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Off the happy path

Most of the demos for chatbot building frameworks talk about how you can build a bot in 5 minutes, or how you don't need to write a line of code, or how you can simply drag and drop your way to an interactive bot.

In reality, when you start making a reasonably complex bot, you will spend a significant amount of time and other resources to build it out.

The happy path

So what happened to the 5 minute bot?

In programming, we call this the happy path, where everything works exactly as expected. There are no exceptions, no bad input data, no unexpected states, and everything hums along exactly as expected.

The 5 minute chatbot demo has a purpose. It gets people interested, and can show off the capabilities of your framework.

In the same way, for conversation design, the happy path is helpful as a baseline.

Start with the happy path…

Google recommends the same in its documentation. When you design your conversations, take care of the happy path first. This means you verify that if the user were to provide the best possible answer (best as in easiest to pattern match), the chatbot behaves as expected.

… and then incrementally add complexity

Once you have your happy path really well specified, start adding more complexity to your chatbot.

The easiest way to add complexity is to handle the case where the user provides an unexpected input.

Check out the Conversational UI Guide from the folks at Google to learn more about this process.

Article by aravindmc / API.AI, Conversation Design / Leave a Comment

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I am a DialogFlow consultant/trainer with a background in Natural Language Processing and Machine Learning.

I help businesses prototype/design/build DialogFlow chatbots. Click here if you are interested in working with me.

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