

WHAT IS A CHATBOT?

by Marlene Strydom

Nope, it is not what you think! It is not that colleague down the passage who suffers from a mild case of verbal diarrhoea!

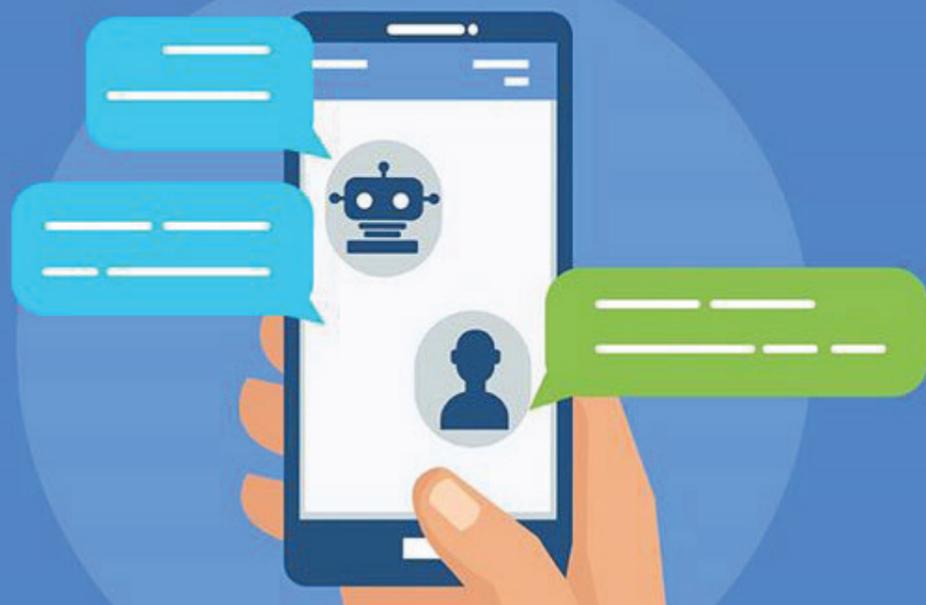
After doing some research for this article, I realised that I recently used this "tool" when I wanted to purchase something over the internet.

I was initially annoyed with the "intruder" popping up on my screen asking if I need assistance...

 Have you also experienced this?

I mean really, does this thing actually know what I am busy with! In the end I was very impressed. I managed to finalise my transaction within a few minutes when I decided to give in and communicated my needs. I never knew it had a name....a chatbot! I asked a developer (a techie) to answer a few questions for me on this topic to also help me understand chatbots a little better.

CHATBOT



Me: What is a Chabot?

The techie: A Chabot is a computer program that, using rules and artificial intelligence, is used to assist with, among other things, information gathering or customer service.

Me: Can you give us a few examples of popular Chatbots?

The techie: Here are some:

- Instalocate – personal travel assistant
- Meekan – scheduling assistant
- Foxy – social bot for making new friends
- chatShopper – Personal fashion shopping assistant

 Did you know these existed?

Me: Have you, yourself, ever interacted with a Chabot?

The techie: I have asked for assistance on an internet shopping site. My only awareness was that I thought I was talking to a human on the other side.

Me: Do you think Chatbots have a place in the working environment?

The techie: Yes, where there is a need for mundane, repetitive tasks that can be automated to allow humans to focus on functions that require emotion and creative thinking.

 Have you used a Chabot?

Me: If Chatbots do have a place in the working environment, where do you see them being used and why?

The techie: Daily repetitive tasks, looking up someone's contact details, requesting metrics like the daily sales figures from your sales manager. Any information that can be deduced from existing data somewhere can be answered by a chatbot. This way we can allow people to focus on things humans do best.

Me: Do you think chatbots will replace human assistants?

The techie: It's possible one day. If you do not go to the next level and make sure you are creative in what you do and only do work based on knowledge acquired over years you can be replaced by a Chabot or machine.

**So, if you think Google
is your friend,
think again...
you have a Chabot
waiting for you!**

Marlene Strydom is Legal Assistant to the Head of Legal – AFGRI Operations (Pty) Ltd.

She has 23 years secretarial experience in different industries.

She is a member of PAFSA's Academy of Excellence having reached the finals in the PA of the Year Award in 2011.

She has also received PAFSA's Crystal award.

**Marlene believes that:
It's important to be kind! Be kind – everyone has a story to tell.**

