

Messenger Bot Secrets for the Local Business

By Leon C. Williams

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About the Author

Make them want to contact you! Targeted Lead Systems is a specialized Digital Marketing Agency that is focused on generating internet leads for both local and national businesses.

Our Company

Headquartered in Roseville, California, Targeted Lead System and it's affiliated operations is positioned to help you dominate your niche on the internet. We provide Video Marketing Services, Social Video Marketing Services, Local Marketing Services, Lead Generation Design and Strategies, Viral Contests, Social Media Marketing Services, Social Media Management, Facebook Advertising, Youtube marketing and advertising and Pay Per Click advertising.

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Leon Williams has been in Marketing and some level for over 27 years. He has started and grown several companies that have been highly successful. Working in System Software and Database Management in the 1980's to today focused on helping his clients dominate the Internet space, Leon has a long history of harnessing current technology to drive business and marketing processes.

Introduction

For all those small business owners that think the world of online marketing has just about been tapped out, with no more resources available, there's news. And although this news was unleashed on the world back in 2016, it has been picking up steam ever since, particularly within the last year or so. This resource is known as Messenger bots, and they're going to revolutionize the way local businesses conduct customer service, sales, promotions, and generally interacting with their customers and clients.

Messenger bots are taking the world of online marketing by storm, with more and more businesses using them. Not only do these bots make it easier to conduct business, but customers are loving them too! Perhaps not surprisingly, Messenger bots were first released by Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg back in April of 2016. At the time, no one really knew just how effective these bots would be, or even how they could be utilized. As time went on however, it was clear that these bots were a necessary addition to online marketing.

But the release of these bots really was just the beginning. As marketers continue to find ways to utilize them, and really shape the way businesses use Messenger bots, it's clear that the initial potential of these bots is just beginning to be tapped. And while new bots are coming onto the market all the time, it's clear that Facebook Messenger bots, like most of the innovations Facebook continues to create, are still the most popular to use.

So what are these Messenger bots? How can they be created? And just how effective are they? All of these questions and more will be answered in the report that follows. So read on to learn all of the secrets there are to know about Messenger bots.

What are Messenger Bots?

Marketers, business owners, and even online users have all become familiar with chatbots. Chatbots are a type of artificial intelligence (AI) that allow a business to communicate with their customers, any time they land on their website automatically and without actually requiring any human interaction, or someone sitting on the business' end answering questions and replying to customers.

Messenger bots are just like those chatbots, but they appear only in Facebook Messenger (the largest of the messenger bot market so far) or other texting apps. Facebook Messenger bots can be built simply and easily by using a bot engine such as NLP AI. When creating these bots, local business owners can input simple language they expect to get from their customers such as, "What hours are you open?" or "What is your return policy?" Then the answers can also be inputted by the business owner. When an actual customer asks the question, they will receive the programmed answer.

Facebook Messenger bots in particular, are particularly effective and unique from other types of messenger bots because they can actually learn as they communicate with customers. With every interaction, they will continue to learn and expand on their vocabulary and could actually become smarter. This is leaps and bounds over other messenger bots, and definitely other chatbots that typically have very limited answers and language. In addition to making these bots more accessible and easier to use for customers, it also makes them easier to use by the business.

But, as much as people are starting to use messenger bots to interact with businesses, any local business owner knows that small businesses and major corporations are very different. They have different budgets, different capabilities, and use different technologies. So are messenger bots really right for the local business owner? They are, just read on to find out why.

Why Local Businesses Need Messenger Bots

There's no reason local business owners can't reap all the same benefits of using messenger bots that major corporations can (more on those benefits in the next section). And while embarking on any new technology can seem scary and intimidating, it doesn't have to be.

The fact is that most of the messenger bots out there are run by small businesses. While major corporations also use them, the simple FAQ interface that the majority of bots are using are perfect for small businesses. And while the big companies often have 1-800 help lines and round the clock customer service desks, local businesses simply don't have the capital to invest in those. This makes messenger bots the perfect way to bridge the gap and provide the needed customer service without shelling out big bucks in order to do it.

Local businesses can also start small with their messenger bots, using a very basic platform and then building on it once they become more comfortable with the technology and learn more about what their customers want out of a bot. This can save them a lot of money in the end, unlike larger companies that often try to do everything at once and then have to spend big dollars in their budget to go back and fix problems.

