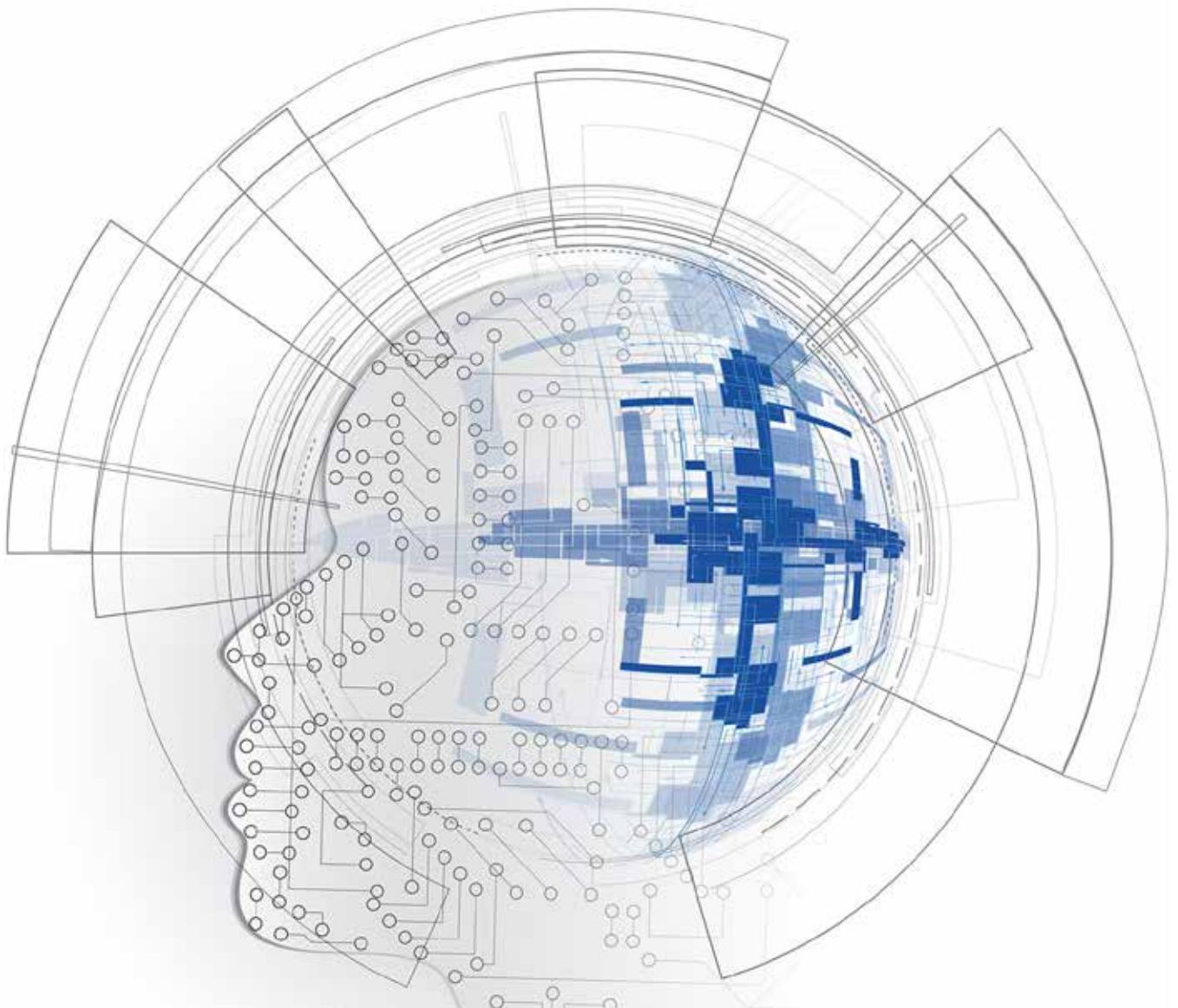




Next Gen Interactive Experiences Using Artificial Personality



Conversational interfaces are changing the way we interact with machines. Due to the widespread integration of mobile technology in our day-to-day lives, a large part of our screen time consists of conversations with various info-entertainment applications and websites, and use is increasing rapidly. Gartner notes that by 2021, use of conversational platforms is expected to increase 400% from 2017 numbers.¹ This kind of demand has led industry experts to explore new mechanisms of service in fields like virtual enterprise assistance (VEA), virtual customer assistance (VCA) and virtual personal assistance (VPA).

