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AI startup is helping customers streamline support with cognitive virtual agents

Customer

Actionable Science

Products and Services

Azure

Industry

Partner Professional Services

Organization Size

Small (1 - 49 employees)

Country

United States

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1 May 2019



Actionable Science creates conversational cognitive agents

that help enterprises support employee roles in customer service, human resources, and IT services and help desk. Our platform, Virtual People, includes agents that come ready to handle everyday tasks, from intake to action, with a focus on what we call auto-resolutions. That means employees in these departments have more time for the skilled work they are best suited for, which brings the company the best employee value.

Similarly, users—either our customers or our customers' customers—appreciate getting relevant information quickly and accurately. Our solutions are conversational, so users become more comfortable as they interact with an automated system.

“As part of our mutual selling relationship with Microsoft, we are executing a large AI automation solution with a major insurance company. It is high visibility and will help transform its customer engagement and other key enterprise functions.”

—Manish Sharma: Cofounder and COO
Actionable Science

More than a chatbot

The Virtual People platform is powered by the latest in AI and cognitive automation advancements from Microsoft. The personal digital assistants keep learning and evolving so that they can resolve increasingly complex customer issues—that is, the more they're used, the more they learn, and the smarter they get.

The market space that Actionable Science operates in is increasingly competitive. To set ourselves apart, we've moved away from the concept of a simple chatbot toward a

more inclusive approach. First, we focus on knowledge management and offer a comprehensive solution for it within the Virtual People platform. It builds and expands upon the knowledge base that users can query and includes the ability to add questions and answers, edit existing questions, crowdsource solutions, learn from conversations, provide version control, and add variations of lines of questions and answers to improve performance. This is backed by a lightweight Ticketing System to resolve technical issues. Finally, our conversational chatbot can do a seamless handover to a human agent via LiveChat.

Second, our product includes a built-in solution for process orchestration, the proprietary means of using AI to manage multistep processes. For example, to get a car fixed after an accident, customers of an insurance company might want to file a claim, check claim status, or look for repair shops to get estimates—all of which are part of a complex series of steps. The personal digital assistants in our product guide customers through such actions conversationally, to get the job done.

Intelligent people, intelligent technology

Our product is multichannel, meaning it can interact with customers through email, intelligent chat, and shortly, conversations using Cortana. No coding is required on the part of customers. The platform runs almost entirely on Microsoft Azure infrastructure, APIs, and cognitive technologies. It uses open-source NodeJS and JavaScript to connect some of the components. The result is a cost-effective use of technology.

As one of our customers, Hari Abburi, Vice President of

Global Talent at Dawn Foods puts it:

“Our guiding principle is cost-effective flexibility. There’s a demand in the market for automation, and Microsoft is democratizing AI to make that flexibility possible. We can take advantage of that rapidly evolving AI technology to build an enterprise-class platform that serves diverse businesses in a multibillion-dollar market.

“To me, agility is matching the speed of our customers. This is delivered through an augmented workforce. The effective mix of humans and personal digital assistants augments workforces and enhances the collective intelligence of a company in a simple, integrated way to the customers. At a fundamental level, this changes the way we work. Our partnership with Actionable Science through a knowledgeable personal digital assistant named Hey Caro! enables our vision of an augmented and agile workforce.”

Actionable Science is in this for the long term. We understand that return on investment drives our customers’ decisions. Our challenge is to convince them that Virtual People is the right automated solution to invest in, and the expertise and prestige of Microsoft helps back that up. We’re built on Microsoft technology, a recognized leader in AI. Consequently, customers are confident that we’re not relying on risky, untested, or potentially obsolete AI capabilities, since we continually update Virtual People.

Smart relationships

We are fortunate to work with Microsoft, a startup-friendly company that understands the phenomenon of automation in our business. This has been true since the beginning of our participation in Microsoft for Startups and continues as we start working directly with Microsoft to sell our solutions.

Our team is actively connected to expert Microsoft salespeople who get leads and help close deals. It has been a wonderful experience so far.

These relationships translate into real business-building and revenue-generating benefits for Actionable Science. We're working with Microsoft experts right now to close upwards of ten strategic deals. For example, as part of our mutual selling relationship with Microsoft, we are executing a large implementation with a major insurance company. It is high visibility and will help transform its customer engagement and other key enterprise functions.

Our customers have been happy with the results. Lori Tully, Manager of IT Service Delivery at RTI International, describes a recent deployment. "With the help of our managed service provider and Actionable Science, we recently launched 'Lumi,' our latest IT help desk agent. Actionable Science was patient and easy to work with, and our marketing campaign led to a well-received and successful implementation."

For another account, we have implemented a revamped IT help desk for a key global enterprise. We found the customer on our own, but our use of Microsoft technology, along with subsequent guidance from the Microsoft team has made the project a success.

To illustrate the point, our customer at Patelco Credit Union sums up the business improvements this way:

"Since we launched James, our human support teams have become more knowledgeable about difficult technical problems. With James as the first point of contact, resolution accuracy has significantly improved. We saw a 50 percent reduction in requests that had to be escalated to second-level support. This enabled the human agents to focus on

trends and root causes to eliminate the problems. We also plan to increase our adoption of Actionable Science and improve upon the conversational content in that company's platform so that our retail branches can get help quickly and easily."

With Microsoft for Startups, we have a symbiotic connection with Microsoft. The depth of understanding of what we are trying to do is amazing. They just get it.

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—Manish Sharma: Cofounder and Head of Business Development
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