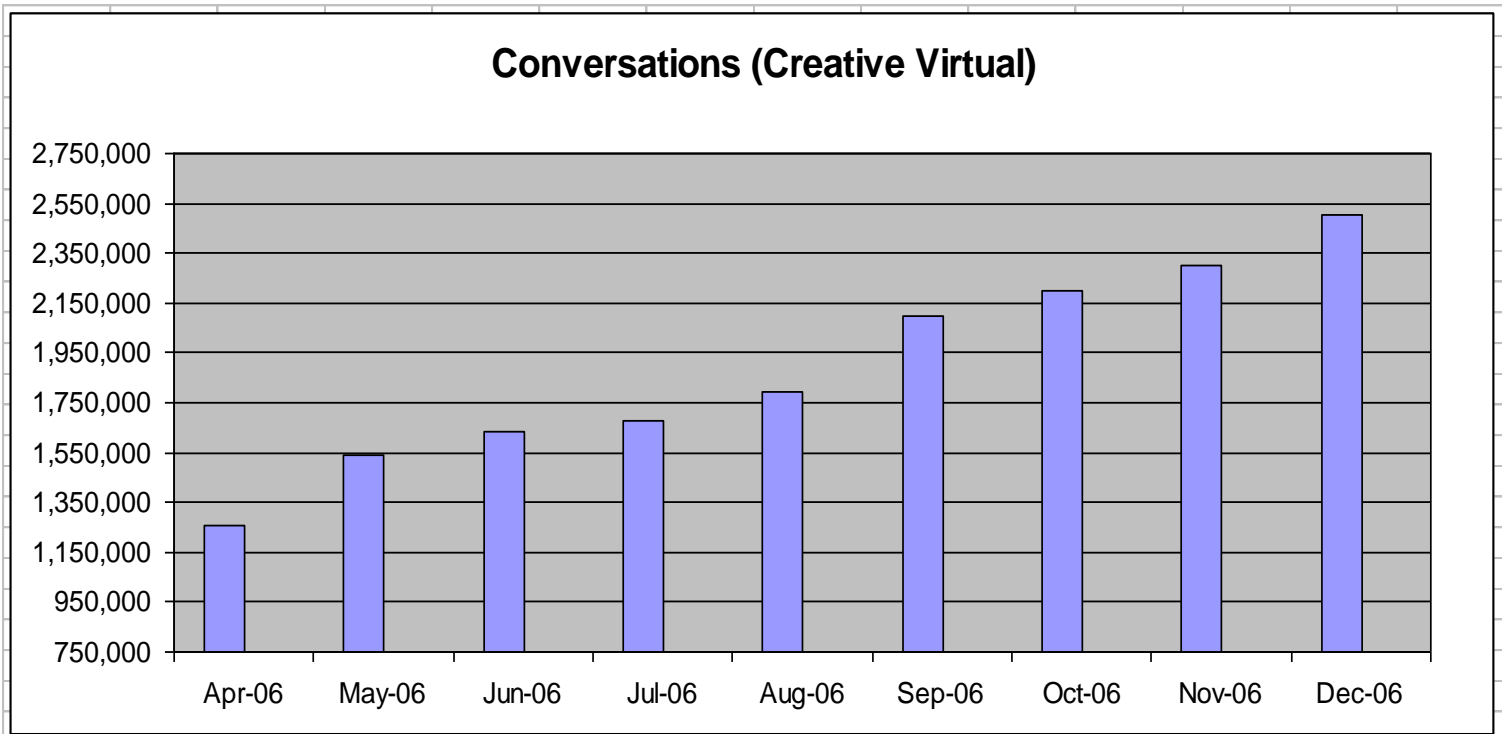




The world's busiest Virtual Assistants



Why Have Creative Virtual Been So Successful?

(a) Deployment Strategy

Creative Virtual have adopted a bot development methodology called BotCreation; based on a phased approach to implementation, the first objective is to deliver value quickly, start collecting user questions early - and use these questions as the key driver for future development phases.

