

# Chatbot as a Corporate Communication Tool: Best Practice of a Hungarian HR Services Company

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## Abstract

*The advent of cutting-edge technologies has changed the way humans communicate. Corporate communication also has to face the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities stemming from the evolution of infocommunication technologies. The paper aims to present the best practice of a Hungarian certified company providing full HR services regarding the use of a chatbot software application as a corporate communication tool. The company applies its award-winning chatbot to communicate with its temporary workforce in five different languages. The paper is a single-case study based on secondary and primary research. The empirical research is carried out by means of an in-depth interview with the examined company's representative to get details about the successful application of the chatbot software. The results reveal that the company was able to successfully integrate a rule-based chatbot into its corporate communications. The use of the chatbot has brought a number of benefits, e.g. time- and cost-effectiveness, satisfaction from both the temporary workforce and the internal staff. The paper concludes that even the most basic type of chatbot software can be applied effectively if the users are informed and well-prepared in advance, meanwhile the knowledge base of the chatbot software is appropriately determined and constantly updated.*

**Keywords:** *Chatbot, Corporate Communication, HR Services*

## Introduction

Recent years have seen changes in corporate communication owing to the dynamic evolution of technology. This revolutionary change has brought several significant trends and benefits to corporate communication, including the use of artificial intelligence, making this topic highly relevant. The creation of new platforms, tools and applications facilitates corporate communication without language barriers, which is a must in today's globalised and accelerated business world. In addition, some of these tools and applications are constantly available and provide instant feedback, while prove to be highly cost-effective.

This ongoing technological revolution is undoubtedly reshaping work processes, including corporate communication (Sharma et al., 2024). It is expected that one application of artificial intelligence, i.e. conversational agents, will have the most development in the near future (Carter, 2018). Conversational agents, also known as chatbots, are machine conversation systems that interact with human users by utilising natural conversation language (Hill et al., 2015). These chatbots have been used by more and more companies and organisations to communicate with customers (Ngai et al., 2021), due to their quick and effective use (Salem, 2024).

The primary objective of the paper is to introduce a chatbot software program (Jackie Chat) capable of interacting with users without human intervention. The system is designed to convincingly imitate human behaviour, necessitating the application to possess a considerable volume and calibre of knowledge while remaining up-to-date. The paper endeavours to showcase this capability by presenting the best practice of a certified Hungarian company providing comprehensive human resources (HR) services. This forward-thinking company utilises the chatbot to communicate with its temporary workforce, enabling them to communicate with their approximately 5,000 employees fluent in five languages without any constraints on time.

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The research aims to find an answer to the question: how to apply a chatbot software successfully into corporate communication. The paper uses both primary and secondary research to answer the research question. Consequently, the review of literature is followed by a qualitative research to gain detailed data on the company's use of chatbot as a corporate communication tool so that its best practice could be presented.

The introductory part of the paper is devoted to the review of relevant literature on corporate communication and chatbot as a corporate communication tool, while the next part presents the research objectives and the methodology of the research. The subsequent parts then are dedicated to the results of the research and their implications. Finally, conclusions are drawn from the research and suggestions are formulated regarding the successful implementation and use of chatbot as a corporate communication tool.

## Review of Literature

### *Corporate Communication*

Scientists and professionals agree that effective communication is the cornerstone of any successful organisation. Corporate communication is understood as an instrument of management by means of which all consciously used forms of internal and external communication are harmonised as effectively and efficiently as possible, so to create a favourable basis for relationships with groups upon which the company is dependent (van Riel, 1997). Corporate communication, therefore, is the process by which a company communicates internally and externally. It involves the flow of information and the maintenance of relationships both within the company and between the company and its external stakeholders such as customers, partners, investors or the media (Frandsen & Johansen, 2014). Despite the lack of a single, unified definition, the various notions of corporate communication have three main common features. First of all, corporate communication is a strategic management function that takes a strategic approach to communication activities. Secondly, it involves internal and external communication activities to build and/or maintain positive image and/or reputation. Thirdly, corporate communication activities take place within the company's relationships with internal and external stakeholders (Mazzei, 2014).