The biggest reason why local business owners need messenger bots though? Because the time to start using them, for every business, is now. Facebook Messenger already has 100,000 bots within the service, and that's just two years after they've been released. Imagine how many more will be on there in another two years, or five, or even ten. By not capitalizing on the technology and getting into the bot market now, local businesses could be left behind in the future. And, because messenger bots are already becoming so popular, when one business doesn't have them, customers may turn to a competitor that does.

Benefits of Messenger Bots

So what are the benefits of Messenger bots? Think better customer service, increased sales, and improved communication with your customers. All of these and more are just a few of the benefits your small business can receive simply by utilizing Messenger bots.

Increased availability

Do you or your customers get frustrated when they want to ask a question, make a purchase, or interact with you another way, but you're simply not around to give them the information they need? It can not only be frustrating for all parties, but it can also be a loss of business if the customer decides to go to another business, one in which the business owner is available to answer their questions. And even though Facebook pages and other types of social media have made it easier for local business owners to be more available to their customers, it still leaves gaps. After all, no business owner can be online all the time.

But Messenger bots can. One of the biggest benefits of Messenger bots is that they are available 24 hour a day, 365 days a year. As long as your customers are online, the Messenger bots are too. So customers can get the answers they need without you even needing to be there.

Processing large volumes of requests

Just like you can't be online 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, you also can't interact with more than one customer at a time. And while you might have many customers with many different questions, concerns, and feedback, you can still only deal with them one at a time.

But Messenger bots don't have the same limitations. And while other types of marketing may require some tweaking for receiving large inquiries and responding to them, such as email marketing, that's not necessary with Messenger bots. After one bot is built, it can handle as many inquiries as possible without anyone having to tweak it at all. This means that all your customers can get the help they need. And isn't that something every business owner wants to be able to do?

Better understanding of your customers

Just like all business owners want to be able to respond to all of their customers in a timely fashion, they also want to be able to understand those customers better. After all, the more you know about what your customers want, the better able you are to serve

them and give them what they need - all in the hopes that they will continue coming back to your business.

Messenger bots do exactly this. By installing Messenger bot analytics, business owners can study metrics such as what keywords are being searched to gain better insight as to what they are looking for. This not only allows you to know your customers better, it also allows you to build future bots better, as you will understand what questions are being asked, and what answers you need to program into the bot.

Low maintenance costs

With all the benefits Messenger bots bring, it's easy to assume that they would be one of the most expensive marketing resources out there. Truthfully though, they're not. While they do have a bit of initial cost, how much that is often rests with the business owner. Most developers and developing companies have different packages depending on what the business owner wants their Messenger bot to be able to do. For those that need just a basic bot, the fees can be very low.

In addition to having a low initial cost, once the bot is up and running, there are virtually no maintenance costs, unless the business owner wants to add more capabilities to the bot. Again, it is completely up to the business owner and if they believe that the bot is running effectively, the costs after initially developing the bot can be non-existent.

A variety of platforms

Facebook Messenger is the most talked about type of messenger bot, perhaps because they were one of the first and still remain the leader of the marketplace. But business owners aren't limited to these types of bots alone. There are many different texting apps that have messenger bot capabilities. A business owner can simply choose the one that makes the most sense for them, or they can utilize many of them to reach their customers exactly where they are.

An incredible reach

Any business owner wants to be able to reach as many of their customers, or even potential customers, as they can. Messenger bots make it much easier to do this. While it would be nearly impossible to give all the stats for all the messaging apps out there, let's look strictly at Facebook Messenger, since it's one of the biggest.

Facebook Messenger has approximately 900 million monthly active users a month. That's not counting the people that have simply downloaded the app, but perhaps have never used it extensively. Within that 900 million are solely people that have

downloaded the app and that use it regularly, as one of their main forms of communication.

Imagine the reach business owners will have when choosing to utilize a Facebook Messenger bot. That's 900 million people just waiting for a bot to reach them, answer their questions, and make it easier to buy from the business!

Target your audience

Targeting a market audience is another must-do for any business owner. And it can sometimes be one of the most difficult aspects of marketing. But Messenger bots can make it very easy to target any audience. Facebook Messenger bots allow business owners to target any person that subscribes to the bot, which typically requires them to give you their email address. Once you have it, not only can you build your email list, but you can also start to nurture the relationship with the customer so it becomes easier to sell to them.

