

Chatbots of the future present huge opportunities for companies

Chatbots of the future will present huge opportunities for companies in the EdTech, human resources, health and other sectors by reducing costs and increasing productivity.

Chatbots of the future will be used to mark student exams and deliver educational programmes in the workplace, an event on chatbots in Dublin was told on Thursday.

Chatbot technology can vary in complexity from a simple set of questions and answers to conversational AI that interprets and predicts user needs during the conversation.

Organised by The Learnovate Centre, which is one of Europe's leading research centres in learning technology, a panel of experts explored the opportunities and experiences of using chatbots in learning at 'Chatbots for Workplace Learning' held at co-working space Huckletree.

At the moment, the technology is primarily being used in the retail and consumer service sectors, but there are huge opportunities for 'early adopters' in the EdTech, human resources, health and other sectors.

Conor Kostick, CMO of SnatchBot, a multinational chatbot building platform, who was keynote speaker at the event and said; "The benefits for the education sector are endless. Chatbots could be used to administer and correct tests — and give instant results. They could also be vital for workplace learning, where entire learning programmes can be delivered by chatbots."

Kostick, who is also founder of the Irish start-up Chatbot Creations and editor of thechatbot.net, said that many universities were piloting the use of chatbots, but it was generally by individual lecturers rather than at management level.

"It is a bit like when websites were initially created; there were early adopters who were quick to see the return on investment when they went online. Now, every business has a website and you couldn't imagine having a business without one. In ten years' time, every business will be using

chatbots.

“A HR department has to devise multiple policies that they need to communicate with each new hire – usually in the form of a large welcome pack. How more interesting, helpful and engaging would it be to put all this information into a chatbot when onboarding new staff as well as when delivering programmes on GDPR and other issues?” he added.

It might come as a surprise, but chatbots are easy to develop and provide instant responses to users seeking information, resources or support. Implementing even basic chatbots can reduce costs and increase engagement.

Kostick added that he often hears fears from people that artificial intelligence will replace humans in the workplace, but he strongly disagrees with this opinion.

“It’s not about that at all. It’s about freeing humans up from doing the monotonous, boring work to do the tasks that AI can’t and the ones that humans are trained and experienced in doing – there are a lot of savings to be made in a lot of industries by doing this.”

He referenced the health sector in Finland, where chatbots make appointments and deal with a lot of the admin work with the final step being the actual physical meeting with a human.

“This allows the health professionals to spend time doing what they are best at and allowing the chatbots to do the mundane and time-consuming work, saving time and money.”

Based at Trinity College Dublin and funded by Enterprise Ireland, The Learnovate Centre is an industry-led technology centre of expert researchers using emerging technology to help transform the lives of learners in the workplace, schools, at third-level and in the home.

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By Stephen Larkin

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