Getting an AI bot to work for your Airport
For many years there has been a great deal of interest in how AI can provide real-world benefits to organisations. However, it’s only recently that AI has begun to show its value.

Over a variety of industries AI technologies have provided cost-effective ways of boosting productivity, optimising yield, increasing efficiency and improving customer satisfaction. With AI having moved into the mainstream many notable experts believe we are on the cusp of a major shift in how businesses operate. In February 2018 Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google asserted that “AI is one of the most important things humanity is working on. It is more profound than ... electricity or fire.”

There are a wide variety of current use cases for AI technologies: self-driving cars; automated stock trading; medical scan analysis and diagnosis; explosive charge planning in mining; crop planning and management. One of the most widely adopted and fastest growing applications is the use of AI bots for customer service and user engagement.

Advances in the fields of machine learning, natural language processing (NLP) and natural language generation (NLG) have greatly increased the capabilities and accuracy of bots. They can now provide a very high level of customer service with incredible levels of consistency and scalability. The ability to communicate simultaneously with a huge number of users in a personalised way can allow organisations to make premium services available to all, while reducing contact centre costs.

In the case of airports, bots can direct users to specific services or outlets, provide flight information updates and more, freeing up staff to focus on more valuable activities.
Understanding the opportunities to apply new technologies within a given sector can lead to great competitive advantages. Within the airport sector, there are a variety of feasible use cases of AI bots which can help operators improve efficiency and customer satisfaction while reducing costs.

Strategic use of bots can also open up new marketing opportunities and lead to greater revenue generation particularly in relation to retail, F+B, parking and services for business travellers.

**The opportunities are endless**

- **Parking**
  - Reservations
  - Processing Payments
  - Navigation
  - Answering FAQs
  - Demand forecasting
  - Flexible Pricing

- **Retail & F+B**
  - Personalised shopping recommendations based on likes and purchase history
  - Online shopping with collection at gate
  - No checkout shopping - Bot identifies which products are taken then confirms and charges via chat
  - Flexible pricing based on availability and demand
  - Coupon generation
  - Micro location ad targeting
  - Loyalty scheme reminders

- **Navigation & way finding**
  - In-airport directions
  - Notifications: when to leave; which terminal to go to
  - Time to airport and time to gate estimates
  - Public transport notifications about delays and cancellations

- **Executive Lounges**
  - Booking, payment and access
  - Order snacks and refreshments
  - Flexible pricing and promotion based on level of use
  - Personalised pricing & promotion based on: flight delays, attire, laptop use, size of group

- **Airport & flight info**
  - Answer questions about flight times, statuses and routes
  - Answering FAQs
  - Notifications about delays, cancellations and early arrivals
  - Notifications about new routes

- **Meeting & Conference rooms**
  - Reservation, payment and access
  - Upload and display presentations
  - Upload and print documents
  - Order snacks and refreshments
Driving value for Airports

Bots are very well suited to certain tasks and can provide forward thinking organisations with a wide range of benefits. As AI technology advances further many more use cases will be discovered or become feasible, allowing for an even greater number of benefits.

**Scalability**: Bots have the capability to communicate with multiple users at one time. There is nothing unusual or problematic about a customer service bot having conversations with 20,000 customers simultaneously.

**Multilingual**: Bots can come with multiple languages pre-installed allowing them to instantly communicate with users of those languages at a very high level.

**Cost Savings**: Human capital is the most obvious cost saving, but there are many others e.g. reduced need for expensive signage due to bots giving directions and lower advertising costs due to bots communicating marketing messages.

**Improved Customer Experience**: Bots can lower waiting times by directing customers to areas with shorter queues. Some premium services, which are limited by contact centre staff availability, can also be rolled out to all customers at scale, at minimal cost.

**Consistent Brand Voice**: There are no barriers to bots staying on brand. They don’t get bored or frustrated, and never have a bad day. They also don’t alter communication styles based on their opinions or preferences so they can provide incredible levels of consistency.