The aim of corporate communication is to deliver effective and coordinated messages that support the company's business objectives and contribute to building and maintaining a good reputation (Cornelissen, 2008; Ozan & Yolcu, 2022). It also plays an important role in strengthening the internal cohesion and culture of the company as well as in building and maintaining relationships with external stakeholders (Mazzei, 2014).

Corporate communications can be written, verbal, visual or digital and include internal correspondence, appearances, press releases, marketing materials and nowadays social media communications (Oltarzhhevskiy, 2019). Corporate communication is also strongly present in the online space, with internal employees using the company's social platform and communication support tools such as Microsoft 365 or Google Workspace. In addition, companies use website and social media like LinkedIn and Facebook profiles, and often Instagram and TikTok accounts, following online trends, as a means of external communication. Moreover, social media is perceived as a strategic tool for corporate communication as through these platforms, companies strive to present a unified brand and communicate in a way that is relevant to their target audience (Gomez & Soto, 2011).

Corporate communication originally was a specific organisational practice stemming from the 1970s due to the then growing negative attitude towards businesses (Argenti, 1994). Research into corporate communication, however, dates back to a few decades ago, when it was perceived as an emerging academic field by van Riel (1997). He identified three key concepts in corporate communication research: corporate identity, corporate reputation and orchestration of communication (van Riel, 1997). Since then, corporate communication has been in the focus of research and new concepts, such as stakeholder relations (Frandsen & Johansen, 2014), have completed the ones defined by van Riel (1997). Yet, it has remained a current and pertinent topic, especially with the advent of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence and platforms.

Technology development together with digital transformation has definitely reshaped the way humans and organisations communicate.

### *Chatbot As a Corporate Communication Tool*

With the emergence of new technologies, one of the new platforms for corporate communication has been the chatbot. The term was first used as “chatterbot” by Michael Mauldin in 1994 to describe conversational software (Mauldin, 1994). In fact, the term is a combination of “chat” and “robot”, which originates from its initial function as a text-based dialogue system simulating human language (Al-Amin et al., 2024). The idea of chatbots derives from the 1950s, but the first chatbot was developed in the mid-1960s. Over the years, chatbots have gone through a significant development process. In 2010, Apple launched Siri which pioneered the way for virtual personal assistants (Adamopoulou & Moussiades, 2020). Since then, a number of solutions can be seen on websites and mobile devices, so chatbots have been applied in a wide range of corporate activities, including customer services and webshops.

The most important requirement for chatbots is that they interact in real-time, in such a way that the user cannot distinguish whether they are communicating with a human or a robot. To this end, chatbots have the following basic characteristics (Sansonnnet et al., 2006):

- conversational ability: the chatbot must be able to understand the user’s question, and to do so, it needs a natural language processing module that interprets and analyses the information received;
- rationality: the chatbot must be able to give a meaningful answer to the user’s question, so it needs context-dependent information such as the user’s name and access to external knowledge bases;
- personality: chatbots have a face and personality to gain the trust of the user.

The most basic chatbots, the so-called rule-based chatbots work on the basis of predefined scripts to communicate. In these programs, questions and possible answers to them are predefined, so that conversations follow a defined path, a process similar to a fast structure. However, if the user’s input does not match with any of the predefined questions and answers, this system proves to be inefficient (Thorat & Jadhav, 2020).

There are also intelligent chatbots that fall into two main categories based on their communication strategy. The simpler implementations are passive information providers. They have predefined knowledge about a given topic and compile their answers from this knowledge base (Ngai et al., 2021). These are domain-specific chatbots that specialise in a particular topic (Magnucz & Baksáné Varga, 2020). The other category is made up of interactive robots capable of controlling the conversation: they ask questions and try to maintain communication with their partner. These chatbots can also learn and apply what they have learned to the next conversation (Suta et al., 2020; Dongbo et al., 2023). These are more general, human-like applications that can extract and use information from multiple databases (Magnucz & Baksáné Varga, 2020).

