

Pros and cons of deploying a chatbot

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Pro: They provide a personalized experience

Since chatbots can be programmed to have access to a vast amount of data, it can provide people with a highly personalized experience. Imagine a shopping assistant chatbot that remembers the personal tastes of each person it assists. I would be able to suggest products that the shopper is much more likely to purchase.

Con: They're not quite human

Though the artificial intelligence programming that goes into chatbots has come along way, they still can't fool humans. Currently, most of the chatbots being developed are only capable of choosing from a selection of set sentences or questions. They can't create sentences in an infinite number of ways like humans can and within a minute or two users will catch on that they're chatting with a computer program. This is off-putting to some who will still prefer doing things the old-fashioned way--speaking, or at least chatting with a real person.

Pro: They can shorten customer support wait times

If you're planning on using a chatbot for customer service purposes, you can free up live agents by letting the chatbots ask the routine questions and pull customer data. They can also route customers to the appropriate department similar to the way that automated phone answering systems do for phone calls. If customers are able to get assistance via text promptly, they will have a more positive customer service experience and will be more likely to remain customers--and customer support users--in the future.

Con: They can get caught in a loop of unhelpfulness

Most people have had the experience of listening through a series of options and trying to navigate a complicated automated phone answering system to get to the help they need. The same thing could happen with chatbots if they aren't programmed well and if there aren't enough humans monitoring things to jump in and take the reins. Chatbots won't always be able to understand what a human is saying or asking and consequently, they'll provide unhelpful responses. If a customer can't get the help they need promptly, the chatbot may do more harm than good when it comes to the reputation of the brand it's representing. This drawback of chatbots can be overcome through better programming and live agent support. A "go back" command option, for instance, could allow a customer to return to a previous question or back out of a line of thought that they don't want to pursue. If the chatbot is quicker to admit that it can't assist a customer and quicker in transferring that person to a live agent that can, it will be viewed in a better light than if it were to keep guessing incorrectly until the customer gives up.

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