Deliver better service for less with ServiceNow® Virtual Agent

Drive down agent workloads while increasing customer satisfaction
Let’s chat!

Chat is rapidly becoming the preferred way to communicate in the enterprise. It’s the way businesses get things done. Just think about your own experience. When you want to get in touch with someone quickly, is your first instinct to pick up the phone—or do you look to see if they’re online? Chat is faster, it’s easier, and you get immediate results. Conference calls are great for in-depth discussions, but if you want quick answers or need something fixed fast, chat’s the way to go.

At ServiceNow, we see this every day. Many customers already use ServiceNow’s live chat capabilities for employee and customer service. They see chat as a key part of delivering a great experience, and it also significantly increases service desk productivity. Agents can now handle multiple customer interactions at the same time instead of being tied up with a single caller. They also work faster and smarter because chat is an integral part of their workspace.
However...

Live chat alone doesn’t solve one enormous issue. Service desk workloads are still increasing and agents are the bottleneck. They waste huge amounts of time dealing with the same issues again and again. Where can I find the latest benefits information? I need to reset my password. When will my order arrive? Every one of these requests takes time to answer, and meanwhile customers are left waiting in the queue.

What if a machine could automatically take care of these routine requests, providing instant answers while your agents focus on the hard stuff that matters to your employees and your customers? Would your customers be happier? And would your service desk be more productive?

If the answer is yes, then you need to know about ServiceNow® Virtual Agent.
What is Virtual Agent?

It’s exactly what it says it is. It’s an intelligent conversational experience for your users that gives them answers to common questions and helps them resolve routine issues faster. It uses natural language understanding—artificial intelligence—to figure out what people are saying. In fact, Virtual Agent knows a staggering 3 million words. That’s around 100 times as much as the average human being.

Virtual Agent isn’t just a good listener. It has the answers your employees and customers need. Because it’s part of Now Intelligence—a native set of artificial intelligence and analytics capabilities on the Now Platform®—it’s designed for ServiceNow. It knows each user’s details: who they are, their incident and case history, which assets they use, and more. It also understands IT, HR and Customer Service Management language, along with any unique terminology and knowledge you have built into your ServiceNow system. This means it doesn’t just give generic responses. It responds in context with meaningful information and solutions that are targeted and relevant.

And, it isn’t all talk. Virtual Agent does stuff. Need to get a password reset link from another system? Virtual Agent can do that. Want it to update a distribution list? No problem. In fact, because you can leverage your existing workflows and connect Virtual Agent to ServiceNow® IntegrationHub with just a few clicks, it can do just about anything you normally do with ServiceNow.
Increased deflection... and happier customers

There are good deflection strategies and then there are bad ones. We’ve all experienced the bad ones. Endless menus with no obvious way to talk to a real person, or chatbots that regurgitate useless stock answers come to mind. These approaches may deflect incidents and cases, but they ignore the reason why service desks exist—to look after customers and employees.

With Virtual Agent, you don’t have to trade off deflection and customer satisfaction. Virtual Agent provides truly useful answers and helps users get real stuff done—whether that’s finding the right knowledgebase article, troubleshooting a software problem, or updating them on the status of their case. Customers and employees get what they want faster, making each deflection an opportunity to increase satisfaction. And, because Virtual Agent is consistent—unlike the variable experience across live agents—it’s more accurate, which leads to better customer outcomes.

It’s self-service on overdrive any time and anywhere—on the familiar ServiceNow web interface, Android, iOS, Microsoft Teams, and other leading collaboration platforms.
Faster resolution... and happier agents

When Virtual Agent doesn’t have the answer, it hands over seamlessly to a live agent, creating a streamlined end-to-end conversational experience. ServiceNow automatically picks the best agent for the job based on their availability, capacity, skills, and other configurable criteria. That means that agents respond faster and have the right knowledge to resolve the question or issue quickly. And of course, you can route different types of interactions to different agent queues to provide appropriate response levels—for example, sending critical issues to a dedicated pool of agents while sending general inquiries to another pool.

