes an edifying experience.

Furthermore, bot interactions are conversations—two-way communications in which the responses offered are contextually relevant, natural, and proactive. Not only does this refine the sale process, but with an omni-channel presence, it gives the customer the option of their choice.

User interactions with bots are able to be tracked, so the information can be shared to multiple applications and analyzed to gain insight into your audience. SnatchBot, for example, offers real-time analytics that help grow your patrons and promote synergy. That analytical data allows you to track the growth of your bot, learn what your customers are talking about, and gain better intuition about your consumer base.

The ability to anticipate a customer's needs and understand their preferences will soon be the difference between retaining a valued customer and advocate, or losing them to a competitor.

Being channel-neutral

In the not-so-distant past, enterprises poured funds into developing the best websites and apps. However, as much as a business might want to dictate the channel by which a consumer engages them, they will be missing out on significant potential by limiting that experience.

Customers today want businesses to utilize the omni-channel approach—offer multiple channels of engagement and deliver a seamless experience between them. Keeping customers happy has always been an important facet of most industries; nowadays, keeping them digitally engaged will be the way to keep them happy.

Driving traffic to one particular channel is costly and quickly becoming irrelevant. With the use of a bot and an omni-channel presence, there's no need to direct consumers to a website if they would prefer to use a messaging platform. Rather than trying to corral users into a shopping app, bots deployed to multiple channels can handle transactions by the method of the consumer's choice. Being channel-neutral and offering multiple options to your consumers is already a way to stay ahead of the competition; that gap will only grow as the line between traditional commerce and conversational commerce becomes clearer.

Bots are the new apps

Only a few years ago, mobile apps were considered a must-have in any enterprise's digital toolbox. However, recent research indicates that well over half of mobile users are experiencing "app fatigue," which results from a high number of apps being required to perform only a handful of functions.

While apps are on the decline, there doesn't seem to be any slowing of the mobile market in general; sixty percent of internet usage in 2016 was via mobile devices, and the number of worldwide smartphone users is expected to reach six billion in the next three years.

A huge advantage to using bots is reducing app fatigue by allowing consumers to interact with brands using the communication channels they already use. The average consumer uses only two communication apps, one usually being a messaging platform like Slack, Facebook Messenger, Skype, or SnatchApp. Deploying bots across multiple messaging apps is a definitive way to engage more customers; attempting to drive traffic to a branded app or website will only result in missed opportunities.

Snatchbot's bot-building platform enables developers and enterprises to leverage the native UX aspects of communication channels, like dialogue-handling in Skype or structured templates in Facebook Messenger, among others, which allows bots to have even higher capability across channels.

There's simply no denying that more and more enterprises are turning to bots and omni-channel presence to change the traditional consumer experience into a gratifying, conversational, and personalized interaction. As the digital landscape changes, consumer engagement and behaviour changes with it; employing digital channels and automation is rapidly becoming the clear path to gaining and retaining customers, building relationships, and turning customers into advocates.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES OF HOW BOTS CAN HELP
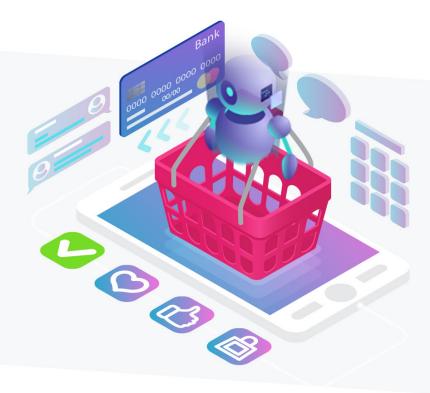## B2C and B2E

B2C (Business to Client)

- ✔ Client on boarding
- ✔ Greetings and help
- ✔ Search for products
- ✔ Refine search results by price, colour, and more
- ✔ Purchase products (checkout)
- ✔ Track order status and shipping
- ✔ View order history
- ✔ Personalized Offers
- ✔ Advertise special promotions
- ✔ Request human customer service agent
- ✔ Ask questions (FAQs)

B2E (Business to Employee)

- ✔ Lead and Contact Management
- ✔ Create new lead or contact
- ✔ Update contact details
- ✔ Update lead status
- ✔ Assign lead to sales rep
- ✔ Convert lead to contact
- ✔ Assign contact to account
- ✔ Get notified when new lead is assigned to account
- ✔ Get notified when new contact is added to account
- ✔ Get notified when new account is assigned to me
- ✔ View contact details
- ✔ Create appointment with lead or contact
- ✔ Get notified of upcoming appointments
- ✔ View daily appointments and follow-up activities
- ✔ Send email to contact with support for templates
- ✔ Quote Management
- ✔ Account Renewals
- ✔ Opportunity Management
- ✔ Sales Management Tasks

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