Creating effective conversational interfaces

Rurik Bradbury
Global head of conversational strategy, LivePerson
LivePerson is the conversational business company

1997
Invented “live chat” for brands

2000
IPO on Nasdaq

2000-
Market leader, with 50% of large enterprises on board

2014
Pivoted to conversational, and mobile messaging

A billion transcripts from sales and care
90% of C2C interactions are messaging. (B2C will follow)

Use our suite of messaging APIs, connectors and SDKs to reach consumers
In 2018, the floodgates open
Brand-to-consumer messaging is being integrated directly into the top mobile operating systems
When there’s an option, consumers adopt it. Here’s Sky:
Today, 110 of the world’s largest brands use our messaging and AI platform. And we learned a lot.

We observed (SMH) the Facebook bots debacle

We learned from doing all the first deployments

We learned from doing Apple Business Chat
Most brand bots fail – some of them disastrously
“AI” is the new snake oil.

Almost everything sold under this banner is – strictly speaking – using the term wrong or even fraudulently
Bots at scale are like “Mousetrap” – lots can go wrong

Conversational design is essential to success (and it’s a lot of work!)

“Tango” with humans (and back)

Measure sentiment and errors. Fix them.

Understand the intents very clearly

Set expectations, and be transparent on what it can do

Treat bots as agents – they don’t get a pass
1. Understand intents (Hint: it’s not about “AI”)

- Want to make a payment: 12.1%
- Open account: 11%
- Transfer money inquiries: 7%
- Cannot pay bill: 7%
- Online trading how to: 6%
- Looking to close account: 4%
- Car loan inquiries: 3%
- Change address: 3%
- Past due account inquiries: 3%
- CD penalty inquiries: 2%
- Question about deposits: 2%
- Looking for a lower payment: 2%
- Cancel payment: 1%
- Change due date: 1%

Consumer banking example
Map intents to the right “agent” (self-serve/bot/human)
“AI” can’t train itself, no matter what some AI vendors might tell you
OBFUSCATIN’ OLLIE

Found guilty of lyin’ and exaggeratin’

AI-powered
It’s self-learnin’
It creates a feedback loop
Set and forget
Plug and play
Starts workin’ on Day 1

Obfuscatin’ Ollie, the AI bandit
Despite promises of automation, there is no AI technology today that can do the work for you. Humans are needed.

Behind any functioning system is a lot of human labor.
2. Design great conversations (new skillsets needed)

Conversational architect
Overall strategy and design of the bot

Conversational designer
Writer, editor, or visual UX person

Conversational developer
Code and bring to life what the architects and designers create

Conversational analyst
Analyze transcripts, optimize interactions
This is Malik, in 1992. Since his birth, he dreamed of becoming a conversational analyst.*

*Unconfirmed rumor*
In 2014, Malik graduated from Yale, majoring in religious studies.

And in 2017, his dream came true.
“There is a ton of hype right now about bots taking over – but it’s actually opened up a lot of career opportunities. There is a huge need for people who can design and optimize conversations using both the left and right side of the brain.

English majors, playwrights, authors, are all in demand to improve the human experience interacting with bots. It’s a new era and I’m excited to be a part of it.”

Malik
Conversational analyst, LivePerson
In conversational design, small details matter

**BEST PRACTICE**
Be crystal clear whether it’s a bot or human

**BEST PRACTICE**
Split in a natural human way, posted in sequence, like a human

**BEST PRACTICE**
Small, digestible chunks of text

**BEST PRACTICE**
Indicate “typing” to convey human-like rhythm
3. **A bot is just another agent** *(no free passes given)*

Deploy, monitor, manage them with same methodology and standards used for human agents.
4. Bots need to “tango” – escalate elegantly to people

Tango – in both directions – like a group chat with both bots and people.
Make sure humans can see what the bot said

One thread with all agent and bot history

AI shows agents the best answers

SmartCapacity focuses agent by urgency
5. Measure results then optimize, rinse and repeat.

Look at CSAT, sentiment in real time and over time – judge bots like people.
Bots need a “home” – a conversational cloud
Thank you

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Global head of conversational strategy

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LiveEngage is the conversational cloud

Scalable, secure, reliable — with 40+ APIs to build any digital future you want
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**Consumers**
- Web
- SMS
- Apps
- Facebook
- Apple
- Google
- Line
- Alexa
- IVR

**Systems**
- WFM
- CRM
- BI
- eComm

**APIs**
- SDKs
- APIs

**Services**
- Self service
- Website, online resources
- Bots
- LivePerson, IBM, Microsoft, BYOB
- Agents
- Asynchronous agent console
LiveEngage is our conversational cloud

**Consumers**
- Web
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**Open Platform**
- Secure APIs and SDKs

**LiveEngage**
- **SmartStack**
  - AI-powered intent analysis, sentiment, and routing
- **Bot Studio**
  - Suite of tools to build, run and optimize bots
- **Agent Console**
  - Built to manage multiple conversations concurrently
- **Analytics**
  - Automated reports, configurable templates, and APIs to run operations at scale

**Enterprise-grade security, reliability, scalability throughout**
- 40+ APIs and growing

**Systems**
- Workforce Management
- CRM
- Business Intelligence
- eCommerce
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- Scalable, secure, reliable
- 40+ APIs – digital “Lego blocks”

Platforms:
- In-app or web
- Universal connector
- Bots
- Self service
- Voice assistants

Systems:
- Secure integration
- Agents
- Routing
- Capacity
- Intent

APIs

- APIs
- SDKs
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From skeptic to believer

Using a “specialist” bot, KDDI lowered costs but not CSAT.

“Six months ago I was very skeptical about bots, but now I think they are the ‘next big thing’; and the hybrid approach must be the first step in that.”

Takuya Nojima
General manager, digital marketing

Leads the marketing and digital experience at one of Japan’s — and the world’s — largest telecoms carriers.
An agile bot in banking

How bots made possible the first agile one-day iteration cycle.

“As an organization, we tend to be conservative with technology. So with bots, I wanted to show how an agile approach, with daily iterations, was not only possible, but could be hugely successful.”

Katie Ayaz
Head of Digital Service

Pioneered the use of agile at the bank, using a one-day turnaround time to introduce a successful bot.
Thank you

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Global head of conversational strategy

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The promise: a silver bullet

- It’s self-learning!
- It gets better every day!
- It’s powered by a neural network!
- Set it and forget it!
- It’s based on deep machine learning!
- It’s AI-powered!

The reality: hard work

The bot will improve exactly in line with the effort put in: testing, tuning, refinement, monitoring. There is no such thing as “set it and forget it” and there is no such thing as “self-learning”.
Bots have failed, because they ignored the three fundamental principles for success

1. Bots need significant, ongoing human effort
2. Manage the performance of bots just as you do with human agents
3. Manage their operation like you do with software or any other complex system
Principle #2:
Bots are just another agent

Your customers judge a bot, and your brand, the same way they judge your human agents: positively or negatively. So should you.
Principle #3: Manage bots like you do any technology running at scale

Bots are complex technology. As with any technology deployment, it will become an out-of-control mess, without planning and management.
To discover and automate these intents, there exists no “AI” in the world – the term has been twisted to become totally meaningless.
AI vendor Hall of Shame

“AI-powered”

“It’s self-learning”

“It creates a feedback loop”

“Set and forget”

“Plug and play”

“Starts working on Day 1”
Despite promises of automation, there is no AI technology today that can do the work for you. Humans are needed.
Bots at scale are like Mousetrap. Lots can go wrong.

Conversational design is essential to success (and it’s a lot of work!)

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