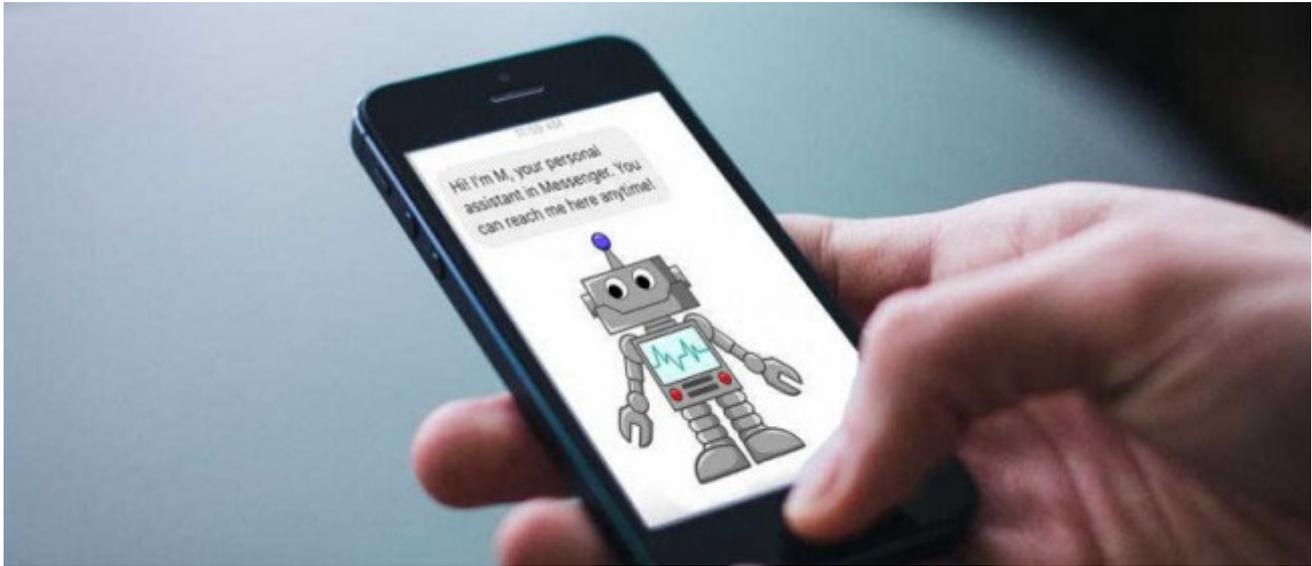# Frequently asked questions about chatbots

Chatbots are the latest craze in the world of mobile and artificial intelligence but they're new enough that many people still know very little about them and some have never even heard of chatbots. Here are some answers to some of the frequently asked questions about chatbots.

What are chatbots?

As you might be able to guess just from the name, chatbots are bots, or more accurately, computer programs, that are programmed to "chat." Chatbots communicate by sending and receiving texts either through SMS or social media messaging services or other internet-based messaging platforms.

What's the point of chatbots?

There are many implications of this technology, many of which we haven't even thought of yet but one of the most common and practical applications which we're already seeing is the use of chatbots by businesses to automate various business-related processes such as customer service. For instance, instead of waiting on hold to speak to a live customer service agent, a customer can initiate a conversation with the company's chatbot who will try to resolve their issue or at least, ask a few preliminary questions to pull up that customer's info and direct them to a chat with the appropriate live agent who can assist them. Chatbots can also be used as digital personal assistants to coordinate schedules and meetings between employees. Other chatbots help people shop, book travel or lodging, or check the weather.

How are chatbots developed?

Chatbots can range from the very simple to the extraordinarily complex depending on how much time and money they want to put into programming it. On the simpler side, chatbots are programmed to handle only a specific set

of related tasks. Based on keywords and some basic natural language processing, they can be quite accurate at figuring out what a person is asking and choose from a bank of predetermined responses the one that is appropriate based on what is being asked. For people communicating with these kinds of chatbots, it's pretty obvious that it's a computer program and not a person. These chatbots are typically designed for industries that have very structured processes like healthcare and financial institutions. More advanced chatbots, on the other hand, are programmed with cutting edge artificial intelligence research. Using more advanced natural language processing, machine learning, and complex decision trees, these chatbots can more realistically simulate human conversation and can even fool humans into thinking they're speaking with a real person. The latter kind of chatbots is where the most exciting implications of chatbot technology can be found.

How will chatbots continue to develop in the future

No one can say for sure, but one thing is certain: as more advanced chatbots become less expensive and more practical to deploy, they're going to drastically change the way that consumers and companies interact with each other by becoming a realistic alternative to more human-centric industries like customer service.

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Source: *forbes.com/sites/laurencebradford/2017/07/24/how-chatbots-are-about-to-change-communication/#1157a48e4aa8*