



Let Dee Help You

Have a chat with our new online Virtual Agent

In our April newsletter we introduced you to Dee, our new online Virtual Agent. If you've visited our site recently the chances are you might have seen Dee. But have you had a chat with her yet? She's very friendly and is ready to answer your questions any time of the day, or night.

Since Dee has become such an integral member of our team we thought you might like to know a little more about her. Why and how she came into being and how she can enhance your onsite experience. And when you've read all about her why not go to our site and give her a click - she'll be there, waiting to help you.

Why did we need Dee

With a site full to brimming with great information we understood that sometimes it was hard to navigate your way around and find what you needed quickly and easily. We would receive calls and emails asking us for help and soon realised that many of your questions were the same ones. Our team spent many hours answering them, leaving them with less time to update you on the hottest topics in Design and Technology. We needed help, and we needed it now.

So, late last year, we contacted Elzware and, working collaboratively with them, Dee was born – our very own online Virtual Agent

Who is Dee

Dee may not be exactly like us, with blood coursing through her veins, but she is much more than a search facility and a traditional FAQ. She is actually pretty clever. Not only does she have a conversation with you - you type in a question in your own words and she provides you with an answer - but she will also lead you to the relevant page on our site, log the entire process, note and report on information gaps and build a profile of our users for us.

How Dee was put together

Recent developments in natural language technology have allowed the introduction of a wide range of Virtual Agents in commercial systems. Dee is one of these.

She is built on the functionality of the basic FAQ system that is known and used around the internet, but, unlike FAQ systems, she will answer questions in a more conversational tone and point you to the right web page. And, also unlike FAQ systems, she doesn't have a "did this help?" feedback button, making her less vulnerable to competitor manipulation or just being badly trained!

To get Dee up and running, we needed to give her a good database of knowledge to draw on based on the content found on our site. Elzware's authoring team set about mapping the

contents of each webpage, collating staff information, and turning individual FAQ page questions into unique FAQs within the knowledgebase of our new virtual assistant.

Ninety percent of the information and preparation of the knowledgebase was completed by the authors, with consultation from us, as and when it was needed. This data elicitation approach removed us from the nitty-gritty build process and allowed Elzware's build team to develop the template, Virtual Agent and strategic placement within the main site.

The information and proposed set of FAQs (of which there were initially 300), keywords and small talk (informal chat) was then split up into a set of 30 logical categories, based on their subject matter. In this way bringing up a particular FAQ would then also show a list of related FAQs that shared the same category, allowing our users to further navigate the knowledgebase intuitively.

With her knowledgebase completed Dee was now set to go to, ready to help users:

- **Navigate the site more easily** - particularly areas of the main site that were not easy to find via our search facility;
- **Find answers to membership issues** - such as password retrieval, joining and types of membership;
- **Find the best person in our team to contact** - via an in-built staff database complete with roles and contact details;
- **Find and retrieve information quickly** with a natural-language processing approach.



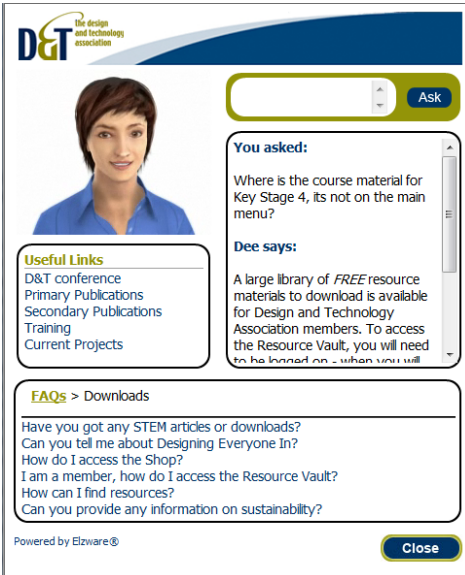
This was a great start, but we wanted more for Dee. Sitting back down with Elzware we agreed Dee should have some additional functionality enabling her to better deal with the unique complexities of our organisation. So, we gave her:

- **A site context for Members and Non-Members.** In this way Dee could deliver different information depending on whether or not a user was logged in. This was crucial to ensure that certain information was only available to Members. Non-Members context would also provide assistance on registering with the us;
- **A Glossary of terms common to Design and Technology coupled with a database of commonly used keywords.** With this functionality Dee would be able to assist with disambiguating the user's requirements and provide help even when a user's request was not properly understood;
- **An animated personality.** We didn't want Dee to be static but to have a range of emotions which would reflect the tone of the content and put a human face on things.

But whilst Dee is fun to engage with she isn't self-learning. She relies on good human grey matter to evolve and develop. In the future, we hope to build into her a set of staged decision trees to help you navigate within our huge Resource Vault and register and pay for membership.

Why we love Dee

With a site as large and complex as ours finding the information you need can sometimes be hard work. Navigating a fixed directory structure can be the equivalent of navigating a maze, with many twists and wrong turns. Dee eliminates this frustration.



D&T The design and technology association

Ask

You asked:
Where is the course material for Key Stage 4, its not on the main menu?

Dee says:
A large library of *FREE* resource materials to download is available for Design and Technology Association members. To access the Resource Vault, you will need to be logged on - when you will

Useful Links
D&T conference
Primary Publications
Secondary Publications
Training
Current Projects

FAQs > Downloads
Have you got any STEM articles or downloads?
Can you tell me about Designing Everyone In?
How do I access the Shop?
I am a member, how do I access the Resource Vault?
How can I find resources?
Can you provide any information on sustainability?

Powered by Elzware® **Close**

For instance, you might simply want to know: "Where is the course material for Key Stage 4, it's not on the main menu?" Why bother calling up when you can ask Dee the same question, instantly and at any time? Dee not only gives you the answer but also the correct link to the resource vault itself, depending on your member status. And she'll also suggest some other links that may be relevant to your question. This simple example shows how Dee saves you, and us, time and trouble. And this is Dee's main raison d'être.

Having Dee on our team has never been so good. The conversation logs she provides are an invaluable source of analytical data, allowing us to have a view on what kind of things you are asking about. Information on membership requests, services, events, key worries or

concerns, full transaction and conversation counts are also powerful data which Dee provides in a series of monthly reports. And, what's more, these reports are used to keep Dee up to date and ever efficient so you have an assistant that never sleeps and is always improving.

Whilst we love Dee, we don't expect, or want, her to replace our human team but we are finding she can help us humans make the most of the digital world that is evolving around us. We hope you'll love Dee as much as we do.

Now you know more about Dee go to our site and have a chat with her at www.data.org.uk
We'd love to know what you think.

Who are Elzware?

Elzware was the brainchild of Phil Hall. Phil wanted to combine the application of artificial intelligence with a human-centric approach.

Since 2002 Elzware and its partners have been developing and refining their conversational systems so users can interact with their chosen website as they might real-world premises, whether that be a shop, classroom, factory, call centre or office. Today, Elzware continues to push online boundaries using market leading technology.

Elzware and DATA (in conjunction with David Perry Associates) have been working together for the last three years to pilot and develop a revolutionary new learning resource: DesignBot – a Virtual Agent that could offer a viable route to providing natural, accessible computer based learning support to students in Design and Technology. Successful trials were run with Y12 D&T students who found the system provided valuable support and helped extend the quality of their learning.

Building on this experience and working in conjunction with Bristol City Learning Centres and Bristol County Council, the TeachBot has also been developed. As the most educated member of the family, TeachBot, offers real benefits to both students and teachers.

To learn more about Elzware visit their website and have a chat with Dorian – the Virtual Agent who never grows old!

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