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Apple, app-ification and the power of chatbots

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With every passing day, the popularity of chatbots continues to grow and this is because chatbots can help make the Internet a better place for everyone.

The one-to-one communication channel in messaging applications has proved a most powerful way for brands and publishers to discover what inspires their audience. Consumers interact with a familiar interface devoid of friction.

Consequently, companies gain higher audience engagement without the hassle of human fallibility.

Talk on chat
At World Wide Developers Conference (WWDC), Apple arguably the biggest tech behemoth of them all acknowledged the increasing potential power of chatbots, proving they are no passing phase.

One key theme of the iOS 10 portion of Craig Federighi's presentation reaching the ears of everyone in the tech community, despite Microsoft's esteemed efforts (a $26 billion LinkedIn acquisition is certainly most distracting) was a brand new commitment to openness.

For the first time in the company's history, developers have been given powers to construct their own app functionality through in-app extensions. Secrecy is going out of style.

Specified highlights included being able to select a particular restaurant in Apple Maps, make a booking, then order and pay for a taxi there. This is achieved using different app extensions while never having to leave Maps.

Similarly before WWDC, Google used its I/O conference to launch Instant Apps, allowing Android to run apps without requiring full installation.

Your device will only download the piece of functionality it needs at the time.

For example, If you want to pay for parking, Instant Apps would only download that payment functionality, rather than the entire app, something in all reality you would probably never use.

Spotting opportunity
While atomization of apps is not necessary anything new, just look at what Spotify has been doing, here. Both Apple and Google are clearly committing to "appi-fication," despite the continual rise of chatbots.

Endless developers and publishers consider chatbots the key way to expand any customer base. If nothing else, chatbots are a revolutionary technology to play with a new model for coders to master.

Evidently, although Apple has not yet gone full bot, the company clearly felt that it must enhance its standard messaging app with third-party tools.

As for the need for this enhancement, people need only to look at the countless messaging alternatives such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and Snapchat and, of course, the rise of chatbots.

Undoubtedly, chatbots are becoming increasingly pervasive, and they will continue to optimize how publishers and brands communicate and develop relationships with their audience.

Chatbots help to mitigate issues such as speed and transparency, saving readers time a luxury commodity in a world that is always online.

Currently, chatbots are not quite ubiquitous but Apple's nod to chatbot technology proves its power and potential.

Publishers are trailblazing the chatbot sector, setting the standards for others to follow.

Despite some early hiccups, nobody is bailing on bots. Publishers, marketers and everyone in-between are carving a path through this emerging market, constantly learning from their audiences and technology.

Crucially, however, the likes of publishers must not lose sight of the core principles of optimal chatbot development to deliver the best possible user experience.

High five
As a starting point, there are five elements of best practice, whereby bots work on behalf of consumers:

1. Deploy engaging experiences
From polls and trivia to seriously shareable user-generated content, think outside the box to make your bot experience more immersive.

2. Keep the experience fresh and relevant
No one likes repetitive bots, exacerbated by closed-loop technology. Instead, craft a library of conversational variations that can be randomly yet appropriately served to consumers.

3. Offer guidance with buttons or suggested responses
When it comes to chatbots, a focused and frictionless experience is fundamental. Freeform might be impressive on the surface, but is consumer expectations just end up exaggerated and above all unsatisfied. Avoid frustration all around by properly identifying and targeting a certain domain and stick to it.

4. Set clear objectives
A chatbot presence across several different messaging platforms enables publishers and brands to reach previously untapped audiences. In turn, creating one-off content specifically for the chat format boosts engagement.

5. Get started
Early adopters of chatbots are already seeing hefty returns on investment. As such, it is important to release a product to bolster an audience and cultivate the experience as this rapidly rising channel evolves.

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