Chatbots and Websites

Voice Online Communities

Joe Oldak, November 2024

Voice Online Communities?

e-voice.org.uk

- Created in 2006 as a place for charities and community groups to build free websites.

- Superhighways are keen advocates and users of the service.

- Over 1000 websites.

What are Chatbots?

- They're everywhere, you can hardly miss them!

- Like having your own ChatGPT style agent that knows all about your organisation, answering questions from your users.

What are they good at?

- If suitably trained can answer questions pretty accurately.

- Give answers quickly without users having to search for themselves.

- Can be integrated into backend systems - e.g, scheduling appointments, querying and cancelling orders, submitting tickets.

- Chat on your website, or through services like WhatsApp and Messenger.

- Do the equivalent work of many real support agents.

- Optionally route through to humans when necessary.

But...

They aren't good at everything!

- They don't know anything about your organisation unless you train them.

- They can't solve complex problems (they aren't *actually* intelligent!)

- They aren't always good at knowing what they don't know, and can be overconfident.

Creating a Chatbot

1. Investigate alternatives

2. Train

3. Test

4. Implement

Investigate alternatives
(There are quite a lot)

- How customisable are they?

- Chat mediums and integrations.

- Amount and type of training material.

- Can they be integrated with your backend systems (for more advanced usage!)

- £?

Training
They're useless without it!

- Generally more material is better, providing it is good quality.

- Can be trained from your website, by uploading documents & FAQs, and by giving specific guidance.

Testing

Don't release it on your users until you've tried it!

- Ask a load of typical questions and see how it responds.

- Provide model answers if appropriate.

- Add more training where necessary.

Implement

- Add it to your website, and tell your users about it.

- Monitor its use in the real world.
  (users tend to ask things that we'd never thought of!)

What we did on Voice

I used Botsonic because...

- It can be trained on lots of URLs using a sitemap.

- It can be customised with name/logo/colours.

- Seemed easy to understand and start using.

- For low traffic it's quite cheap.

- 7 day free trial.

What next?

- Try other providers now that I know more about how this one works.

- Create some good quality FAQs from the forums for training.

- Monitor its answers and provide more training where necessary.