



VIRTUAL ASSISTANT MAKES THE CUT FOR COSMETOLOGISTS

Texas experiments with AI to improve customer experience

CASE STUDY
Public Services

Challenge

The Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) oversees a broad range of occupations, businesses, facilities and equipment. Cosmetologists, who represent one of the largest occupational groups, are required to renew their license every year. Each week, TDLR fields some 1,200 calls from cosmetologists inquiring about the status of their license renewals. The Department recognized an opportunity to tackle this challenge while exploring digital transformation via a “safe to fail/learn” experiment.

Strategy and solution

The Department teamed up with Accenture to brainstorm possible solutions, including how it might use the Accenture Virtual Assistant Platform, which brings together artificial intelligence, robotic process automation, secure cloud hosting, voice and SMS integration, and image content analysis. Through these discussions, TDLR decided to implement an SMS Texting Virtual Assistant, the Cosmetologist Renewal Assistant—CoRA for short.

The vision? CoRA could offer cosmetologists a fast, convenient and innovative channel for checking on their license renewals. TDLR opted for a text messaging approach because of how much time cosmetologists spend using their phones versus traditional websites.

In just two months, the Accenture team configured the Accenture Virtual Assistant Platform and customized it for CoRA to retrieve key data from the customer and provide the status of their license renewal. Customization included using Natural Language Understanding to retrieve each cosmetologist’s license number, enabling a technical integration for retrieving and evaluating license status to provide information back to the customer.



Restyling customer experience



WAIT TIME ELIMINATED

Convenient digital channel eliminates wait time on phone to get in touch with call center



EXPANDED SELF-SERVICE

Get help when it's convenient, including evenings and weekends



RELIABLE ACCURACY

Be confident in the quality and accuracy of information CoRA provides

Transformation

The initial experiment was a resounding success. When the use case is fully implemented, cosmetologists will be able to complete their license renewal inquiries using text messaging on their cell phones—no calls required. That improved speed and ease of use can support a better customer experience, as evidenced by some of the direct feedback from cosmetologists during the pilot: “Just tried it. Fantastic!” and “Thank you for your help. This is cool.”

Just as important, the Accenture Virtual Assistant Platform dashboards and reporting can give TDLR valuable insights into the people it serves.

Over time, insights from CoRA and other virtual assistants can help the Department further refine service delivery and customer experience.

CoRA at work

1,874

Total SMS texts received

742

Total calls diverted

124

Hours saved by call center staff

524

Total cosmetologists served

371

Hours of wait time saved by cosmetologists

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