The implementation of chatbots comes with a number of advantages, of which the followings are the most significant ones:

- 0-24 availability, seven days a week: taking advantage of the “tirelessness” of robots, they can provide services 24 hours a day, all year round (Araujo et al., 2022; Li & Zhang, 2023), which allows companies to improve customer and employee satisfaction (Chen et al., 2023) by speeding up response times, and, consequently, enhance their brand reputation (Bergner et al., 2019);

- time-effectiveness: chatbots are able to support multiple conversations with an unlimited number of users in real-time (Alsayed et al., 2024). This makes companies satisfy a large number of their users simultaneously (Araujo et al., 2022) and free human time (Marks & Haupt, 2023);
- cost-effectiveness: in practice, chatbots dedicated to customer service can answer simple and frequent questions, and with these repetitive tasks they can reduce costs (Araujo et al., 2022; Pillai & Sivathanu, 2020);
- improved performance: by using chatbots, the company's performance can improve at organisational and process levels (Enholm et al., 2022; Lee, 2020) as well as the performance of the employees, due to their freed time (Araujo et al., 2022);
- business analysis tool: by implementing chatbots, conversations between users and chatbots can automatically be analysed so companies can gain more insight into customer preferences, questions and the most common topics which customers most frequently visit the chatbot platform about (Winkler & Söllner, 2018).

Although the incorporation of cutting-edge technologies, such as chatbots, in corporate communication is a relatively recent phenomenon for researchers and practitioners in this field, there have been several studies (e.g. Li & Zhang, 2023; Majumder & Mondal, 2021; Lee, 2020) that have explored this topic. The primary focus of these investigations has been on either the adoption of these innovative technologies or the levels of satisfaction with their utilisation.

Lalić et al. (2020) investigated the adoption of the latest technologies, including chatbots in corporate communications of the most valuable companies in the world (e.g. Amazon, Microsoft, Apple, Facebook, JPMorgan Chase). They came to the conclusion that companies are preparing to develop and integrate the latest technologies to achieve more interactive and immersive experience when communicating to their internal and external stakeholders.

Chatbot as a tool for corporate communication, especially in customer services has been in the centre of many investigations for the past few years (e.g. Bhattacharyya, 2024; Huang & Gursoy, 2024; Ngai et al., 2021). A common feature of these investigations is that they measured customer satisfaction regarding the use of chatbot, which is generally found to be positive. Chang and Hsiao (2024), however, pointed out that many users had reported negative experiences with chatbots, particularly related to customer service, contributing to resistance toward their use. Thus, they carried out an investigation to understand customers' resistance to using chatbots and found that perceived risk and the expected value affect directly affect customer use. Salem (2024) moved further by examining how chatbots could improve the client experience. Although the investigation was carried out in the banking sector, it was found that chatbots may enhance the customer experience by offering 24/7 availability, prompt support and customised replies, but concerns about data privacy, lack of human interaction and chatbot accuracy were also revealed.

Majumder and Mondal (2021) examined the usefulness of chatbots as corporate communication tools in human resource management and came to the conclusion that chatbots are considered to be an effective communication system to be used among employees and customers. They also stress that the chatbot designers should understand the needs of the employees, based on that they can generate some more innovative techniques in human resource management.

There have been some pieces of research which examine the topic from the perspective of the company and its managers. Savastano et al. (2024) carried out a research from the viewpoint of company managers and studied how managers perceive corporate chatbots and how to implement successful chatbot applications for business decisions. Their research findings suggest that managers' stance towards chatbots depends on multiple factors (e.g. suitability, benefits, performance). They also found that for the successful implementation of chatbots managerial awareness and understanding of chatbot technology is required.

Godulla et al. (2021) interviewed experts from the scientific community and from the practical field about the opportunities and challenges of using chatbots in corporate communications. They came to the conclusion that ethical concerns (e.g. data protection, lack of transparency), as major challenges, need to be taken into account. Conversely, experts also see the advantages of chatbots for corporate communication, including efficiency and quality in corporate communication, cost-effectiveness and relieving employees. Nemukula (2023) also focused on managers and their experience related to the use of chatbot in case of a given South African company. The findings highlight that managers' experience with the chatbot is positive overall, and it is widely accepted and effective within the organisation. Although this work is not intended to serve as a best practice, it can be regarded as one since it presents the case of a single company.