Key BotCreation development phases:

Phase 1 (Quick start): use the Virtual Assistant as an intelligent FAQ system; providing a natural language interface that allows people to ask questions using natural language, with links to appropriate web pages.

Phase 2 (Rapid update cycle): use the Virtual Assistant reporting system (BotStats) to identify questions that cannot currently be answered and use the BotCreator tools to enhance the natural language recognition capabilities and FAQs.

Phase 3 (Advanced conversation and integration): develop conversational trees for specific tasks, and integrate the Virtual Assistant into the enterprise; for example, Virtual Assistants are currently dealing with lost property reports for Onerailway and applications for financial service companies. This is a key phase where the bot takes on the more sophisticated customer service and sales “conversations”, delivering a step change in Return On Investment (ROI).

Phase 4: (Maintenance): working with some of the leading financial services companies in the world, Creative Virtual has developed a methodology and set of applications that address the important issues that relate to implementing this type of technology within large organizations. These enterprise tools, together with the BotCreation methodology, deal with issues such as regression testing, version control, change control, DDA compliance, usability, internal compliance sign-off, quality assurance, staging/testing areas, disaster recovery, security etc. Furthermore, the update process is flexible enough to be fit in with existing workflows and systems.

(b) Frustration with call centers

Long waits, multiple menus and feeble sales pitches have frustrated customers. Customers with broadband have turned to the web, to help themselves. When they find a helpful system they use it repeatedly; the increasing take-up of the Virtual Assistant solution is illustrated in the graph above.

(c) Reliable service 24/7

Customers take advantage of services that are always available; meaning they can work to their own schedule.

(d) Cost savings

The ROI that existing companies enjoy has been a great incentive for other organizations to invest in Virtual Assistants; they typically pay for themselves within 6 months. For customer service based Virtual Assistants, customers typically see a 30% reduction in emails and a 25% reduction in call center contacts.

Interesting comments from existing customers:

It feels like we're getting an insight into the people not the clicks (Lloyds TSB)

We searched the market and decided that the Virtual Assistant was the best tool to help us improve the customer experience (Lloyds TSB)

Creative Virtual's expertise and creativity helped us deliver a product we're all very proud of (BBC)

The Virtual Assistant has made a big impact on our performance but without the associated costs and resources needed for most IT projects (cahoot)

We cannot afford to get that crucial first contact wrong, and Any Questions is giving us an important edge (cahoot)

We've been extremely impressed not only with the performance of Any Questions, but also with the customer service behind it - which is critical in such a time sensitive environment (cahoot)

It takes a surprisingly short time to implement a Virtual Assistant - from 4 weeks - why?

The jump start process developed by Creative Virtual has greatly simplified the implementation. Additionally the Virtual Assistant conversational tools have been developed over nine years and they are ready to understand questions from day one. Creative Virtual can also host the Virtual Assistant, further reducing startup time and costs.

How much time is required to manage a Virtual Assistant?

