



Case Study: Travel & Hospitality

Intelligent Chatbot Takes Flight for International Airline

US-based international carrier relies on a virtual assistant to answer frequently asked questions and reduce burden on contact center personnel.

Human understanding may be an unfathomable capacity. But understanding humans is not beyond some of the most effective of today's chatbots, which are capable of handling increasingly higher volumes of chat sessions.

A U.S.-based international airline was looking to implement a chatbot based on a conversational artificial intelligence agent using natural language processing to improve its contact center responsiveness and lower costs.

Our client, which has a long-established loyalty program for frequent fliers, wanted to reduce the volume of routine member inquiries to its contact center operations and to lessen the burden on its online customer service representatives of having to answer the same questions over and over.

At a Glance

Cognizant helped a large U.S.-based international airline implement a robotic virtual assistant to answer commonly asked questions, reducing costs and the time burden on contact center personnel.

Outcomes

- 80% of online chat questions now handled by virtual assistant.
- 90% accuracy answering more than 50 commonly asked questions.
- 1,200 online conversations automated per week—scalable to meet any future demands.

Key to satisfaction: Understanding customer intent

AI-based conversational chatbots save time and money while improving experiences for customers and contact center personnel.

Customers were skipping the F.A.Q. section on the airline's website and instead calling to resolve many of their simple questions. Although those questions were often asked in different ways, the airline's contact center personnel were besieged by the same types of inquiries time and again. This had two negative effects: higher operational costs, due to increased personnel time, and a strain on contact center personnel, who were dispirited because they were answering the same questions over and over.

Today's breed of customers has grown up with super-fast search capabilities and voice assistants. They are used to getting answers instantly—and they expect it. The airline wanted to deliver on those expectations by providing excellent 24/7 customer service to its loyal customers and, at the same time, drive down the time spent and the costs involved in these queries.

The flight plan: Our approach

Cognizant leveraged natural language understanding (NLU) to create a conversational AI-based chatbot on the client's website. The goal was to put the airline's loyalty customers on route to the right answers quickly and, for the most part, without a human customer service representative.

Our first step was evaluating the multiple natural language processing platforms available in the market to establish which technology stack would best suit our client's needs.

Every customer utterance in a chat window was parsed to discern the person's "intent" in their question. Simple constructions lead quickly to responses, with customers satisfied and leaving the site with a good impression. Complex requests, however, can confuse NLU engines and require escalation; but, in this case, escalation needed to be handled seamlessly and fast by directly referring these inquiries to a live agent.

After considering the company's objectives, as well as the various platforms' capabilities,

we recommended Google Dialogflow as the NLU engine and leveraged the LivePerson chat platform to escalate conversations to employees when needed. We then thoroughly mapped the enormous volume of conversation flows, identifying ways to categorize inquiries by customers' intent when asking questions, even if the form of questions differed by individual. This mapping formed the basis of our chatbot "training," which relies on an algorithmic analysis of a growing repository of archived natural language inquiries.

The database and its algorithms became more complex as the number of customer "intents" grew. To address any "intent" conflicts, our team leveraged best practices from previous engagements and performed frequent regression testing to ensure an acceptable chatbot accuracy rate—higher than 90%. After we reached this threshold the intelligent assistant was deployed on the airline's site, where it now automatically handles more than 1,200 straightforward and complex conversations related to the airline's loyalty program weekly, and escalates issues when necessary.

Landing on the right solution

Today's consumer-focused organizations face a paradigm shift in customer expectations: that they receive near-instant service with faultless accuracy when getting questions answered. In a just-in-time culture, the only correct response is to adapt.

Our AI-based conversational chatbot solution answers the most common questions rapidly and automatically. An online virtual agent begins with instant replies and pertinent information to answer more than 50 frequently asked questions. Machine learning helps the virtual assistant "learn" iteratively, making answers progressively more accurate while expanding the language vocabulary of the chatbot and adding more answers over time.

To learn more about Cognizant Conversational AI and natural language solutions, visit us [here](#).

About Cognizant Artificial Intelligence Practice

As part of Cognizant Digital Business, Cognizant's Artificial Intelligence Practice provides advanced data collection and management expertise, as well as artificial intelligence and analytics capabilities that help clients create highly-personalized digital experiences, products and services at every touchpoint of the customer journey. Our AI solutions glean insights from data to inform decision-making, improve operations efficiencies and reduce costs. We apply Evolutionary AI, Conversational AI and decision support solutions built on machine learning, deep learning and advanced analytics techniques to help our clients optimize their business/IT strategy, identify new growth areas and outperform the competition. To learn more, visit us at [cognizant.com/ai](https://www.cognizant.com/ai).

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Cognizant (Nasdaq-100: CTSH) is one of the world's leading professional services companies, transforming clients' business, operating and technology models for the digital era. Our unique industry-based, consultative approach helps clients envision, build and run more innovative and efficient businesses. Headquartered in the U.S., Cognizant is ranked 193 on the Fortune 500 and is consistently listed among the most admired companies in the world. Learn how Cognizant helps clients lead with digital at www.cognizant.com or follow us [@Cognizant](https://twitter.com/Cognizant).

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