Nevertheless, little evidence can be found in the literature for best practices for implementing chatbot in corporate communication. Heo and Lee (2018) presented a successfully deployed card-based chatbot in their study, which they found to be highly popular among users due to its speediness and ease of use. Kurilchik (2017) also examined the use of chatbot as a digital marketing communication tool in case of a certain company, and found that chatbot can be a great tool for customer communication, but advanced technology and commitment from the users' side is required. Although not specific to corporate communications, Ferman Guerra (2018) introduced some best practices for the successful designing of chatbots in general, which can be useful for managers and corporate communication practitioners alike.

## Research Objectives and Methodology

Responding to the digital challenges of today's world, the purpose of the research is to introduce the utilisation of a chatbot software as a corporate communication tool in the practice of an HR services company as well as to analyse its effectiveness. The paper aims to demonstrate this by presenting the best practice of a certified Hungarian company providing full HR services. The relevance of the research lies in the challenge for HR services companies in the area of corporate communication, i.e. the need to maintain constant and up-to-date contact not only with their own internal staff, but also with temporary workers. In many cases, this is complicated by language challenges and geographical distances. The examined company, however, takes advantage of artificial intelligence by using a chatbot to communicate with their workforce in five different languages.

The research to be presented in this paper is a single-case study based on both secondary and primary research, therefore, the paper is descriptive and exploratory. In the first phase of the research, relevant literature on corporate communication and technology (e.g. artificial intelligence) was reviewed to present the theoretical background of the topic. In the next phase, the secondary research was complemented by a small-scale primary research. Considering that the research objective is to present the best practice related to the use of a chatbot software of a certified Hungarian company providing comprehensive HR services, the primary research was carried out using qualitative research. The qualitative research was conducted by means of an in-depth interview that was held with the Head of Technology Development Department of the examined company, WHC Kft. The interview was in-depth so that the researchers could gain detailed insights into the best practice of the company in the field of corporate communication, related to the use of the chatbot software. Another reason for using the in-depth interviewing technique was to learn more about the operation and the effectiveness of the chatbot. The interview was held in May 2024.

WHC Kft., the company to be examined within the frames of the present research, is a 100% Hungarian-owned, dynamically growing, international HR company founded in 1990. The company is a major player in the Central and Eastern European region by providing high quality HR services to more than 1,500 partner companies in ten countries. The company has an internal workforce of nearly 600 employees and twelve offices in Hungary (WHC, n.d.).

## Results

Considering that this paper is a single-case study presenting a best practice, in the qualitative analysis phase, an in-depth interview was conducted with the Head of the Technology Development Department of WHC

company. The paper uses the findings of this interview to demonstrate the best practice of the examined HR services company by illustrating the process of communicating with employees via chatbot.

Regarding the need for the use of the chatbot software, it was found out that company currently has twelve offices in Hungary and more than 400 partner companies in the country, employing more than 5,000 temporary workers, the majority of whom are foreign nationals. The colleagues of the company are required to communicate with the temporary workforce in Hungarian, English, Ukrainian, Russian and Serbian. The company, therefore, has internal staff members fluent in these foreign languages and English language courses have been set up within the company to improve the language skills of internal staff. This was also necessary because all support outside the company, the possession of employment documents and the handling of official matters are carried out by the company's staff members. In addition to the language challenges, the questions, needs and expectations of the newcomers from each country are also different and come at different times, occasionally after the working hours of the internal staff. Consequently, the workload of the colleagues was considerable, that is why the company aimed to increase work-life balance of internal staff and the satisfaction of temporary workers by introducing the chatbot. Therefore, the introduction of the chatbot was designed to ensure communication seven days a week, 24 hours a day, which takes a significant burden off the internal staff.

