The University of Texas at San Antonio deploys chatbots to engage alumni with a 93% open rate

Opportunity
The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) is a large state research university in Texas. Like many other universities, they were looking for fresh ways to engage their young alumni.

The university had a change in leadership when Taylor Eighmy took over as president and wanted to promote a week of celebrations around the inaugural event. Knowing this monumental event had the power to engage their alumni if handled cleverly, Heather Locke Green, director of annual giving and development communications, decided to make the most of this opportunity.

Inspired by how President Eighmy encouraged others to simply refer to him as “Taylor,” Green developed a fun quiz tapping into this welcoming and relatable nature by associating him with another famous namesake: Taylor Swift.

Green looked for an innovative way to promote the quiz as well, one that would engage and excite alumni as much as the quiz itself. When she learned how she could use a chatbot in Facebook Messenger, she realized she had a delivery mechanism that could really connect with alumni.

What is an AI chatbot?
Derived from the term “chat robot,” chatbots allow for highly engaging, conversational experiences that can be customized and used on popular platforms such as Facebook Messenger. Pre-built conversational flows allow you to simultaneously communicate with your alumni in a one-on-one manner, while expanding your team’s bandwidth to focus on other tasks.

RNL’s chatbot, AL, uses conversational artificial intelligence (AI) that can be trained to engage audiences on specific topics—like taking a quiz comparing the president of a large university to one of the most famous pop stars on the planet.

About The University of Texas at San Antonio
The University of Texas at San Antonio is a multicultural discovery enterprise institution enrolling more than 32,000 students in 157 degree programs. It has 126,000 alumni.

Solutions used
AL Conversational AI

About AL from RNL
AL is a conversational AI chatbot that can have informative and authentic conversations. AL can be trained to discuss almost any fundraising topic with constituents, from alumni events to giving days.

MEET RNL’S AI CHATBOT YOURSELF
Say hi to AL, RNL’s AI chatbot and see how you can ramp up engagement with your alumni through this interactive and intelligent solution.
Visit RuffaloNL.com/Alchat.
Meeting alumni where they already are

According to recent research, internet users worldwide spend an average of 135 minutes per day on their phones, mostly on messaging apps, a 50 percent increase from five years earlier.

Of these apps, Messenger is the most popular. Having 1.3 billion monthly users, it is already the leading messaging app in the marketplace, and growth shows no sign of stopping.*

With these statistics in mind, it would be a missed opportunity for a university not to embrace Messenger as a key additional channel for reaching alumni, current students, and potential donors.

Furthermore, apps like Messenger allow for the use of chatbots that manage conversational engagement with alumni, rather than requiring constant inbox monitoring by a full-time employee. By tapping into the endless interactivity possibilities that an AI chatbot offers, universities like UTSA can add another powerful channel for engaging alumni, particularly young alumni.

Key results

The results of the UTSA Inauguration campaign were stellar. It took less than one week to acquire almost 700 alumni subscribers through a minimal $250 investment on paid social advertising.

To extend this success beyond President Eighmy’s inauguration, UTSA is now able to message these alumni at a 93 percent open rate and 12 percent click-through rate (5x better than emails), as an efficient way to increase awareness of events, update contact information, and even solicit donations using Messenger.

“The team at UTSA loves to be innovative. I had never experienced a university reaching out to me on Messenger, so I knew [RNL] had a cutting-edge idea,” Green said.

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Heather Locke Green
Director of Annual Giving and Development Communications
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* (Source: Techcrunch)