These are just a few of the benefits that come with Messenger bots. Once business owners start to use them, the chances are good that a whole world of benefits will open up to them. So, while the benefits are there, and are very real, how is a business owner supposed to create and use bots in order to reap these benefits?

How to Build a Messenger Bot

There are really only two things you need to start building your own messenger bot: an account on the messaging app you want to use, and a bot development service.

There are plenty of bot development services out there. [Dialogflow](#) and [Wit.ai](#) are just two of them. These development software programs will let you build your bot and fully customize it according to what you think your customers will ask, and how you want it to work. Most of these types of software are very user-friendly and just simply ask you questions, and walk you through the process step-by-step.

While it can take a little bit of time, it's a simple process and will build a bot for you that will act, and interact with customers, exactly the way you want it to. Most of the bot-building software also has tutorials so you never have to worry about being overwhelmed and not understanding what you're supposed to do next. Of course, if you don't have time for tutorials or simply don't want to build the bot yourself, you can hire a developer or online marketer to do it for you. Just know that this is going to cost you.

To have your bot interact with the messaging app you're using, you'll also need an account within that service. For example, if you're using the longest-running messenger bot service, and with one of the largest audiences, you'll also need a Facebook profile. A Facebook page can be handy too, as this can let your audiences go to your page to learn more about your business, and it will also let anyone that lands on your Facebook page to interact with your bot.

Once you have these two elements, you simply connect the bot you created in the software with your account on the messaging app. This can all be typically done within the bot-building software with prompts telling you exactly how to do it. If you're not using Facebook Messenger bots, but bots that will appear in other messaging apps, the software will still tell you how to do it. Often, the apps have their own software that needs to be used so it's even easier to integrate the bot into the app. But businesses really should start with Facebook Messenger start. It's the original after all, and it has one of the largest audiences.

Sound too simple to do? That's because most business owners have become too accustomed to the idea that in order for something to be highly effective, it has to be complicated. But that's just not true. Creating a bot really is that easy and you can have one in under an hour in order to unlock the potential of messenger bots and reap all the benefits.

Best Practices for Messenger Bots

Before and during the creation of your bot for business, it's important to keep in some of the best practices to use. You likely want to create your bot so it can answer some of the most common questions your customers ask you, such as when you're open, where you're located, and possibly even your return policy. But there's more to a bot than just programming these questions and answers. By keeping some of these best practices in mind, you'll ensure that not only is your bot effective, but that it's displaying well and interacting with customers in a way that is easy and simplified for them.

Be consistent in what the bot can do

If you want your bot to be able to tell customers when you're open, make sure it has commands for doing so for every day of the week. It sounds like common sense, but this is an example of how sometimes, bots just aren't that consistent. Maybe they've been coded wrong, or simply have a glitch. The fact is, if yours does, it needs to be fixed as soon as possible. You can typically check to see if the bot is consistent by testing it and then testing it again once it's created. Try to ask it a range of questions you know your customers will have for it and see if it's consistent. If not, don't unleash that bot to the world until it is.

Provide a way back to the main menu

It can be frustrating for a customer to get to a portion of conversation where the bot stops working, or they're constantly met with error messages. This can't always be helped. Sometimes they're simply asking the bot things the bot doesn't necessarily know and hasn't been programmed to respond to. But what's even more frustrating for the customer is if they can't just go back and start over. Many customers will do this if they've reached a dead spot with your bot, so make sure you give them a way to do it. Otherwise, they'll likely end up leaving the conversation and going to a business that they can easily interact with.

Be concise

Have you ever seen the acronym "tl;dr" online? It means "too long; didn't read" and if your bot's messages are too long, it's going to trigger this response in your audience. People like interacting with bots because it's a quick way to get the information they need, so make sure your messages are just that - quick to read. In order to do it, make sure your messages are no longer than 90 characters, which is about three lines on mobile devices. If possible, keep them as short as 60 characters, which is about two lines

on mobile. And giving multiple messages is fine, and sometimes necessary, just make sure that altogether they're not over 140 characters at a time.