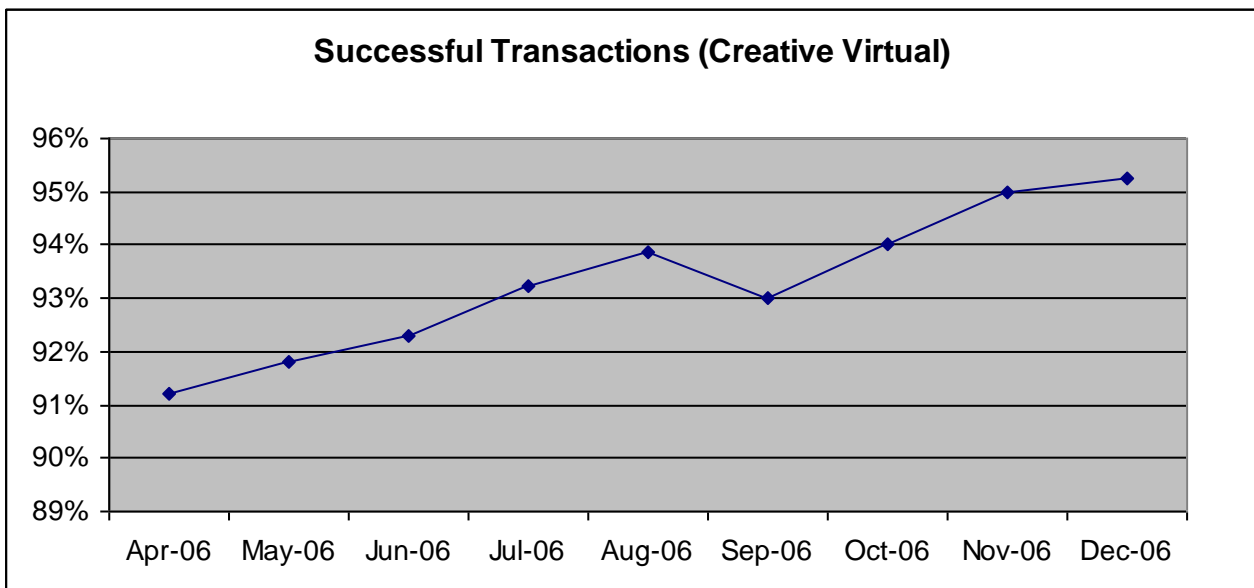
Typically only one or two days a month is required to maintain a Virtual Assistant; this includes monitoring BotStats, producing management reports and enhancing the knowledge base (expanding the FAQs, conversation trees etc.). Creative Virtual is continuously developing the core language tools (BotCreator), ensuring that, as language evolves, Virtual Assistants retain the position as the world's leading virtual interactive assistant solution. The update methodology is made fast, reliable and secure through the BotCreation methodology.

How many conversations can a Virtual Assistant have at the same time?

The parallel architecture allows an unlimited number of concurrent conversations to take place. The largest clients are having over 25,000 conversations per day, in 13 Languages.

How accurate is a Virtual Assistant?

All of our commercial Virtual Assistants achieve an accuracy rating of over a 90% (by far the most accurate and consistent bot technology in the world)



What is the most successful interface for a Virtual Assistant?

Virtual Assistant interfaces are fully configurable (from a simple text box to a 3D avatar with text-to-speech and lip synchronization and speech recognition), but the ones that have proved most popular have four main components.

1. A character (avatar) that expresses emotion
2. Natural language dialogue
3. Related FAQs that are driven from the questions being asked
4. Dynamic template that typically includes an FAQ navigation system (breadcrumb) and an area for context sensitive messages (e.g. promotional or customer service messages linked to the questions being asked)

Are Virtual Assistants successful around the world?

Virtual Assistants started in Europe; English and German are the most popular languages today, but they have now spread to Asia and the US (13 languages are currently supported).

How does a Virtual Assistant understand sentences?

The core knowledge base is organized in much the same way that a human organizes language - keeping vast vocabularies of words organized and cross-referenced with words or phrases that mean similar things. To illustrate this more clearly: building blocks termed 'Macros' exist within the core knowledge base to aid understanding by collecting similar words or phrases and then linking these to other Macros. This allows for the various ways that a question might be asked without the need to write specific cases for each particular choice of words.

How much does a Virtual Assistant cost?

Typically less than 10 cents for each question asked (compared to at least 5 dollars for a call center enquiry).

What industries do Virtual Assistants operate in?

The largest users are in financial services, followed by retail; telecom, travel and entertainment are catching up fast. Today, the vast majority of applications are focused around customer service, but there is now great interest in Virtual Assistants that combine customer service with sales and marketing functions.

Can a Virtual Assistant interface with other applications?

The Virtual Assistant supports open systems standards such as HTML, XML, ODBC and JDBC, which makes it easy to integrate the Virtual Assistant with third-party applications such as databases, content management systems and personalization systems. In addition, the Virtual Assistant can be integrated into live-chat, callback, text-to-speech and voice recognition systems. A key part of Creative Virtual's strategy is to offer customers the best-of-breed Virtual Interactive Assistant technology, which can then be integrated with other best-of-breed applications to create the most effective customer service solution available.

Can a Virtual Assistant interface with live-chat?

