



McClatchy and AI

September 26, 2024

Strategic Overview

McClatchy is investing heavily in AI across all verticals of our organization including:

- Product & Experience, Marketing,
- B2C, B2B, SBO,
- IT, legal Customer Service, Analytics,
- Accounting, People (HR), Advertising Lead Management,
- Content and Curation and several other areas.

I led our 8 person team to tilt up an improved customer service system using a bot.

Background

- Our current customer service providers had/have weak bot solutions.
- We tested several bot solutions and ended up choosing Botsonic and Zen Desk for live handoff.
- We had our first bot up and running about 10 weeks later in Kansas City and we just launched the bot in Sacramento last week
- We spend less than \$10,000 per year for Botsonic and Zen Desk
- We avoided **other bot solutions** due to concerns about offshore data storage and PCI compliance risks.

Bot Capabilities & Integration

- The bot is not linked to financial or payment systems.
- It assists customers by providing information and hyperlinks for self-service.
- ZenDesk facilitates seamless handoff for more complex issues like billing or subscription complaints.

Results:

- a. Contact volume reduced by **20%**
- b. Annual savings exceed **six figures**

Additional Benefits

- The system's design phase required comprehensive analysis of our customer interaction points.
- We discovered that most customers prefer engaging with a bot, except for more complex or personal matters.
- The process allowed us to re-evaluate our subscription model and vendor partnerships.

Internal Benefits:

- Launched a bot for our **Advertising Customer Service Team** to streamline resource navigation.
- Deployed an employee version to assist with benefits inquiries.

Conclusions

- Our custom-built solutions significantly outperformed external vendor offerings.
- While the bot doesn't resolve every customer issue, it effectively streamlines self-help options.
- This automation initiative has transformed the way we approach customer experience, making it more efficient and customer-centric.