LOGICALIS
Architects of Change

DHHS use AI Bot to provide 24/7 support in major IT transformation

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is a government department responsible for health, ambulance services, families and children, youth affairs, public housing, disability, ageing, mental health and sport policy in the state of Victoria, Australia. The department provides many services directly to the community through its operational divisions, located across 17 areas of the state. Each division covers a mix of rural outer-metropolitan and inner-metropolitan areas of Victoria. They fund almost 2,000 other organisations to deliver vital health and human services care.

DHHS has a total of 11,000 employees supporting their mission across Victoria. Those employees are supported by a central Corporate Services team which provides a number of critical back-end, shared services including significant technology projects so that DHHS can do its job in the community effectively.

This case study discusses how the shared services team at DHHS had to get creative on how they would support their 11,000 end users through a Windows 10 deployment and how their vision, combined with the technology know how of Logicalis, led to the birth of Evie, the AI bot who was born to answer all the questions DHHS staff might have about their Windows 10 rollout.

Background

With a scheduled manual IT upgrade that would require an onsite overnight installation on all 11,000 employee devices at DHHS and a number of communication challenges that included an inability to filter email alias' to communicate with staff members by location, DHHS's Senior Change and Communications Analyst, Sarah Aquilina had a challenge on her hands.

The corporate services team of which Sarah is a part, was accustomed to supporting the wide and varied internal IT programs and projects within DHHS and Sarah's role is to ensure the success of projects rolling out. Sarah does this through thorough communications, consultation and planning as part of the program. The end game is ensuring that the end users affected by the change have the support they need and information for the project to be successful.

The Problem

In addition to the communications challenges, the other problem with the Windows 10 rollout project was there was no resource available to help with any queries employees might have pre or post the rollout. Sarah was concerned that without helpdesk support or a team to direct questions to, the users might experience issues that they couldn't resolve on their own.

What they needed was a knowledge hub to help with Windows 10 rollout questions. Sarah had an idea which quickly took shape into a vision of how the project could be successful without assigning additional resources. The vision was to create a knowledge base in the form of a bot that users could pose questions to. A self-learning bot that could replace the need for a helpdesk.

Sarah posed the question to the Logicalis team who were managing the rollout, without hesitation the Microsoft lead Barry Brown, was able to translate Sarah's vision into a plan and had it created within two weeks.

The bot, named Evolve (Evie for short) was designed to provide a support base that people can ask questions to, any time night or day. The benefit is being able to ask the 'silly' questions that people might shy away from asking a real person.

Not only is Evie self-learning but if she doesn't have the answer immediately, an instant message will go to the project team for their expertise and then that knowledge piece will be added to the repository for future reference, eventually there shouldn't be a question that hasn't been already asked.

Challenges in implementation

There were zero challenges in the creation of Evie the Bot, except for the integration of Evie into Yammer which traditionally doesn't support a Bot framework. Logicalis was able to accomplish this integration by using Microsoft's Power Automate (Flow) to ensure the workflow was there to create new questions and answers directed to the project team; that's if the current Q&A wasn't already found in the knowledge base.

The DHHS management team had no reservations about using AI to supplement the resource challenges and they were excited to try out something new that would save costs and time for both the service support centre team and the users with questions. Overall it helped productivity enormously.

The result so far

For Sarah and her team, the goal of the bot was happy end users and increased user adoption for the Windows 10 rollout. As for the early rollout stages, we can now give a big tick to both. Evie now lives on Yammer, DHHS's Collaboration platform and is integrated with Teams and SharePoint for ease of searching the knowledge repository.

The creation of virtual communities on Yammer including Chatbots is a great showcase for what automated technology can do, it eases employees in gently and allows them to be more productive, getting the answers they need in real time rather than 9am till 5pm.

Of course, an added benefit is the cost saving of having one full time headcount assigned in helpdesk support. The technical support people in Sarah's team can now focus on more demanding projects and implementations, keeping the great work that DHHS is doing, continuing at pace and at scale.

The road ahead

DHHS are currently looking at how they expand on the success of Evie and looking at the possibility of bots for different scenarios such as IT and HR, one Bot can't know everything across all disciplines so like many organisations, the DHHS are looking at what makes sense for them and to deploy the innovation whilst also providing some guidance for business units on what the overall framework for this type of technology should look like.