Yes, a Virtual Assistant can be setup to link to live-chat and call-back systems (even passing a copy of the conversation through to the call center agent).

What do users think of Virtual Assistants?

Apart from positive feedback on the websites, users vote by the increasing take-up of Virtual Assistants, across all sectors.

The significant volume of transactions also provides the major source of material for the ongoing updates to the core knowledge base rules.

Feedback from one of our recent clients:

Teletext Holidays commercial director Matt Cheevers is convinced of the sound advantages of Virtual Assistants: "This is exciting technology and will only enhance the experience our customers have whilst visiting our site, ultimately impacting on the number of repeat visitors and higher conversion rates for our advertisers."

Creative Virtual's comprehensive reporting system allows Teletext to review customer conversations with Jodie and so "get into their customers head" to improve their understanding of customer requirements and provide more tailored services. The ability to capture user data makes Jodie more than just a fantastic 24/7 customer assistant - it makes her a valuable marketing and research tool which allows Teletext to stay in touch with their customers.

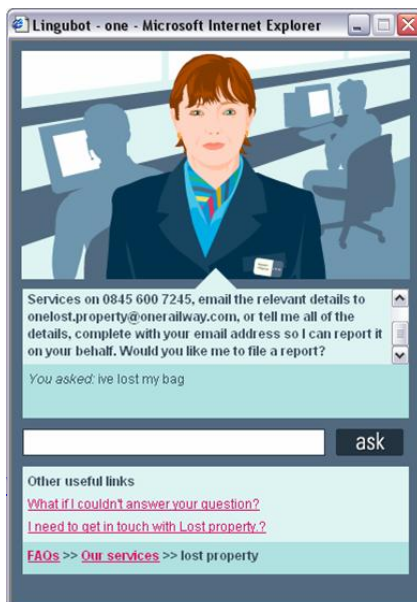
Customers currently taking advantage of the Virtual Assistant solution include:

BT, Lloyds TSB, BBC, Sky TV, Churchill Insurance, Norwich Union, Legal & General, Sharp Electronics (UK), Unilever, Teletext Holidays, Birmingham & Midshires.

What does the future hold for Virtual Assistants?

The convergence of telephony, entertainment and computing, combined with the advancements in voice recognition, text-to-speech and 3D technology means that the future for Virtual Assistants is very exciting indeed. Working closely with customers on combined research projects, Creative Virtual are seeing a great deal of interest in personalization and platform integration. In the future, users will be able to speak into their device of choice (e.g. mobile phone, PC), using natural language, to perform complex transactions (e.g. talk to a virtual financial advisor); Virtual Assistants will be at the heart of such systems.

Virtual Assistant overview:



Perfect customer service is a critical factor for success in any industry; however, the cost of maintaining good customer relations can be hard to swallow. With a virtual interactive assistant (Virtual Assistant) from Creative Virtual, your customers receive friendly and competent service 24 hours a day, all year round. Your Virtual Assistant will answer questions in natural language, instantly giving customers the information they seek - and for a fraction of the cost of a human customer services assistant.

Furthermore, independent studies have clearly shown the positive effects of self-help systems on customer satisfaction and call center workloads.

Virtual Assistants are always friendly and patient, giving information reliably and consistently. If they cannot answer a question, they can instantly escalate the query to a human customer service assistant via live-chat, e-mail or call-back, using your existing call center management software.

For users it means the sensation of communicating with a 'real' person, able not only to answer their questions, but also to understand the *context* of questions, and even hold entire conversations - a feature that makes our solution unique within the commercial world.

For example, Onerailway's virtual interactive assistant 'Valerie' (above) even deals with lost property issues.

Analysis of the 'conversations' through the online (real-time) reporting module gives a unique insight into the *people*, not just the clicks.

Due to its power and flexibility, the Virtual Assistant can easily be integrated into any website. It is also possible to include animation and voice recognition, as well as text-to-speech.

The Virtual Assistant can be integrated into database and CRM systems using standard interfaces, such as XML, ODBC and JDBC. The built-in scripting language offers all the power and flexibility required for complex integration tasks.