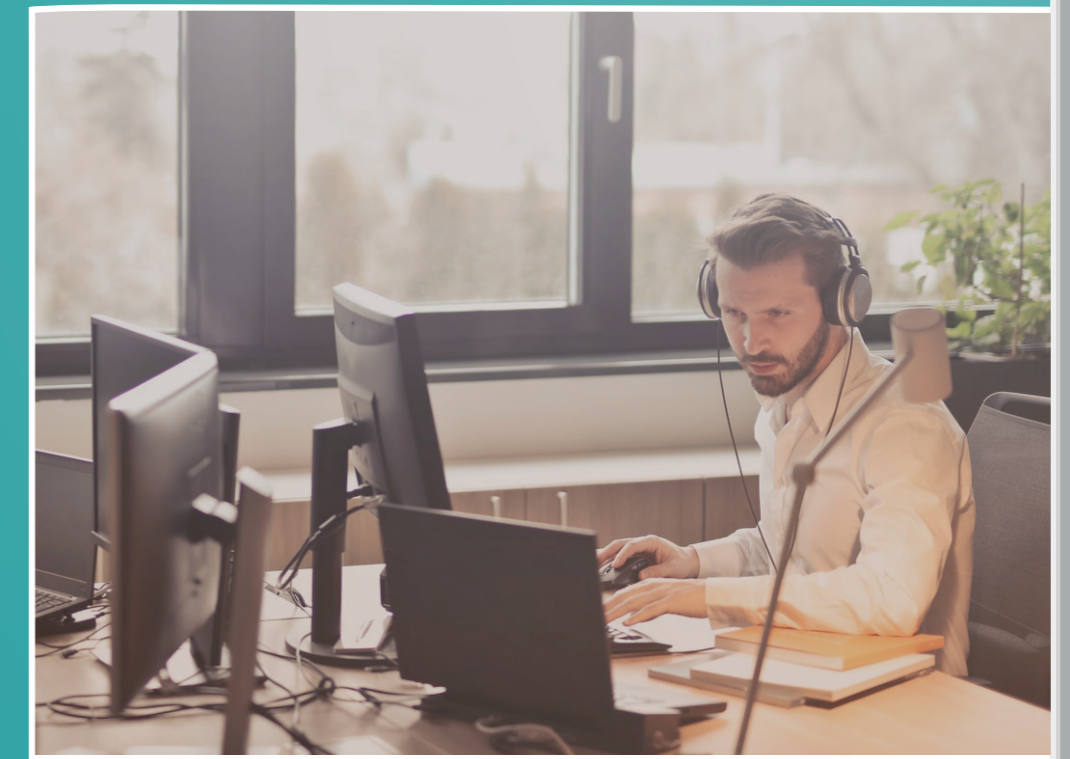


“A lot of people are talking about the importance of chat to the business, but many companies have focused on chatbots rather than human interaction. This ignores the transition to digital that customers demand and leaves a hole where there is an opportunity to make customers feel part of the organisation,” Firth adds.



MIP INTEGRATES CHAT FUNCTIONALITY INTO ITS SOLUTION

MIP Holdings, a specialist provider of software solutions, has introduced a new chat feature into its administration systems. The chat functionality is integrated into MIP’s solutions, allowing companies to add value to their business users and their customers alike. “There has been so much hype around companies using ‘mainstream’ technology chat providers that MIP felt we had to look into the functionality within the technical and ownership boundaries of a business.

This has been exacerbated by the fact that some chat providers are consolidating their platforms and ownership of the chat data or IP is being challenged internationally. This has caused huge concern for any company using ‘open source’ or ‘freeware’ chat providers as the ownership rights will immediately fall foul of the South African Information Regulator where our privacy laws will be completely bolstered on 1 July 2021,” says Richard Firth, CEO of MIP Holdings.

He explains that with customers becoming ever more demanding, companies must implement a social strategy that uses digital capabilities to communicate with customers directly and instantaneously. “Customers are demanding always-on, always-connected communication through the medium of their choice, and any business that neglects to offer this will get left behind. This is why we talk about socialising the business rather than digitising it. Socialising the business enables companies not only to get instant feedback from customers, but to respond immediately, all while automating workflows and processes to ensure greater efficiency. The four key channels needed for the ‘digital transition’ phase is the human centric contact centre, the web site, the mobile app and finally chat, which incorporates conversational AI.”

Firth says that the increasing importance of instant, direct communication with customers prompted MIP to develop and integrate the new chat feature. The feature can be used for team chats and cross-team chats, as well as customer-facing communication, and is fully incorporated into the company’s automated internal processes. “Our customers don’t need to worry who owns the data, because they do,” says Firth, commenting on the information ownership issues that are only starting to plague the industry. “We are also seeing open source solutions transitioning to payment models which are leaving businesses high and dry where they have invested in these technologies based on their open and free access,” he adds.



“The team chat and cross-team chat capabilities not only allow for faster service resolution and better staff performance, but also enhance case and workflow management. By integrating the chat functionality into our administration system, we have enabled automated inclusion into the internal processes of the business. The system will create a chat based on the process that is currently in play, including customer interactions. This means that a customer query will automatically result in a chat being opened to the right teams within the business for escalation and resolution. As consumer protection and information ownership is regulated, the chat capabilities give us ownership of the audited internal communications around any business process in the organisation – a first for most businesses,” Firth explains.

“This also adds value to any AI strategy. With chat being an integral part of any workflow, the data is automatically stored in the company’s big data repository, and can be used to provide deeper insights and drive conversational AI as this maturing area of business becomes more relevant. Even those companies that have invested in chat capabilities are unable to get this kind of value, because those chat systems are built independently of the applications and architecture of the business. Our solution, being fully integrated, touches on every process, application and system the business uses.”

Firth adds that while chatbots have their place, there is no substitute for the human touch. “Automation is an essential part of making a business more efficient, but at some point, every interaction requires human intervention. Our solution automatically switches from the automated process when human input is necessary, with a seamless transition. A while back, Gartner predicted that by 2020, the average person will have more conversations with bots than with their spouse. While we haven’t quite reached that point yet, companies are in danger of relying too much on bots. We are giving them an alternative that will offer the same efficiencies and much greater value.”