The implementation of the chatbot was preceded by a survey. The company investigated the issues with which their temporary workers sought assistance. The results showed that automation could be used to reduce the burden, while also increasing employee satisfaction and optimising the work of internal colleagues. It was found that 90% of the questions asked by temporary workers were general in nature, and could be answered in a consistent manner. Additionally, if the questions were specific to their place of work or accommodation, the number of possible answers was multiplied and varied. Utilising the chatbot allows temporary workers to obtain immediate responses to their inquiries and address issues, which were traditionally handled in person, from the convenience of their living quarters or residence.

The results revealed that nearly 150 colleagues from all the company's offices were involved in the implementation of the chatbot which manages communication with the temporary staff. The technology solution is based on artificial intelligence, but it is a basic, rule-based chatbot that works from the knowledge that is pre-defined and pre-loaded into the system. The knowledge, therefore, is based on an Excel spreadsheet that is loaded into the admin interface, and then the chatbot applies the newly learnt information. The knowledge material derives from the survey results and is contained in a more than 10,000-line spreadsheet per language (Hungarian, English, Serbian, Ukrainian and Russian) encompassing the most frequently asked questions and the most commonly occurring issues. In terms of teaching, it was necessary to prepare the chatbot for synonymous words and phrases, as well as for spelling mistakes and to define the number of character matches for the chatbot to recognise a question. The company has been "teaching" the chatbot regularly since its launch, as new situations arise, new groups of questions arise and workers arrive from new countries, so new functions are added on a regular basis. Besides the technology development team, a project team meets bi-weekly to brainstorm on how to make the chatbot better. In addition, the chatbot has its own name (Jackie Chat), personality (it looks like a young, handsome man), favourite car and city. This makes it more human for the users.

As part of the best practice, the company intentionally informed temporary workers about the operation and functions of the chatbot by means of various infographics and videos in advance. It was also found that the biggest challenge for the internal employees was to convince the temporary workers that although they would be talking to a robot, the knowledge of the chatbot was as reliable as that of their project contact.

The research findings show that the chatbot works on a Viber interface and can be used by all temporary workers in the team, after identification. The chatbot tool can answer questions about the temporary employees' employment relationship, carry out administrative tasks (e.g. requesting an advance payment, requesting additional leave, submitting a travel allowance), and provide information to help the temporary workers spend their free time. This means that the chatbot knows where the shop, the cinema

or the swimming pool is located in every single city in which the company has an office or its temporary workers have accommodation.

The results revealed that the introduction of the chatbot, which has shifted administration to an online platform based on artificial intelligence, has shown reduced fuel and printing costs, as well as postage costs. In terms of workflow, the most positive impact was felt in the number of calls per day, time spent visiting accommodation of the temporary workforce, and less administration in terms of registration of claims, distributing surveys or sharing information of public interest.

It was also revealed that the chatbot, which manages WHC's temporary workforce, was awarded a Gold rating at the HR Best awarding ceremony in 2024, which is the most prestigious HR certification in Hungary. The chatbot was awarded in the category of "Digital HR powered by HRmaster" that rewards exciting, complex and the most well-implemented HR technology solutions and strategic digitalisation efforts.

## Implications

The research findings show that corporate communication has changed recently and faces many challenges and opportunities alike at the same time. One challenge the examined company providing HR services must face was found to be the need to maintain constant and up-to-date contact with their own internal staff and with their temporary workers, which in many instances is impeded by geographical, cultural and/or language barriers.

The research into this innovative and award-winning application found that the chatbot allows the investigated company to communicate with their workforce of over 5,000 employees successfully in five languages in a time- and cost-effective manner. The chatbot was found to provide temporary workers with 0-24 availability seven days a week, making it easier for them to manage their employment relationship and providing full information on their employment through the interface. Another advantage for them is that they can communicate with the chatbot fluently in five different languages which may include their native language. The chatbot also supports foreign nationals during their stay in Hungary by offering leisure activities and information on public holidays. From the company's perspective, an important business impact factor was proved to be the improved performance, because if any information of public interest needs to be communicated to the temporary workforce or a survey needs to be carried out, it can be done immediately through the chatbot without significant preparation by internal colleagues. These findings are in line with the benefits of the implementation of a chatbot software described in the theoretical part of the paper (e.g. Araujo et al., 2022).

