



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

DIGITAL

Cheshire West and Chester Council working with ICS.AI

Using Artificial Intelligence to respond to Covid-19 queries

Context

As the pandemic hit in March 2020, councils found themselves as first port of call for many coronavirus queries. As the virus developed the public had more and more questions and the demand for answers increased. Cheshire West and Chester Council began their AI journey in 2019 and were offering a chatbot service to support the public.

Implementation

The artificial intelligence AIDA Assistant has been live on the Cheshire West and Chester Council website for around a year providing a good level of contact and service. Website visitors are invited to open the digital assistant chat and either ask a question or state their issue, with AIDA responding and guiding them to the information they need. The website is maintained by Qwest – a Council owned company - who originally chose the ICS.AI assistant because of its Ethical Reflex capability and trusted Microsoft Platform.

On the 24th March 2020 Bot queries grew by nearly 600%, reflecting the coronavirus lockdown and increasing numbers of local people contacting the Council online. Because AIDA was covering simple queries the Qwest contact team were able to be reassigned to make outbound calls to 5000 vulnerable people.

Success

ICS.AI used the 300+ Coronavirus questions asked to create a dedicated Covid-19 'skill' which is currently answering questions at 90% plus success rate, with the Bot also providing real time content updates from other trusted sources (such as GOV.UK) meaning it remained accurate but also that the Council did need not have to update fast changing, important and complex content.

Partnership

As a company, ICS.AI understood the huge impact coronavirus is having on public sector organisations who are struggling to provide public services due to the effects of the pandemic. Martin Neale, CEO of ICS.AI and supplier of Cheshire West and Chester Council's digital assistant AIDA said, "Our team here at ICS.AI decided we wanted to build a specific coronavirus skill to add to our AI digital assistant in order to help customers get through the emergency phase of their coronavirus mitigation plans."

The COVID-19 Assistant is now available to all organisations, it can be deployed quickly and does not require any customer IT resources beyond adding it to their website.

ICS.AI is fast becoming one of the UK's leading suppliers of artificial intelligence technology to the public sector and the only UK headquartered Microsoft AI inner circle partner, ICS AI are providing clientele with the ability to give customers and employees first class support, 24/7.

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