Technologies enabling these conversational solutions are evolving along with the applications with which they're being implemented. As a part of this evolution, next generation conversational solutions will face various technical challenges, in terms of integration with enterprise systems for tasks like information gathering, handling of complex user conversations, and providing accurate responses to multiple actions. There are also other non-technical challenges, which are important in determining the success of these solutions. One critical criteria for determining a solution's success is evaluating how effectively the user is able to engage with it: How can we ensure the user is able to connect with the responses given? How can we ensure that the conversation is not monotonous? How can we ensure that the solution truly understands the user, rather than giving scripted responses?

A leading trend for improving user engagement in these cases is the use of virtual characters, or avatars, for interactive experiences. Virtual characters can improve user attention span during a given experience, by providing a life-like personality that understands verbal conversation and makes effective use of non-verbal communication.

An example of this is an actor portraying a character. The actor operates through the character, taking on the way the character walks, talks, sits, stands; the way they react to situations, and the way they modulate their voice. The actor does all of this to bring the idea of a character to life and create a convincing experience. Similarly, by employing an avatar, we can make a virtual experience more "human": more intuitive conversation, a degree of empathy, effective use of non-verbal communication, and a sense of personality.

Avatars that can go beyond a 2-D or 3-D digital image of an individual or a character are more likely to establish trust with users, which is essential to making conversations engaging. In order to feel connected to a virtual assistant (VA), the customer should believe that the VA is not merely programmed to perform a rudimentary task, but that it truly has the ability to listen, to understand, and to think. In other words, the customer should believe, to a certain degree, that the VA is a live person. In the case of a call center, where human agents reflect the organization's brand and values, VAs should be able to accurately bring the brand and its values to life. With the help of virtual characters and avatars, they can.

¹ Gartner, Market Guide for Conversational Platforms, Published: 20 June 2018 ID: G00354892

There are many benefits to having an avatar-based interactive experience, ranging from greater usability to more effective brand development:

- 1.** Avatars can increase trust about the information being shared by using familiar verbal and non-verbal communications.
- 2.** Interactive virtual characters perceived as “real” personas help users relate more meaningfully to the messages being communicated.
- 3.** An avatar with a personality that exhibits brand values in its interactions with users can encourage greater user engagement and strengthen brand allegiance.
- 4.** Avatars can be regulated with the use of AI-based conversations, and are more efficient than conventional virtual interactions at expressing emotions and responding appropriately.
- 5.** Their ease of interaction allows avatars to convey complex or nuanced information naturally, in a way that’s easier for users to understand.
- 6.** Avatars and virtual environments can enable effective communication for people with limited mobility or disability.



The most successful avatars create a believable human-like character or virtualized presence known as artificial personality (AP). Examples of successful APs from market leaders include Apple's Siri, Amazon's Alexa, Microsoft's Cortana, Autodesk's Ava and Google Home. Each of these avatars have a definitive personality.

Some guidelines of designing a successful AP are:

- Focused efforts should be made towards humanizing the content and user experience.
- The interactions should feel human-like and contextual.
- The user should be able to relate with the avatar's persona and develop an empathetic connection to it.
- The virtual persona should reflect the brand's core values and beliefs.

