

The Ultimate Training Reinforcement Tool? A Chatbot

by Vince Han

Chatbots are commonly known for customer support, but that's just one way to utilize this growing technology. Enabling a chatbot on a common mobile messaging platform like SMS or WhatsApp creates the ideal user experience for training reinforcement.

An age-old dilemma for Learning and Development (L&D) professionals has been how to engage a learner after they have attended a workshop or an e-learning course. The reason to keep a connection with the learner is clear--unless a learner continues to think about, practice, and review what is learned, they will forget course material and the investment of the training is all but wasted.

Most attempts at continued learner engagement have had limited effect; emails are left unread, glossy training manuals collect dust, push notifications on learning apps are disabled, and there isn't enough time in the day for a human coach to follow up with each individual learner.

Enter the chatbot. If you want to keep the conversation going that you start in a training course, what better way to do that than with a technology that is built around having conversations? Chatbot technology allows you to scale personalized follow-up conversations across the globe to thousands of people--even while you sleep!



Chatbots provide a frictionless user experience

The challenge of engaging learners post-training is typically not grounded in a lack of desire or motivation on the part of the learner. In fact, learners want to apply what you teach them in order to improve job performance and, in many cases, have the training benefit their personal lives as well. The challenge is actually in finding time to work on any post-training review, reflection, or skills practice. In the day-to-day hustle and bustle of corporate life, rarely do people block out time on their calendar for “post-training review” (although applying learning into someone’s daily routine should be a more natural integration anyway).

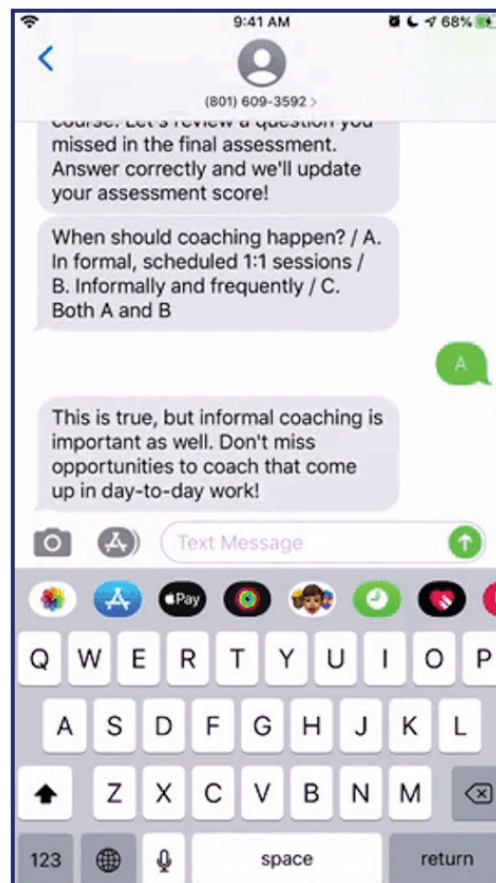
The post-training engagement options mentioned above of email, training manuals, learning apps, etc. all come with some form of friction--small but formidable obstacles standing in the way between the learner and the content you want them to

consume. Email inboxes are cluttered and overwhelming, apps require usernames and passwords quickly forgotten, and all these solutions demand more time than the learner perceives they have to give.

Chatbots that engage learners on a common messaging platform like SMS or WhatsApp (there are many others) have the distinct advantage of being on the channel that learners pay the most attention to. Why? Because these are the channels where their family and friends are communicating with

them. In the USA, for example, industry reports state that 98% of text messages are read, an impressive statistic when compared to email read rates.

Asking a learner to add a chatbot to their list of contacts is a markedly easier task for them cognitively than having to install and learn how to use an app. Asking a learner to exchange messages with a chatbot is as easy as asking them to text a new colleague. This ease of use





translates into the most frictionless way to reach and engage your learner population.

Choosing the right mobile-based channel for your chatbot

Common messaging apps vary from country to country. In many Western countries, SMS still tends to reign supreme although younger generations have flocked to social media apps like Instagram, Snapchat, and others. In other areas of the world, messaging apps like WhatsApp, WeChat, LINE, Telegram, Kakao, Viber, and others have amassed millions of users seemingly overnight.



Almost all popular messaging apps allow for chatbots, although each may dictate and police automation in different ways, mostly to limit abuse by spammers and aggressive marketers. The big advantage of putting your reinforcement chatbot on one of these messaging apps is simply to make it easy for your learners to find and engage with it.

