

ICMI 2019 Cognigy



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Dennis Walsh, President, Derek Roberti, VP of Technology, NA Cognigy. Cognigy was founded by two men who had deep experience in enterprise systems. Initially their thought was to create a solution around voice, but they soon realized that the niche that needed to be served was creating a true conversational AI platform that could serve not only contact centers, but all parts of the broader enterprise. The goal was to create a single platform that met the needs of all areas, one that used the same development facilities and could be extended and expanded to cover an almost infinite spectrum of conversations.

“The objective of using the platform is to be able to provide conversational interfaces,” said Roberti. “These can be interfaces to enterprise systems or be interfaces to information. A customer might interface with an organization by going to their website, navigating through a menu, searching a knowledge base, or logging into a portal. But they must be persistent and to figure out how to find the information or take the action that they need. What a conversational platform like ours does is take all the knowledge and put it into a natural language interface so the user can say ‘what’s my balance?’ or ‘I forgot my password’ or ‘what are the new product features?’ and use the same tool to accomplish everything they want to in an interaction with an enterprise. Our technology is a series of user interfaces that allow trained users to be able to create conversational flows in order to shape what the conversation should look like. They can make the conversational engine smarter by teaching it the type of inquiries that a consumer might make or important terms they might ask about. All that tooling sits on top of an advanced AI run time engine, which provides the ability to translate a variety of user inputs into trained intents that either we configure, or the customers configure themselves.”

Of course, the platform’s effectiveness is dependent on the quality of information of the organization. If it has no content or limited content, there is no value to pass on to the consumer. If the content is not searchable, they can’t ask meaningful questions. If enterprise systems aren’t open, the company can’t integrate with them. It is important to work within an ecosystem of relevant content to be made available to the user and systems that can integrate. “We’re not a service organization, our philosophy is to enable businesses to help themselves.” They believe the most effective approach is for a company to start small and gain confidence in the ability of the solution to provide answers to commonly asked questions. The company has developed a partner network including organizations like Deloitte, KPMG, PWC and smaller agencies to help them build out integrations with customers.

Unlike other solutions, conversational AI is about incremental learning and development, both for the bots that companies deploy, and for the users themselves. “These are skills that can be developed, almost as a background process while working in an organization, to build experience in customer engagement.

Why is it important to fulfill customer expectations across a broad variety of conversational channels?

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We are in the age of self-service, and users expect to be able to accomplish tasks with immediacy and simplicity across all interaction types: Customer support, sales / marketing, HR, etc. To achieve the desired FCR (First Contact Resolution), not only do we need to meet our customers in the channel, device and modality of choice, but we need to enable process completion at each point of interaction.

The old ways (Call Center, Customer Service Centers) of addressing inquiries are simply not flexible, fast or accurate enough to provide a good experience, and often do not meet the consumer on their terms. Today, any number of channels are available to them to inquire, seek and secure information quickly and accurately. Being able to bridge multiple channels (Web, Text, SMS, Voice, etc.) is a must for customer satisfaction as well as addressing competitive pressures.

How does your solution enable businesses to build advanced conversational AIs without the need for extensive IT involvement?

Cognigy's philosophy is to enable basic users to make full use of the work performed by developers and power users to create conversations that are simple to build but are deep in their capabilities. We provide pre-built intents, conversation flows and integrations giving the SME's a running start to build a conversation.

How do your Cognitive Bots not only answer calls and deliver immediate support, but provide smart handoffs to human agents?

Key to our architecture is a provision to hand off to a human at any point within a conversation and hand back to the bot when an agent is no longer needed.

In what ways does your solution give developers the flexibility they need to expand on its value?

Cognigy is the only platform designed for business user productivity that also provides a first-class role for developers. Any action a user can take with their mouse, a developer can do in code. This lets developers build integrations, traverse enterprise systems and trigger automations in code and then surface these capabilities in the business user interface.

The role of the developer is to own the most complex parts of process development and make that complexity accessible and easy to use in our flow editing tools.