As for the technical features of the presented chatbot, the research findings underpin what Sansonnet et al. (2006) defined as the basic characteristics of chatbots, since in case of the examined company it was found that the chatbot they use has rationality, personality and conversational ability. The results also show that even the most basic type of chatbot software, i.e. the rule-based chatbot can be applied successfully with a positive feedback from its users on condition that the users are informed and well-prepared in advance, and the knowledge base of the chatbot software is appropriately determined and constantly kept up-to-date.

The results also demonstrate that an initial hesitancy was experienced from the users' side because of the knowledge and the reliability of the chatbot, which is consistent with previous research findings (e.g. Chang & Hsiao, 2024). The company could brilliantly handle this issue by preparing the temporary workers for the use of the chatbot and convincing them that the knowledge of the chatbot would be as reliable as that of their previous human contact.

Overall, the findings reinforce the conclusions of Majumder and Mondal (2021) that chatbots are really useful corporate communication tools in human resource management.

This research enriches the current literature on chatbots as corporate communication tools by showcasing the best practice of the examined company regarding its award-winning virtual assistant. The results can be useful for companies planning to integrate chatbots into their corporate communications, especially for HR services companies that need to manage temporary workforce in different locations and in different languages. Insights from this paper can guide other companies in tailoring their corporate communication to align with cutting-edge technologies and new challenges they face. The paper may also serve as a ground for further studies and investigation since the constantly and rapidly developing technologies require immediate response from companies in the field of corporate communications.

## Conclusion

The paper scrutinised the subject of corporate communication, which encompasses both organisational practices and academic disciplines. Particular attention was paid to one of its emerging communication tools: the chatbot. Since its advent, there have been various applications on websites and mobile devices facilitating communication. They have the advantage of being able to stay in touch with an unlimited number of users at the same time, whereas the more advanced ones can even learn. All this, if properly applied, makes corporate communication faster and more effective from various aspects. In accordance with this, the paper aimed to showcase a best practice from a Hungarian certified company that specialises in offering comprehensive HR services, specifically highlighting the successful implementation of chatbot as a means of corporate communication.

The examined HR services company maintains daily contact with more than 5,000 temporary workers, which proved to be a challenging task and required the application of a virtual assistant. The rule-based chatbot the company implemented, called Jackie Chat, is available in five languages (Hungarian, Ukrainian, Russian, English and Serbian). The tool is used to help the Hungarian and foreign temporary workforce with both employment-related questions and day-to-day administration. Despite the initial hesitancy, the implementation of the chatbot was found to be an accepted way of corporate communication, particularly because it was communicated well in advance that human-human communication was going to be replaced by human-robot communication. The findings of the empirical research also reveal that the temporary workforce has reported positive experience about the chatbot as a corporate communication tool resulting from its ease of use and round-the-clock availability. From the perspective of the company and its employees, it has been found to be highly cost- and time-effective, as the operation of the chatbot has resulted in reduced costs and the employees' freed time which they can dedicate to other tasks and activities. Furthermore, the industry has also acknowledged the chatbot's success by rewarding it with a prestigious professional award in its category.

Chatbots have become more prevalent in today's corporate life, and they definitely have a place in corporate communications toolkit, especially in human resource management as Majumder and Mondal (2021) highlighted. It was confirmed that chatbots contribute to improving satisfaction and efficiency of existing communication activities. The results, however, underline the importance of the proper selection and the careful planning of the chatbot software for it to be successfully implemented. The presented award-winning best practice proved to be highly successful, and it may be a reference point for other companies, but the special features and needs of each company must be thoroughly considered before the implementation of any chatbot.

Although the paper's objective was achieved and the findings provided auspicious results, the paper has its limitations, primarily due to its concentration on just a single instance as an exemplary practice. Nevertheless, the paper suggests a promising avenue for future research, which should involve investigating and contrasting other chatbots employed in corporate communication.

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