Keep in mind, however, that with such personal access to the learner's day-to-day life, the quality of the chatbot experience becomes paramount (see section below). People like to control who gets access to their most personal spaces, and while

work-related exchanges are granted some level of access, it is reserved for things that are either urgent or feel especially useful.

Some organizations may be reluctant to have work-related experiences on messaging apps due to security or workforce management considerations. In cases like this, those organizations may have some form of mobile communication such as Yammer, Slack, Microsoft Teams, etc. With chatbot popularity on the rise, these platforms should allow for chatbot integration, which can be another alternative to consider.

Applying instructional design sensibilities into chatbot design

When people think of chatbots, they tend to think about populating some knowledge base with FAQs and applying machine learning to match user inquiries to the appropriate answer. When it comes to a mobile-based chatbot for training reinforcement, however, the design of the chatbot takes on a whole new level of sophistication. You suddenly have the ability to design your chatbot to proactively send messages to learners in the form of reminders, nudges, quizzes, learning exercises, and more.

This ability to push content and instigate a learning interaction is powerful but also



requires sensitivity so as to not annoy, overwhelm, or confuse learners. For hourly or shift workers, you need to be sensitive to the timing of the messages. In all cases, thought should be applied to the personality of the chatbot, the tone of messages, the frequency of messages, and for how long you want the interactions to last (e.g. how many weeks or months).

The good news is that for learning professionals, the #1 skill is instructional design! So applying what we know about how people learn and how to encourage them to think about and apply lessons is something we are naturally going to excel in. Sure, the medium of a chatbot might be new to us, but some initial trial and error will quickly help instructional designers create chatbot experiences as adeptly as they do e-learning courses.

Creating chatbots with Mobile Coach

Over the past six years, the chatbot design team at Mobile Coach has been working on chatbots supporting all types of training programs. Whether it be new hire onboarding, emerging leader programs, soft skills training, or safety and compliance, we have seen a broad gamut of training applied to chatbots. And along the way, we have fine-tuned our chatbot authoring platform to make designing, configuring, and managing chatbots easier and more powerful than with any other platform, all without requiring any IT or engineering resources.

We have all sorts of benchmarking data based on training program type and organization type. Here is one such example:

Comparison Data								
	Number of users	Opt-out Rate	Avg Response Rate (RR)	Onboarding RR	Multiple Choice RR	Open-Ended RR	Length of User Experience	Frequency of Pushed Messages
Sales Product Knowledge Comp.	249	1.61%	84.27%	84.27%	60.62%	69.1%	11 weeks	3 per week
Manager Essentials Training	2,330	0.94%	56.51%	99%	81%	63%	8 weeks	3 per week
Onboarding Mentee Support	341	4.69%	61.87%	96.13%	64%	75%	5 weeks	2-3 per week
New Manager Training	93	6.45%	65%	87%	63%	44%	4 weeks	1-3 per week
Employee Development Session	890	4.27%	59.43%	n/a	66%	n/a	3 weeks	2-3 per week



Our team at Mobile Coach is also working on building a script template library to help organizations quickly take a best-of-breed chatbot script to fit the particular program or initiative they are focused on. This gives organizations utilizing the Mobile Coach platform a significant headstart and advantage when launching chatbots for reinforcement projects.

As organizations start to see just how effective chatbots can be in delivering business results, they will need a SaaS-based platform like Mobile Coach to manage multiple chatbot initiatives, usage stats, user eligibility workflows, security and compliance issues, API integrations with other internal IT systems, and many other complexities that are inherent in running large enterprises.

No matter what technology platform organizations choose to develop chatbots with, this era of conversational interfaces is just getting started. Everyone benefits from helping people more effectively learn and develop in this incredibly fast-evolving world!

Request a Demo!

Request a full demo of the Mobile Coach chatbot authoring platform, complete with a tour of key authoring features and reporting capabilities. Contact us at sales@mobilecoach.com or visit us online at <https://mobilecoach.com>.



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Vince Han is the founder and CEO of Mobile Coach and a frequent speaker at conferences such as Training Conference, DevLearn, Learning Solutions, Masie's Learning Conference, ATD ICE, ATD Techknowledge and others. He holds an MBA from the MIT Sloan School of Management. Vince has founded several successful technology companies and resides in Utah.