With Virtual Agent, live agents also get the context they need for a flawless handover. Virtual Agent gives the live agent all of the key information it has collected so far, so the agent picks up from where Virtual Agent left off. There’s no need to start from the beginning and ask the same questions over again. You save time and eliminate customer frustration, while your agents avoid the stress of starting a new conversation without any context.
Virtual Agent in action at Novant Health

Want a real world example of what Virtual Agent can do for you? Here’s how Novant Health uses Virtual Agent to create more time for patient care.

As a major integrated health system with more than 1,600 physicians and 29,000 employees, Novant Health’s mission is to provide remarkable care for its patients. It wants its doctors and nurses to focus on saving lives, not struggling with cumbersome support processes or spending hours trying to order critical supplies and equipment. And yet, that’s exactly what they had to do. They would even receive callbacks from Novant’s overloaded service desk while they were with patients.

By unifying and streamlining its support processes with ServiceNow, Novant Health has given back time to its clinicians, freeing up an additional 62,000 hours a year for patient care. Virtual Agent has played a major role in this success, contributing to a 50% reduction in service desk workload. And, Virtual Agent is always available, so it fits in with clinicians’ busy schedules, rather than doctors and nurses spending precious time waiting for a service desk agent.
Get started in just a few weeks

When someone says a product uses artificial intelligence, people get scared. They assume that it’s going to take special skills to get it up and running, and even then it’s going to take a very long time. Meanwhile, the real world keeps on happening, and they can’t afford to wait.

Virtual Agent is different. While it is built on advanced artificial intelligence technology, you don’t have to be a data scientist to use it. It comes with dozens of prebuilt conversations—different types of chats for IT, HR, and customer service that it supports out-of-the-box. Do you want it to help employees with guest Wi-Fi access? It already knows how to do that. How about dealing with a request for leave? It knows how to do that as well. By starting with these out-of-the-box conversations, you can get going in just a few weeks and get immediate value.

And, with prebuilt content for ServiceNow® Performance Analytics, you can easily identify and prioritize frequent conversations that have the most benefit for your customers.

Finally, let’s talk about Virtual Agent’s artificial intelligence technology. ServiceNow comes with its own native language understanding (NLU) capability as part of Now Intelligence. This is optimized to help you get the most out of Virtual Agent. However, if you already have a standard NLU provider, that’s no problem—Virtual Agent comes with out-of-the-box integrations with both IBM Watson® and Microsoft® LUIS.
Easily grow Virtual Agent capabilities

Of course, Virtual Agent doesn’t limit you to out-of-the-box conversations. It also gives you easy-to-use graphical tools to design your own—and once again you don’t need a PhD in data science to use them. This is very different to other solutions, where you have to go back to the vendor if you want a new conversation added.

With ServiceNow’s NLU Model Builder, you can teach Virtual Agent to understand new things: for instance, when a user asks to reserve a meeting room. You just have to give Virtual Agent examples—there’s no need to understand the underlying NLU technology, and you don’t have to provide every possible variation. If the user says it in a different way, Virtual Agent is smart enough to figure that out by itself.

With Topic Builder, you can also design complete dialog flows. Once again, it doesn’t require any special skills. Just use the drag-and-drop tools to create a conversation flowchart and you’re done. And, remember how we said you can connect to ServiceNow® IntegrationHub? It only takes a few clicks to add a specific IntegrationHub action into the flowchart.
The bottom line

Live chat is rapidly becoming the way businesses get things done. And, it’s a key part of creating a great service experience for customers and employees. However, even though chat is more efficient than phone calls, rising workloads mean that service desk agents still can’t keep up. They spend huge amounts of time dealing with repetitive requests rather than focusing on high-value interactions. Meanwhile, customers and employees are stuck waiting in the queue.

Virtual Agent solves this problem. It takes care of routine questions and issues, so your agents can focus on what’s important. By deflecting common questions and issues, you drive down agent workloads—lowering costs and increasing responsiveness. And, your customers and employees get instant answers any time and anywhere without having to wait for a live agent. Best of all, you can get up and running with Virtual Agent in just a few weeks—it delivers immediate value out-of-the-box, and you don’t need any special skills.

In other words, it’s a win for you and for your customers.