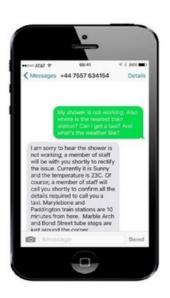# Virtual concierge at dozen Radisson Blu hotels

Edward is the new artificially intelligent virtual assistant bot, deployed at a dozen Radisson Blu hotels, that directly meets today's customer expectations in the self-service economy and ushers in the enormous possibilities that technology offers the millennial and millennial-at-heart customers.

Ebrahim Dinat, COO at Ocular Technologies, says that the press release, issued by Edwardian Hotels, the owners of Radisson Blu hotels, and for whom the chatbot 'Edward' is named, is designed to deliver exceptional experiences for guests who prefer digital brand interaction. "The new Interactive Text Response (ITR) mobile SMS service will allow guests to check and request hotel amenities – such as towels or room service, get information about local bars and restaurants and even express complaints – simply by sending a text message, 'Edward' will respond within a few seconds."

Developed in conjunction with Aspect Software, a partner company of Ocular Technologies, Tobias Goebel, director of emerging technologies at Aspect says, "In late 2015, our chief customer officer, Joe Gagnon and I met with the IT director and the COO of Radisson Blu Edwardian in London. A long-term customer of Aspect's, we were there to share what we have been so diligently working on over the past year: our vision for re-imagining customer service that would combine the best of all forms of consumer interaction types, and the best of what we and the industry have been able to develop in next generation CX technology."

Goebel points out that this included:

- business value of a blend of personal touch and automation;
- response times and accessibility of self-service;
- proven methodologies of Interactive Voice Response (IVR);
- consumer appeal of texting/messaging as a communication channel;
- ubiquity of SMS across the world;
- benefits of Natural Language Understanding for free-form dialogue;
- value of CRM to show the guest we know them; and
- human touch through live service integration where needed.

"In essence, the vision for re-imagining customer service has at its core how to use Interactive Text Response (ITR,), or what is also known as 'bots', to provide the ability to let customers self-serve on text channels at blazing-fast speeds with a user interface that resembles that of a natural conversation with a person."

"Edward works by using automated and intelligent text-based interaction, via a self-service interface that is accessible 24/7 and powered by our partner company's Aspect's Customer Experience Platform (Aspect CXP)," continues Dinat. "Guests can use the service to message their requests and get immediate responses. The natural language understanding (NLU) interface enables guests to use natural, conversational language rather than remembering cryptic commands, though the application is backed up with live assistance when needed."

Goebel further explains: "[Edward] greets guests via SMS and handles questions or needs as diverse as 'what cuisine does your restaurant serve?', 'send me some ice please", or 'please don't clean my room today'. One of the early findings was the guests of the Radisson Blu Edwardian tend to send full sentences. For instance, they would rather send 'Can I make a reservation in your restaurant?' versus 'restaurant reservation'. Edward is fully automated with human backup when needed, understands natural language and responds within seconds. A whole new level of service excellence in the hotel!

"While the system is still being tuned to become better and better, we are also not stopping experimenting and innovating with it."

He highlights that Aspect CXP is a platform that allows Aspect to build self-service experiences once and then deploy it on any channel. "And by any channel we mean any channel. CXP's design-once-deploy-anywhere approach and its adapter framework for adding new channels lets us take an application as is and deploy it on a different channel."

Concludes Dinat, "For anyone suffering from app fatigue, these interactive bots are set to once again awaken and excite the customer. Being an early adopter of this technology is a good bet in the high customer experience stakes."