**Reliability**: As with websites bots can be hosted on multiple servers to ensure near 100% uptime.

**Available 24/7 365**: Bots can operate non-stop at full capacity every day of the year without any extra costs.

**Speed**: A bot can read a user’s question and formulate an answer in a fraction of a second.

**Cumulative Learning**: With machine learning, bots can continually analyse the data they receive and improve their own performance. This can be done with or without human supervision.

**Freeing up staff time**: Time consuming repetitive tasks are among the first which should be automated. This can allow team members to focus their time and energies on activities which add more value. Using bots to answer very common questions is a prime example.
Thoughts from the Industry

Throughout the industry, the speed of adoption of AI technologies is rapidly quickening. As successful implementations are rolled out, often with bots as the central communication hub, business cases have become easier to make.

While discussing how AI could improve the airport experience, Paul Griffiths, CEO of Dubai International Airport, had this to say:

“Most of the touch points that we currently loathe about airports today — the security and immigration — will disappear. And technology will enable all of those checks to be done in the background.”

At the 2017 Future Travel Experience conference SITA CTO Jim Peters said:

“We know that passengers prefer to use technology and when it is well designed it can really improve the passenger experience. Airlines and airports are investing in AI and mobile programs to make services even better for the passenger, supporting sales and providing customer support, particularly during times of disruption.”

Discussing the implementation of AI technologies at Edmonton International Airport, CEO Tom Ruth explained:

“For people to know how long a security line is, where they can buy things… Over time, we just want to make sure that we’re putting a lot of information in the hands of customers so their airport experience can be that much more enjoyable.”

In 2016, Dan Olley, the CTO of global information and analytics company Elsevier, made this strong assertion:

“If CIOs invested in machine learning three years ago, they would have wasted their money. But if they wait another three years, they will never catch up.”
What does the research say?

MCKINSEY GLOBAL INSTITUTE

Sectors leading in AI adoption today also intend to grow their investment the most

Future AI demand trajectory
Average estimated % change in AI spending, next 3 years, weighted by firm size

Leading sectors
- Financial services
- High tech and telecommunications
- Transportation and logistics
- Energy and resources
- Media and entertainment
- Automotive and assembly
- Travel and tourism
- Consumer packaged goods
- Professional services
- Health care
- Retail
- Education
- Construction
- Travel and tourism

Based on the midpoint of the range selected by the survey respondent. Results are weighted by firm size.

Source: McKinsey Global Institute AI adoption and use survey; McKinsey Global Institute analysis

ORACLE

Messaging apps: The Perfect Channel for Chatbots

65% Consumers prefer using a messaging app when contacting a business¹

50% Consumers would make a purchase through a messaging app¹

Over 50% Customers expect a business to be open 24/7²

Source: Oracle Chatbots 101 Infographic (2017)

Driving user engagement in airports with intelligent bots

HUMAN CONVERSATIONS AUTOMATED

ebo is an AI chatbot currently offering solutions for real-world business problems and disrupting the customer experience industry. It helps airports reduce costs, improve customer service, market products and services, and drive growth in a scalable and cost-effective way.

ebo uses machine learning and natural language processing to help it communicate in a personal, natural, free-flowing way. Tone detection helps ebo to understand the mood of the user and decide whether to ask if they would like to talk to a human. ebo’s multilingual functionality allows it to communicate in a wide variety of languages.

The ebo platform is highly customisable. You can decide what to call your bot and you can teach ebo how you want it to communicate with your customers. ebo is the brain of your bot, but you can add the style, personality and knowledge.

ebo is intelligent and flexible. Using ebo, organisations can automate many customer interactions. Cost savings can be significant and team members can become more productive.

ebo can operate simultaneously across multiple channels. It can integrate with Facebook Messenger, Skype and many other chat apps as well as your website. It can also be configured to work with custom chat platforms and CRM software like Salesforce.

The ebo platform is hosted on secure cloud servers making it safe and reliable. Conversations can be customised using information about individuals, while protecting their data with strict privacy settings.

If you’d like to know more about ebo, please visit the website or schedule a demonstration.