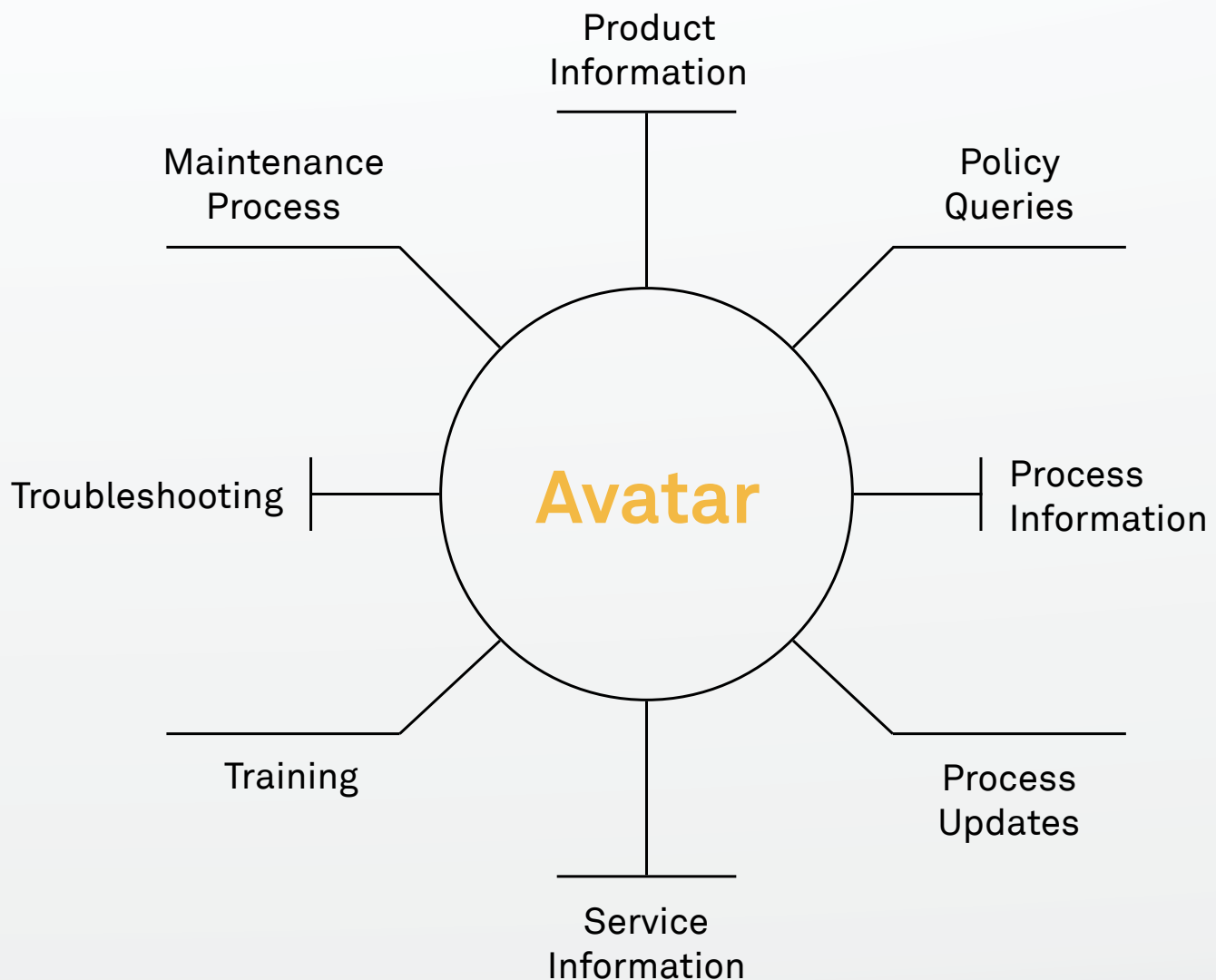
When done well, virtual personas can be valuable additions to almost any team in any industry, wherever information needs to be communicated in a human way. The following are some areas where an avatar-based interactive experience can be employed for various practices across multiple domains.



In healthcare and life sciences, an avatar-based interaction can provide product information for pharmaceutical products and medical devices. It can also enable a sales person to create an effective remote sales pitch by using 3-D-enabled mixed-reality experiences for product exploration. For instance, an avatar can connect with an elderly user to help explain medical policy details and answer any questions. In retail, an avatar-based conversation can enable an end user, purchase officer, or distributor to view all the information remotely, allowing for more informed decisions anytime and anywhere.

Users in this case can get information about all the processes and policies. Avatar-based solutions can also provide step-by-step training on how to use a product.

Through their use of verbal and non-verbal communications, the artificial personality of an avatar can help establish a lasting connection with users. The potential application of these technologies is limitless, especially in areas where establishing meaningful connections is essential.



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