

MINING BUSINESS DATA

Build better Dialogflow chatbots

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May 15, 2017

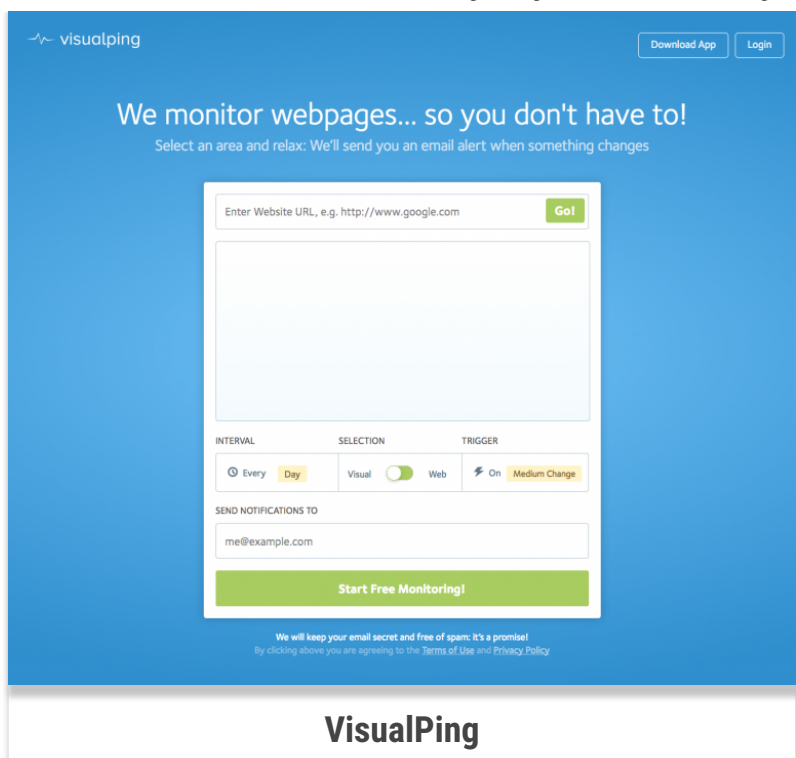
Using DialogFlow (API.AI)? Don't forget to do this

One of the risks you take when building chatbots on top of any online service like API.AI is the potential that improvements in the service can cause some breaking changes.

For example, recently API.AI introduced what I believe are two significant improvements to their service: [team accounts](#) and [prebuilt smalltalk agents](#). In fact, here is an [article](#) which summarizes why the prebuilt smalltalk agents are a **really big freaking deal**. (Especially if you are a text analytics/Natural Language Processing geek like I am)

The only small problem is that it also broke a few workflows which people had gotten used to. (You can search for these threads on the API.AI forum).

I believe I have found a good way to keep up to date. There is a service called [VisualPing](#). They help monitor webpages for changes, and the first two pages are free.



visualping

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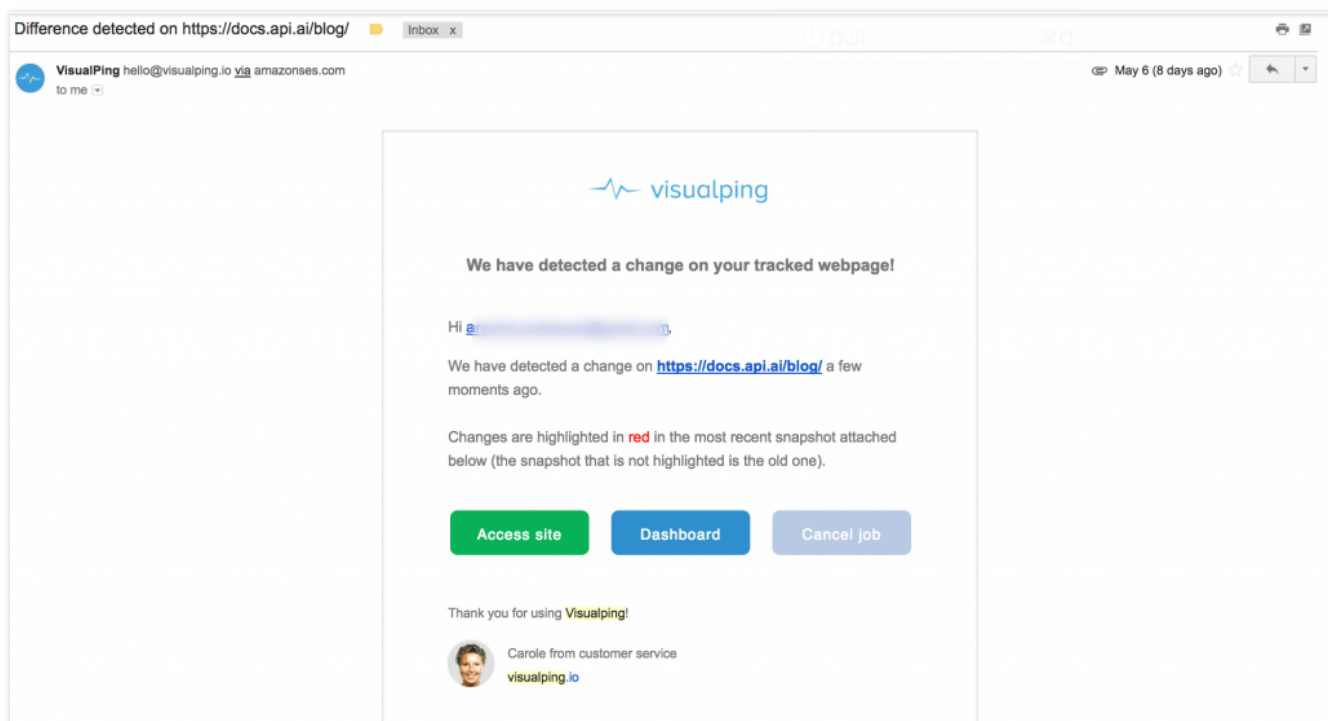
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VisualPing

API.AI announces its notifications at the following URL (called the changelog):

<https://docs.api.ai/blog>

So add the URL above to your VisualPing account, and you will be set. For example, here is an email I received from VisualPing the day after the changes were posted to the API.AI blog.



Tip:

While you can get hourly tracking from VisualPing if you pay, I don't recommend it for the simple reason that API.AI does not post its updates to the changelog before rolling out their code changes, or even around the same time the code changes go live. Since there is already a lag from when the code goes live to when the update is posted to the changelog, daily tracking from VisualPing should work fine.

You might be wondering if your users will report the breaking changes to you before API.AI does. I cannot rule it out. But it is also possible there could be silent failures, and monitoring the API.AI changelog can help you figure those out. Also, if API.AI ever get to the point where they post the updates instantaneously or do pre-announcements, such monitoring will be very helpful at that time.

If you would like to be notified about important updates to the API.AI service, you should probably sign up for my mailing list. 😊

Article by aravindmc / API.AI / [Leave a Comment](#)

