

Bankia boosts customer service with Google Assistant



Background



Bankia is the fourth largest bank in Spain with total assets of around €180 billion. With operational hubs in Madrid and Valencia, Bankia has over 15,000 employees and offers a range of retail banking to customers throughout Spain.

The bank has embraced customer-centricity as a guiding brand principle and offers true omnichannel retail banking. Customers can begin a journey in one channel and continue on another with minimal friction. Bankia is totally committed to service excellence and wants to treat every customer as an individual. As part of this commitment, Bankia offers a remote service called “Connect with your expert” where customers can receive personalised financial advice. With a customer satisfaction level of 92.5% the service has helped Bankia retain customers and attract new ones.



The challenge

Leverage Google Assistant to better serve customers



To keep pace with evolving customer needs and market trends, Bankia is continually looking for new ways to serve customers better using modern technologies. Bankia's innovation department wanted to test voice-managed virtual assistants to augment existing customer support channels. A project was initiated to test the capabilities of the new technology and to gain a practical understanding of its true potential.

The project also sought to evaluate how the virtual assistant could harness natural language processing (NLP) to solve specific customer queries and use cases. Bankia believes that voice-controlled virtual assistants will play a pivotal role in building the digital bank of the future.

And as a customer-centric organisation, Bankia was keen to be an early adopter.

Furthermore, the initiative also helped to analyse how customers behave in channels not owned by the bank, as opposed to mobile and online banking solutions, which are the most common digital channels for customers to interact with the bank.

Google Assistant is a relatively new solution, having launched in 2016. Although the technology is stable, as a flagship Google initiative, Google Assistant is updated continuously, which can make it challenging to work with. This would influence how the Bankia project should be managed.

The engagement

A phased approach covering discovery, design, implementation and active testing



After careful consideration, Bankia invited GFT to manage the project. The bank's innovation department had previously worked with GFT on a project that successfully adopted artificial intelligence to automate the classification of legal documents, which led to the creation of an Artificial Intelligence Lab involving both companies.

To mitigate risk and align the project with quantifiable benefits, GFT proposed a phased approach to the project. This was based on proven GFT methods for developing tailored solutions based on conversational interfaces.

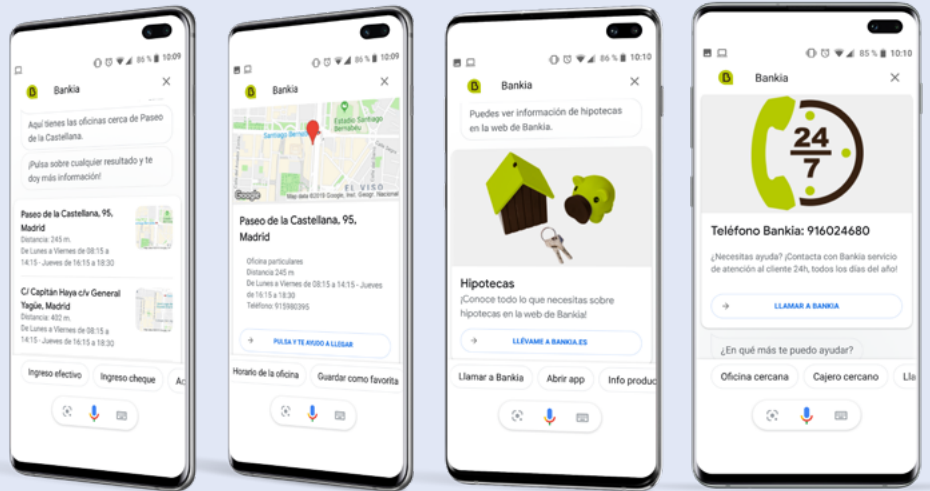
Phase 01

Discovery



GFT hosted a workshop to define the minimum viable proposition for the project. This included detailed definitions of customer journeys, priority set up, a definition of depth and reach of conversation and definitions of new functionalities.

Most importantly, clear use cases were defined, based on real customer behaviour, using information from the most popular requests for information from the Bankia website.



Phase 02

Conversational design



Including:

- Finding branches and ATMs.
- Nominating a branch as "my favourite" and obtaining additional information, such as opening times, address, telephone number, calling the bank.
- Connecting to Bankia's website for information on specific financial products – it involves being able to identify the product requested by the user and then directing the user to the relevant product page on Bankia's website.
- Connecting to mobile banking for transactional operations, such as checking balance, viewing transactions and executing transfers.
- Responding to inappropriate language.

The conversational design also contemplates the situation in which the user would start a conversation in Google Home, where voice is the only interaction channel, and is able to direct the conversation to the virtual assistant if visual support is required.

Phase 03

Implementation



This phase involved implementation of all of the above dialogue flows and usability testing. Testing identified opportunities for improvement and enabled the solution to be aligned exactly with real-world needs. User testing also allowed Bankia staff to become familiar with the solution. Following extensive testing, Bankia launched the solution.

From the outset the Bankia solution has followed an iteration cycle, which delivers continuous improvement. In this way, the solution can offer more informative answers to customer questions. The bank regularly reviews questions that are most frequently posed to the virtual assistant and streamlines access to this information.

The information generated by the system is also a useful management tool.



Phase 04

Active testing



Before the final deployment to production, GFT executed active testing of the solution. The aim of this activity is to validate the usability of the solution by asking users to interact with it as they would do in a real-life scenario. While the user interacts with the solution, all their movements and reactions are followed in real time by a team of observers (product owner, project manager, designers, developers and other stakeholders) sitting in a separate room. This phase provides valuable input to ensure the solution meets requirements in terms of usability, as well as to identify possible improvements.

The benefits

High customer satisfaction



By harnessing the power of Google Assistant, Bankia has created a new banking channel that increases customer engagement and loyalty. Customers can do banking their way and can communicate with the bank when they wish to.

Google Assistant has empowered Bankia to maintain its position at the forefront of bank innovation. Feedback from customers has been overwhelmingly positive. With a score of 4.6 out of 5, Bankia is the highest rated bank on the Google Virtual Assistant Platform.



Customer
loyalty



24/7



Innovation



Positive rating
4.6

About GFT



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