MASERGY

E - GUIDE

Responding to a crisis with virtual agents

If your business needs to deliver quality customer care and reduce operating costs, virtual agents (VA) are a solution to consider. Leveraging conversational AI and intelligent automation, VA's can help businesses remain agile by increasing service availability, backfilling absent employees, and reducing business risk. Cloud based virtual agents provide a variety of options to maintain service and support employees without increasing capital expense. By allowing enterprises to reduce the cost of handling routine inquiries, streamline shift management and improve customer care, often at the rate of 10 percent of a human agent, VA's are an easy-to-use, "do-it-yourself" solution worth exploring.

Leverage virtual agents to thrive during crisis

Businesses of all kinds are facing an unprecedented crisis. Many companies are reducing hours or being forced to close their doors entirely to the public. Yet, consumers are still in need of essential and some non-essential supplies, as well as services of all kinds. Many stores are also dealing with employees that may be calling in sick or asking to change shifts. Phone lines are swamped as anxious consumers ask questions and search for product availability. The results of this are long wait times

and dropped calls, preventing customers from getting help when they need it most.

Businesses are now facing two crises: unpredictable spikes in demand for service and the need to prepare for a potential global economic recession.

Conversational AI and Intelligent Automation (IA) can help businesses remain agile by increasing service availability, backfilling absent employees, and reducing costs and business

risk. Here are some specific examples that show how virtual agents can help you weather the storm.

Extending service availability

Businesses must be ready for a continued increase in call volume and demand for services. Virtual agents, powered by conversational AI and Intelligent Automation, can help by:

- Allowing individual stores to set hours and control immediate changes within their system depending on their location.

- Providing automated answers to common questions. [Click here to see a virtual agent answering questions about a business.](#)

- Sending **outbound notifications** like store closures, appointments, changes in service hours, or product availability.

- **Enabling store pickup** - As consumers exercise "social distancing" by avoiding contact with other people, they are increasingly looking for solutions that allow them to spend less time shopping in stores.

- Allowing businesses to **refer customers to the next closest store** location that can assist them with their needs.

- **Scaling on-demand** to meet unexpected spikes in service. IVAs provide customers access to answers and self-service when a live agent isn't available.

Supporting your workforce

The current crisis will cause some staff to call in sick, request additional shift changes, or transition to remote work. Virtual agents can manage these changes in the following ways:

- **Supporting work-at-home agents:** Virtual agents offer automated service with the ability to transfer to a live agent seamlessly. It doesn't matter if the live agent is working in a call center, a brick-and-mortar store, or from home; the virtual agent can transfer the call with a screen pop that includes a transcript of the initial conversation.

- **Shift finder services:** Employees call an automated sick line that triggers a virtual agent to make outbound calls or texts until it finds someone else who can fill in and notifies management of the change.

- **Offering queue callback:** Queue callback offers callers an opportunity to receive a call back from an agent while maintaining their place in the queue. It minimizes the time your customers spend on hold and the time it takes to get quality responses from live agents.

Reducing costs and shifting expenses

With an economic slowdown upon us, all businesses must deliver quality customer care while reducing operating costs. Virtual agents allow enterprises to reduce the cost of handling routine inquiries, often at the rate of 10 percent of a human agent. Businesses can then redeploy these valuable live workers to more sensitive service requests or focus on revenue-generating activities.

Virtual agents are cloud-based and are purchased on a pay-as-you-go basis, transferring capital costs to operating expenses by avoiding or delaying purchases and upgrades of costly on-premise software, hardware, and equipment.

Cloud-based virtual agent platforms also allow businesses to reduce costs and increase productivity

with easy-to-use, "do-it-yourself" solutions that lower development costs and enable them to innovate and make changes more quickly.

The current global crisis is having a profound impact on businesses across the world. Cloud-based intelligent service automation can help soften the blow to your business operations. Companies have a variety of options to maintain service, support employees, and manage risk during these trying times.

For more information on how you can get started with IVAs during these times of crisis, contact Masergy and learn how quickly we can get you set up.

About Masergy

Masergy is the software-defined network and cloud platform for the digital enterprise. Recognized as the pioneer in software-defined networking, Masergy enables unrivaled application performance across the network and the cloud with Managed SD-WAN, UCaaS, CCaaS, and Managed Security solutions. Industry-leading SLAs coupled with an unparalleled customer experience enable global enterprises to achieve business outcomes with certainty.