Test on different devices

There's a whole world of mobile devices out there today. Some have screens nearly as big as a laptop, such as the iPad, while others are still teeny tiny. And while your message may appear just fine on those larger screens, if it's too long users will have to scroll up to see the entire thing on smaller screens. This is just as bad as having a message that is too long, because no one wants to scroll just to see what the messenger bot said. Also remember that while in chat mode, users will typically have the touch keyboard up on their screens, effectively taking the amount of screen that's shown and cutting it in half.

How do you combat this? By simply testing the messenger bot on different devices. If you find the messages are too long, you can optimize the bot so messages can be read with minimal scrolling needed. It's a great way to make the bot more usable for your audience, which means they'll likely be more engaged with it.

Ask a question to confirm

Some bots will need to confirm something with the user, such as if they are making a purchase or booking a hotel room or a restaurant reservation. When the bot is making that confirmation, it's important that they are asking a question, not making a statement. It's a little thing, but if the bot makes a statement as confirmation, and the details are wrong, the user is going to feel as though they did something wrong. If a question is asked in confirmation and it's still wrong however, they'll see it as a misunderstanding, won't get their back up, and will simply go back to correct the problem. The problem won't have blown up in their minds to a big deal and the customer will be happy. And happy customers is what every business wants.

Let them know what the bot is doing

There may be times when the bot has to do some "thinking" and doesn't respond right away. Maybe it's automatically checking to see if those dinner reservations are possible, or maybe it's automatically processing an order. Whatever the case may be, users will typically only wait about eight seconds before they trying to reactivate the bot. When they do, it can confuse the bot and the user, and the whole conversation can quickly deteriorate.

To prevent this from happening, let the user know that the bot is currently processing information. This can be done with typing indicators that let the user know a response is on the way, or with short messages such as "I'm processing your order," or "Still

processing, I want to get this just right.” This will let the user know they haven’t been forgotten, the bot hasn’t glitched out, and that in just a few more seconds, they will have what they need.

Include undo and cancel buttons

Neither bots nor humans are perfect, and mistakes will be made at some point in a conversation. When they do, make it easy on the user to go back and fix the mistake, or to cancel something out. Messenger bots are an online experience and correcting a mistake really should be as easy as pressing the back button in a browser. So make sure they’re there so that when that mistake is made, the user doesn’t get frustrated that they have to go back and have the entire conversation over again.

Give it a unique name

There are many reasons that Apple’s Siri and Google’s Alexa have become so popular. But one of the biggest is because they were given an actual name, which makes users trust them more and become easily familiar with them. While these two technological innovations are definitely not messenger bots, the same concept can be applied to them. Give your bot a unique name that shows some personality and is consistent with the rest of your brand. And remember, they don’t have to be common names. Sometimes creating a name that fits with your company and brand are more entertaining for the user and will have them looking forward to interacting with it.

Integrating Your Messenger Bot

Your customer service desk is only effective if people can find it. And that's the same reasoning you should go into messenger bots with. You can build the greatest bot using all of the best practices described earlier, but if no one knows how to get to it, that hard work may be for nothing. So how can you get people to find your bot? By integrating it into places other than the messaging apps themselves. The big question then, is where are those places?

Facebook

If you're using Facebook Messenger bots, it only makes sense that you would place an icon on your business' Facebook page that would allow users to click on it and be instantly chatting with the bot. It's important to remember that these Messenger bots cannot be placed on a personal profile. So if that's all you have, and you want to start using a Facebook Messenger bot (the easiest of all for local businesses to start with), you'll need to create a Facebook page. It's really easy. Go to this page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/creation/>, sign in with your personal info and then get started building your page. Not only is this helpful when creating Facebook Messenger apps, the page alone will be a huge boost for your brand.

Email marketing

Some think that email marketing is dead. Others believe that with new bot technology, email marketing is about to be sent to the trash bin. However, neither of these are true. And, if you want your messenger bot to be even more effective, it should be integrated into all email marketing campaigns. This can be done by again, simply adding the icon the customers can click and then be redirected to the bot. This is a great tool to use if they have immediate questions about the campaign, or if they just want to share your product with others, since often many people can make up a group of people that see all of the messenger bot's messages. In today's world of marketing, there is not one sole type that is best for any business. Instead, a mixture of different tools should be utilized in order to get the most bang for your marketing buck.

