

Actionable Science Guide: AI Powered, Virtual People Series

10 things to look for in hiring your Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered *Virtual Employee*



ACTIONABLE SCIENCE, 2017 | VIRTUAL PEOPLE™ AT WORK

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It will not be a hyperbole to label Artificial Intelligence (AI) as the most transformative technology trend of our times. Today artificial intelligence powered *Virtual People* can talk to users (Chatbot), think and make decisions (Machine Learning), and complete end-to-end tasks (Robotic Process Automation). This powerful combination of capabilities creates a '*Virtual Person*' that can perform many of the repetitive organizational functions in roles across Help Desk, HR, Sales, Customer Support and so on.

As any management consultant worth their billing will tell you that behind all successful organizations is the ability to attract, retain and grow the best talent. Over a period, enterprises have built Best Practices on how to find talent that best fits the organizational needs, and have spend a lot of time defining the attributes to look for in hiring perspective employees. As the world moves forward to welcome our newest hires – AI powered Virtual Employees, we must pause and reflect on and ask the same basic question:

- How do we select the right Virtual Person?
- How do we grow and maximize the potential of the Virtual Employees?
- How do we build a team of high performing virtual and real employees?

In this paper, we discuss 10 attributes that you should consider in your Virtual People. Virtual Employees that do well across these attributes will contribute positively to your team and deliver outcomes that will exceed all expectations. The good news is that these attributes should feel familiar – as they are the same you use to evaluate real people.

1) Knowledgeable – do they know the job you are hiring them for?

When we hire an employee for any role, we spend lot of time reviewing the resume to make sure they are knowledgeable about the discipline you are hiring them for. For example, you will expect a financial analyst to understand numbers, build reports, use tools like Excel or Tableau and so on. Your virtual hires also need to come to the table with the right background and knowledge. You should expect them to understand the language and vocabulary of the domain. You should also expect them to have a knowledge base of key user tasks relevant to the space. For example; an IT Help Desk Virtual Person should understand and diagnose all common platform and apps like Windows, Mac, MS Office, etc... Prior domain knowledge is important – insist on depth of experience.

2) Doer not talker

Everyone loves employees who can make things happen. These are employees that can discuss things, strategize, plan but most importantly can execute and get things done. Your Virtual Employees should also be able to get work done. In an enterprise context, this typically means opening an application or looking for some data or interacting with a device. Many Virtual People are designed to just have the conversation or handle some very basic tasks with limited process

automation and process digitization capability. A Virtual Person designed with action in mind should be able to emulate an end user and log into any legacy application (mainframe, thick client, web based) to get work done – anything less is a compromise.

3) Can hit the ground running

The first 30-60-90 of any new hire is a critical period in which they learn about the organization and begin to deliver early results. Virtual People may be knowledgeable when they come to your organization but it is their ability to understand your organization quickly that enables them to be successful. To achieve this goal, they need to be configurable and trainable. You need to teach them new tasks, steps to complete those tasks and then monitor their success. A good Virtual Person platform should provide these capabilities out-of-the-box.

4) Quick Learner

In terms of technology capabilities this means ability to ingest information and make sense of it. It could be simple information like reading FAQs and being able to talk about it, or it could be reading a policy document and creating business rules out of it. A good Virtual People platform can make sense of unstructured data and create conversation and rules from it.

5) High EQ

Empathy and emotional intelligence are perhaps one of the most defining pillars of a successful employee. A Virtual Person also needs these in good measure. A Virtual Person should be able to sense user's emotions and can decide when to bring a human into the conversation. They should be able to adapt the dialog to the personality of the user or the type of task at hand. This ability to humanize and personalize will ensure that Virtual People are accepted and adopted.

6) Team Player

A single Virtual Person is powerful – but a team of Virtual People working together to achieve common goals is exponentially more effective. The Virtual People should be able to talk to each other and effectively collaborate to get work done. For example, an HR Virtual Person onboarding a new employee may request help from the IT Helpdesk Virtual Person to take care of provisioning access and services. As a team player the Virtual People would also easily plug into the echo system of existing applications leveraging a variety of access mechanisms like API, Direct DB, File Based, RPA etc. Ideally many common enterprise applications like CRM, AD, ITSM, HRA etc. should be integrated out-of-the-box.

7) Trustworthy

For an Enterprise; security, privacy, availability and responsiveness are some of the top concerns for any new enterprise application. A Virtual Person should be able to exceed the requirements in these areas. Having good security policies including mechanisms like supporting encryption at rest and in transit is basic table stake. Supporting standard authentication mechanism (SSO, OAuth etc.) is also a must have.

The solution should also be able to scale up dynamically to handle variable demand and should have embedded monitoring for responsiveness and availability.

8) Analytical and data driven

Don't you love it when one of your co-workers can recite a lot of numbers and use it seamlessly to make decisions or get other work done? Virtual People are blessed with a nearly limitless capacity to analyze information and intelligently react to it (even real time as they are having a conversation).

More interesting Virtual People also generate a lot of information – what are people talking to them about, how far did they get in the conversation, what path did the conversations take and so on. Being able to capture all this information and report on it systematically in a dashboard is very useful. A good Virtual People solution will be setup to both use information and data intelligently but also create reporting and dashboard on its own performance.

9) Open to feedback

Ongoing coaching and feedback is the crux of performance management. We believe a good Virtual Person should always monitor its own outcomes and learn from them (and be open to human intervention and training ☺). Monitoring success and failure of various tasks, as well user engagement and sentiment are all inputs that should tell a Virtual Person what is working and what is not – and it should learn from this, 24*7.

10) Location and language savvy

The best Virtual People are multi-lingual with no cyber location preference. They speak the top 8-10 languages in the world and do so in all the main places where users will engage with them. They can work through your intranet site, Skype, Facebook Messenger, Slack and other leading messaging applications. They are able to read email and text messages. They can also have a voice conversation using a voice application like Skype or Amazon's Alexa or just on a plain old telephone.

Hiring the best team is one of the most important tasks we undertake in ensuring the future of our organization. Virtual Employees will be a vital part of the team-of-tomorrow. Ensuring that we create the brightest most compelling Virtual Employees possible, is our mission at [Actionable Science](#). Making our Virtual People be successful across these 10 factors remains the singular focus of the entire company and perhaps should be for anyone who wants to ensure the success of their business and extend it with the power of an AI program.

Please email your feedback and suggestions to: saurabh@actionable.science

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