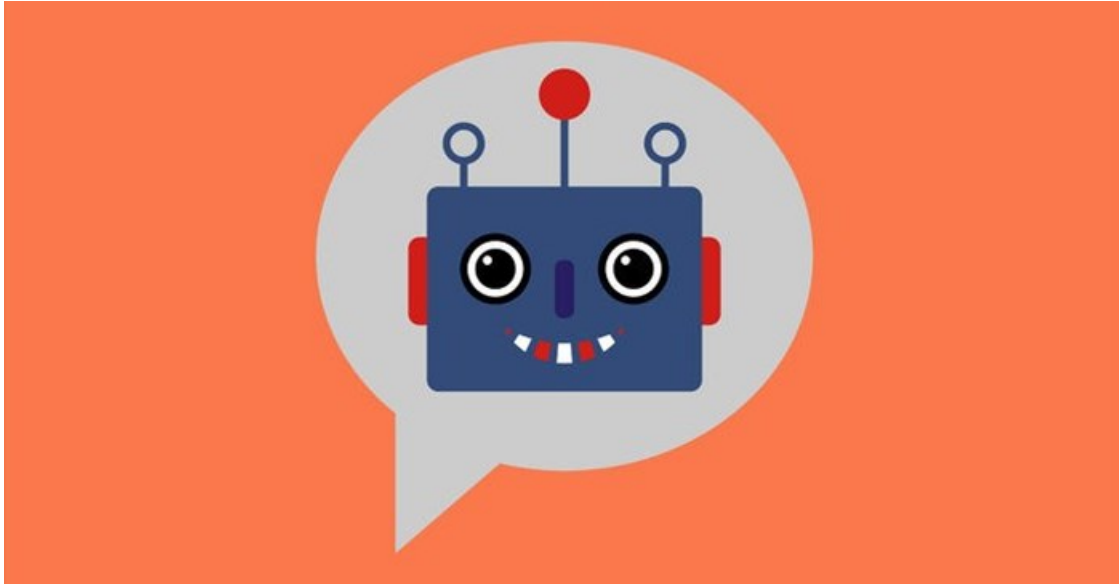


Joburg to host conference about bots

BotCon Africa 2016, organised by mobile technology firm Praekelt, is Africa's first conference about bots. It will delve into how customer service and public information channels are using social media and messaging platforms to solve users' problems using chatbots.



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“Africa’s first BotCon is an opportunity to connect with innovators and practitioners who are defining the conversational interface,” explains Belinda Lewis, product director at Praekelt. “Bots work through the platforms that users are already on, they allow currently human-intensive services to be scaled, while still allowing for personalised experiences.”

The next frontier

Why are bots today’s hot topic of tech speculation? The artificial intelligence (AI) tools required to develop a convincing bot used to require huge amounts of investment and specialist skills. Now, a moderately helpful chatbot can be built in minutes. That’s why bots are coming to a chat client near you, if they’re not there already.

Tipped as “the next frontier” by *The Economist*, bots are all around you, if you know where to look. Uber can already “talk” to you via Facebook Messenger, ABSA Bank has launched chatbot banking on Facebook and Twitter, and IBM is working with African providers to bring its Watson to frontline healthcare too.

The conference promises a day of insight, practical knowledge sharing and informed discussion into the business and technical challenges and opportunities specific to the African continent. Delegates will be able to meet the designers, data scientists and technologists who are building the conversational interfaces of the future, as well as the NGOs and business leaders who are using them.

Confirmed speakers

Confirmed speakers for BotCon Africa 2016 include Facebook’s Emeka Afigbo, Asvin Sologar of Upstream, Frans Cronje of DataProphet, Jade Abbott from RetroRabbit and Gustav Praekelt and Belinda Lewis of Praekelt.

“The next evolution of human computer interfacing is going to happen through conversational interfaces, we're going to use text and voice to speak to machines like we would to another human,” says Praekelt's Lewis. “This conference will give you examples of African success stories and focus on how bots can be used for business and social good in frontier markets.”

BotCon Africa 2016 will take place on 18 November at the Gallery Space at 44 Stanley in Millpark. For more details visit [the dedicated website](#).

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