



For Effective Service Management, You Can't Afford NOT to Have A Virtual Agent

At this point, most enterprises have a chatbot or virtual assistant in place or an initiative to deploy one by one of the various business owners throughout the organization. Self-service driven by technology leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) is now a reality. It is a competitive advantage as companies look to reduce costs, improve service levels, and provide faster, better service to customers. You cannot afford to be left behind.

The question then becomes what is the right virtual agent for your business needs? It is a crowded market. There are large service management companies that provide a virtual agent as a secondary offering. There are a few dedicated chatbot or virtual agent companies that only provide the single solution without the integrated systems management solution. Some are specific to certain verticals such as sales and marketing. Others are focused on being an add-on chat bot for a service management solution without the service and support expertise. Very few companies have both a recognized virtual agent solution and a customer acclaimed service management platform. Ideally, for many companies, the best approach is to have both.

In addition, there is a level of technology sophistication that differentiates conversational platforms. Chatbots are often referred to as “dumb” because they are basic with low complexity. They serve well for simple integration, questions and answers. They can often create a negative impression when a more skilled solution is required, turning users off and negatively impacting customer loyalty. At the most advanced end of the spectrum are Virtual Assistants or Virtual Agents. They are focused on more complex and contextual responses. Levering AI and ML, they go beyond basic conversations and can anticipate and learn from end user interactions. This area is rapidly developing and is the space that the Serviceaide Luma Virtual Agent occupies.

“Increase the speed at which you can address a proliferation of virtual assistants by selecting a conversational platform solution capable of addressing a broad set of enterprise requirements”

- Gartner (9/2020)



How The Right Virtual Agent Can Add Value Today

Given the events of 2020, the focus on business continuity has grown. Providing uninterrupted services to remote staff, online customers and prospects is a priority. There has never been such a focus on ensuring that systems work successfully. This is not a temporary concern. The idea of how we effectively leverage new technologies, systems and improved processes to not just keep the business running but to excel in the approach to service management is here to stay.



Business Continuity: Benefits Of A Virtual Agent

1 Accessible and Reliable:

Hardened systems and processes are the best defense to mitigate the effect of any continuity event. Fortunately, a virtual agent is available 24*7*365. Able to support multiple channels: voice, internet portals, and messaging ensure ubiquitous access through practically any device at any location at any time. And a Virtual Agent running in the cloud can transition (fail-over) across data centers in different regions of the country (or the world) if conditions dictate, maintaining accessibility.

2 Single point of contact:

A single known and accessible source of support is vital in any disruption, and best practice is to establish a support contact that is hardened so it survives any disruption so there is no confusion when reaching support. A Virtual Agent makes this possible as it can be the single point of contact to all support environments and services. Unfortunately, too many organizations use a combination of contacts and solutions such as voice mail, email, support portals, and desktop support kiosks, which can leave an organization confused when one or more of these is no longer available. In times of dislocation, the support team simply doesn't have the resources to deal with multiple, possibly redundant communication methods.

3 Reliable Communication and Collaboration:

Communication is vital during an emergency or anytime conditions change abruptly. A Virtual Agent can provide a single source to convey detailed information concerning procedures, closures, diagnostics, policies, and solutions to problems. When disruption occurs everyone needs access to up to date status and the ability to convey their status or the status of their tasks. A Virtual Agent can provide employees a method to check-in, and further update the status of tickets, projects, or cases they are working on. Likewise, the Virtual Agent can be a broadcast means to ensure employees receive vital communications over a channel they have access to at any point in time.

4 Triage and Rapid Response:

Every best practice guide on business continuity planning will stress the need for a rapid pre-planned response. However, when things are chaotic, it is often very difficult to determine what is critical. Volume and dysfunction become the enemy of an appropriate and rapid response. This requires issues to be triaged. And triage under uncertainty is nearly impossible for systems that aren't intelligent; systems that can't understand the intent of the user; and systems that don't ask the right questions to determine need. Luma Virtual Agent has natural language interface which enables accurate capture of user issues so criticality can be assessed, and the user's intent understood, ensuring the issue is routed to the right team or handled directly by the Virtual Agent. By understanding intent, or if the issue itself is unrecognizable, perhaps never before seen, the Virtual Agent will ask enough questions to identify the criticality and classify the issue, triaging the issue properly, effectively shielding support from overload due to non-critical issues.

5 Massively Scalable:

How skilled resources will be made available during critical hours and days of disruption must be specified in a continuity plan. Of course, this is needed in normal times too. So it only makes good business sense to create a robust self-service capability and automate routine tasks to save money and free skilled experts to deal with complicated issues and higher-value projects. If a Virtual Agent is employed, you not only save time and money year-round, but you have a scalable, trained digital workforce that can automatically scale and pick up the load when human workers are unavailable. This past year serves as a good example as we saw issues flood support teams dealing with COVID-19 and work from home challenges.

By design, the very nature of a Virtual Agent is unaffected even by the most extreme situations and can conduct business when manual procedures and work schedules are jeopardized. Being highly available, massively scalable, and able to intelligently ask questions of users, issues are naturally triaged and resolved based on their criticality. Any contingency planning involves hardening systems to ensure they are operational during disruptions, so shifting work to a Luma Virtual Agent naturally achieves this goal. This is also true under normal business conditions. Use our current situation as a catalyst to drive a stronger, more robust company or organization. Implement technologies that can be swiftly adopted and provide immediate value. Leverage a Virtual Agent to streamline and improve your service and support providing much needed business and operational continuity.

In summary, the benefits of a virtual agent during times of uncertainty is real. What is also clear is the business benefit. You can quantify the savings in several ways:

Businesses on average will see a reduction of 30% of overall support desk costs by implementing a conversational solution. The two key areas are: 1) Ticket deflection: An IT organization that employs a virtual agent can experience self-service adoption of 50-60% on average with an upside of 85% depending on the business. 2) Actionable tickets: End users provide more initial information working with a virtual agent to create a fully formed ticket, which when transferred to a live agent as necessary improves the time to resolve.

“The cost of fulfilling a service request is \$18-\$175 and the cost of resolving a technical issue is \$21-\$110 in North America. When a virtual agent is available, the cost typically drops to \$1-3 when no analyst intervention is required.”

- HDI (2020)

The most popular metrics to evaluate service effectiveness include the average speed to answer (79%), number of incidents logged (77%), and the first contact resolution rate (64%). Imagine how a virtual assistant on call 24 x 7 can improve your business' results.

The role of a virtual agent is an important one and should be part of every business service management solution. Preparing for the unexpected is critical. Equally important is planning for success. A virtual agent that is intelligent; one that leverages natural language processing and machine learning that integrates seamlessly with a proven service management solution is required.



Serviceaide Understands Service Management

The Serviceaide Complete Service Solution (CSS) is an AI based platform combining advanced machine learning, conversational AI and Natural Language Processing with a comprehensive service platform and virtual agent. You can transform your service management across ITSM and Customer Service. Rather than hiring additional human analysts you can leverage a virtual agent as an extension of your team. This allows you to effectively respond to support requests across organizations with a service solution that improves over time. Luma Virtual Agent can be trained, learn and add value out of the box.

About Serviceaide

Serviceaide is an award winning B2B AI Service Management leader. Recognized industry leader in the use of AI in service management. **Serviceaide's** products dramatically lower service and support costs for companies by making AI enhanced self-service simple and effective.

Contact

info@serviceaide.com | 1-650-206-8988

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