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How ALDI Slashed Their Enquiry Time From 3 Minutes to 3 Seconds Without Increasing Headcount



"This chatbot has given me time back. It's allowed me to shift my focus from managing enquiries from an operations point of view, to handling more strategic customer service issues."

-Rania Farag, Customer Service Manager, ALDI Australia

If you've ever walked into an ALDI store for bread and milk and walked out with a pet bed, some bath towels, and two dozen extension cords, you're not alone.

The supermarket chain has thrived on the popularity of its weekly "special buys" items - ranging from discounted snow gear to motorised kids' cars. These items are notorious for attracting crowds of people, some lining up hours before opening time in the hopes of snagging a bargain.

It's no wonder then that ALDI's customer service team are inundated with enquiries about stock availability from customers who don't want to miss out.

"50-60% of our enquiries are from customers wanting to know what special buys stock we have, at what store at a particular given time," said Rania Farag, Customer Service Manager at ALDI Australia.

"These are straightforward questions but because of the sheer volume of enquiries, it was taking up to three minutes for our customer service team to respond."

And once the communication had begun, it would often spark a series of follow up questions.

"Instead of a quick three-minute contact, it would often extend to a five-minute conversation or a case that spans over a couple of days because there's back and forth questions going on."

This led Rania to explore automation options, looking for ways to speed up the process and answer simple questions in real-time.

ALDI needed a solution that:

- could answer simple questions immediately, on a 24/7 basis
- provided a friendly, on-brand experience
- could be easily updated
- worked with their existing technology stack
- wouldn't require additional resources to manage

In their search for a solution, it wasn't long before Alpha Indigo became a clear favourite.

“ALDI is all about simplicity efficiency and we instantly found the Alpha Indigo team aligned with these values.”

A simple, yet powerful solution to stock enquiries

Alpha Indigo designed and implemented a chatbot that was hosted on ALDI’s Facebook private messenger. In a world-first for ALDI, customers were able to get immediate answers to their special buys stock enquiries without any human contact.

This has enabled Rania to streamline team resources and focus on more value-adding customer experience work.

“It’s given me time back. It’s allowed me to shift my focus from managing the volume of enquiries from an operations point of view, to handling more strategic customer service issues. We’ve also been able to reduce our resources by two full-time equivalent staff members.”

Access to reliable stock information was particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic when people were looking to make an educated decision whether to leave their home.

“Our chatbot has helped us provide a safety net for our customers during this pandemic. Because customers have reliable stock information, if they can see the special buy is not in stock, they’re not taking the risks of going into stores.”

Results

- **Peak visitor numbers of >4000** handled with ease
- **Response time reduced** from an average of 3 minutes to a few seconds
- **2000% increase in visitors** to ALDI’s Facebook page
- **Reduced internal resources** by two full-time equivalent staff members

More than just a robot

One of the biggest differentiators of Alpha Indigo’s solution has been the focus on the human design aspects, rather than technology. ALDI’s chatbot was given a persona, a tone of voice, and even a name (Alidia, named after one of ALDI’s area managers), helping to bring the chatbot to life.

“Before we even talked about the solution, we had a workshop to talk about its identity. That’s helped us to integrate Alidia into our team – we now see Alidia as an extension of our team rather than a piece of technology.”

An evolving solution

Initially, Rania was tempted to try to make the chatbot an all-singing, all-dancing solution, but under the expert guidance of the Alpha Indigo team, they agreed to focus on the most value-adding tasks before building to a more complex solution.

“I really value Doug’s transparency and honesty. He could have pushed us to invest time and money to make it more than it needed to be, but he steered us in the right direction.”

“It’s been a real partnership.”

Alpha Indigo has provided a managed service model for the chatbot project, handling the end-to-end process from discovery and design all the way to implementation and ongoing management. This has been a huge relief for Rania and her team.

“It's really taken a lot of pressure off us internally. It's one more thing that I'm not having to manage and that's made our lives so much easier. We know the Alpha Indigo team are absolute experts in what they do and feel completely at ease with them taking control.”

What's next for ALDI and Alidia?

For the ALDI Australia team, this is just the beginning of their chatbot journey.

“We've recently expanded Alidia's capabilities to handle other simple questions like recruitment enquiries and refunds and returns support. Once we've got these things in place, we'll then look at taking on more complex questions.”

Highlights

Challenge

- Customer service team inundated with stock availability enquiries
- Response time was averaging three minutes
- Using up valuable customer-service resources

Solution

- Designed and implemented a chatbot on ALDI's Facebook private messenger
- Customers received immediate answers to special buys stock enquiries
- Customer service team freed up to work on value-adding tasks

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