Website

By now you know that when creating a messenger bot you don't have to rely on people opening a messaging app in order to use it. And just like you can include an icon on Facebook and in email marketing, you can - and you *should* - include the same icon on your website. It's here that you'll likely get your hottest prospects and leads anyway, because they've searched you out. They already want to know more about you, your

business, and what you're offering. And as they continue to read and learn, they'll likely have questions. So why not give them a simple way to get the answers to those questions, or make it even easier for them to make a purchase, by giving them access to your bot that can help them do it all? If you have a messenger bot but don't have a way to access it from your website, you'll be missing out on huge potential.

Messenger Bots Other than Facebook

Facebook may be the second-largest social media platform behind YouTube, so it makes sense that Facebook Messenger bots are some of the largest on the bot market. But this platform isn't the only messaging app that allows for the creation of bots. And by utilizing bots across multiple platforms, local business owners can expand their reach even more and make it even easier for customers to get in touch with them. Below are five other messaging apps that currently have bot capability. And as time goes on, it won't be long before messenger bots can be found wherever any other bots can be.

Twitter direct messaging bots

Once one social media platform does something different, it's not long before all other platforms are jumping onto the trend, too. That's just what happened with Twitter direct messaging bots. In 2016 Twitter unleashed Direct Message API, which allows any business owner to create a bot that can be integrated into Twitter direct messages so that businesses can continuously interact with their followers and customers.

Currently there are only about 100 companies that use this technology on Twitter, so businesses that get in now can be ahead of the crowd and be considered innovators in their field. Twitter's direct messaging bots are still in their beta phase, so business owners and developers need to request access to Iris in order to create one. That can be done online right here: <https://platform.iris.ci/sign-up>.

WhatsApp

While Facebook now owns Instagram, there aren't currently any messenger bots that can be used on it. However, Facebook also owns WhatsApp, a messaging app that is used by 1.6 billion monthly active users and sends approximately 60 billion messages every day. In August of 2018, Facebook started allowing messenger bots on WhatsApp, giving business owners one more way to connect with their audiences. Like Twitter, WhatsApp bots are still in the beta phase, so business owners will have to apply to be selected as one that can use bots. That can be done through WhatsApp for Enterprise, which can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/business/m/whatsapp/business-api>.

Google Hangouts

Google Hangouts is a huge messaging app that can be used for texting messages, or even calling people using their phone number or their email address. It's also a huge app that's used for business collaborations between colleagues and staff members of a

business. Now, bots can be used to give customers easy answers to their questions, or to manually assign tasks. Because this is a Google product, a bot can even take a location from a user and pull that location up on Google Maps API, or even show them the business' exact location using the same technology.

The easiest way to create and deploy bots through Google Hangouts are through Apps Script, and there are many that can be used, although they're not entirely necessary to create bots within the messaging app. These are: [Google Apps Script](#), [Google Cloud Functions](#), [Google App Engine](#), and [Google Compute Engine](#).

Slack

Slack is another messaging app that is typically used by team in a workplace. Bots can be created within this messaging app as well, and it may be the easiest app to create bots in. Within Slack settings are some very basic bots that can respond to questions from team members. For example, if there's a phone number that is always being asked for, such as tech support, the bot can be programmed to reply with the number any time a team member asks "tech support phone number?" Or, for those that want a bot that has a few more capabilities, a custom bot can be created using [Zapier](#).

Telegram

Telegram is an app that hasn't made headlines in the United States, but it is big in the U.K. This is likely because it was developed by a private company in London, United Kingdom, but it's available all over the world. Like Facebook, it's a social media app but also has a direct messaging service called "Chats". Bots can be built for this platform as well using [Intercom API](#).

Conclusion

It's easy to see just how the world of messenger bots are quickly taking over. It's no wonder why, either. With so many benefits, including freeing up time in the customer service department so you can get on with everything else that needs to be done in your business, there's no reason for businesses to decide against using them. And because they're so easy to create with so many platforms available, just about anyone can create them in minutes in order to reap all those benefits.

When creating messenger bots, it's important to keep in mind that it should be all about the user experience. Simply put, the easier it is to use a messenger bot, the better the experience will be for both the user and the business. Keep the best practices outlined in this report in mind while creating your own messenger bot and both users and your business will benefit from it. Pretty soon, you'll be exploring every avenue possible for messenger bots and have them running across all platforms!

Next Steps

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