



Chatbots in Groningen

DO CHATBOTS INCREASE A CITIZENS' SERVICE EXPERIENCE?

On the webpage of a webshop, a utility company or a restaurant, we see that chatbots are all around us. They are fast, consistent and available at all times. But where businesses have engaged in innovative customer services, governments are only just starting to experiment. In the City of Groningen we delved into the world of chatbots, where we piloted a Chatbot on our Whatsapp-channel and experienced the uses and challenges of automated, Artificial intelligence (A.I.)like innovations to engage with our citizens in a different way.

Relations to Workpackages

In Like! we try to build a local digital innovation culture across the North Sea region. With the Chatbot we invested in building a digital innovative service for citizens in Groningen. A Smarter Service which not only brings citizen and municipality closer together, but also tries to pull our public services into the future.

Local partners

Partners: HowAboutYou

www.howaboutyou.nl/

This Case Study Paper is produced by Bram Scholtens

About LIKE!

Local governments, citizens, universities and SMEs have joined forces to co-create smarter, more efficient and more innovative services through 9 transnational pilot projects covering 3 core themes:



Innovation
Culture Approach



Smart
Services



Digital
Dashboards



The Chatbot

With our Chatbot trial the goal was to experience the potential of Artificial Intelligence in Customer Services. For three months we actively piloted within our Whatsapp-channel on the topic of relocation. Incoming questions were analysed and when the Chatbot reached a certain percentage threshold, an acceptable level of the analysis by the Chatbot, a suggestion for an answer was given to the web care team. This allowed us to taste the future possibilities without incurring the risk to give faulty answers.

Artificial Intelligence

A crucial part of a Chatbot is the underlying A.I. technique. To increase the quality of our customer support it was essential to make sure the answers were correctly interpreted and trustworthy. Where a citizen might ask 'Do I need to bring my passport when I come to register the birth of my first child?' but actually just wants to know if he or she can bring just an I.D. card instead.

Our experience in the suggested answers was that while the chatbot can answer the short, easy questions, ours was not yet able to understand the more complex, multi-pronged questions most citizens ask us.

Joint Venture

A very big plus for this developing experience was the cooperation between our external partner HowAboutYou, the Webcare team of our Customer Contact Centre and the initial team within Like! Ideas were shared, we solved issues together and we evaluated the pilot from all three perspectives. Making room for innovation does not only mean new technology, it also gives a boost of energy to all people involved and broadens the horizon for future possibilities.



Launching the Chatbot in Groningen

Prerequisites for success

- Onboarding the Customer Contact Centre, implement together with the business;
- Start small, pick an easily defined subject;
- Expect the unexpected when it comes to questions from citizens;
- Use real Artificial Intelligence, not Q&A Excel sheets.