Business Challenge

Information Technology (IT) at the George Washington University (GW) provides dozens of essential services to students, faculty, and staff, including online learning and collaboration tools, educational and business apps, email and calendar, backup, and storage. IT runs a traditional service desk, with students getting assistance through email and phone calls.

However, the digital revolution has elevated expectations for service delivery. Today’s students want to get what they need using the latest digital technologies.

This new reality prompted IT to investigate new approaches to IT service support—for example, incorporating cognitive automation technologies. IT recently conducted a pilot to determine the feasibility of using a chatbot to address two IT service support needs:

- Provide 24x7x365 support
- Reduce the number of routine calls service desk agents handle to free up time for more complex issues

The pilot was so successful that departments outside of IT now want to use chatbots to modernize service delivery for their users.
The demand for IT services at GW continues to increase as students complete homework assignments, take online exams, and perform research at all hours of the day and night. They often need help recovering passwords or PINs, connecting devices to the network, or accessing online course materials. IT needed a cost- and resource-effective way to deliver continuous support in a compelling, modern manner.

Fortunately, IT upgraded its Remedy implementation to BMC Helix ITSM and added BMC Helix Digital Workplace. The upgrade put innovative cognitive automation capabilities in the hands of the IT staff. The staff began looking at ways to apply these capabilities to transform service delivery to align the student experience with the way today’s users expect to interact with IT.

Intrigued by the ability of chatbots to help people find information and request services using a natural language interface, IT conducted a pilot using BMC Helix Chatbot, which is included with BMC Helix Digital Workplace.

“Our pilot targeted incoming freshmen,” explains Donna Hill, assistant director, service, configuration, and continuity management. “We identified the 14 most common support requests and set them up in “Martha,” the name we've given our chatbot. Instead of contacting us by email or phone, pilot participants chat with Martha via text or the web. She answers questions and responds to requests, walking students through any required steps, and, behind the scenes, automating the processes that fulfill the requests.”

**Martha Gets a Thumbs Up**
Martha’s popularity far exceeded expectations. During the pilot, students chatted with Martha 4,581 times. It’s an impressive number considering that the pilot was limited to incoming freshmen and the 14 most frequently submitted requests. During that same period, the traditional service desk received 8,106 calls from all students on 200 requested services.

Martha was highly effective in addressing students’ needs. In the post-pilot survey, 88% of the participants wanted Martha to become a permanent service for the GW community.

Martha proved the feasibility of chatbots in helping IT deliver effective 24x7 support. What’s more, because students were overwhelmingly satisfied with
Martha, they would most likely turn to the chatbot before calling the service desk. As a result, she’s likely to significantly reduce the load on service desk agents.

How Does GW Benefit from BMC Solutions?
- Always available assistance and access to knowledge improves the student experience.
- Offloading level 0 and 1 calls to Martha frees up service desk technicians to tackle level 2 and 3 issues.
- The ability to meet the growing demand for support without adding headcount keeps support costs in check.
- Expanding Martha’s use to additional knowledge areas beyond IT can further enrich the student experience.

Learn More About These BMC Solutions
- Visit the BMC Helix Chatbot webpage
- Visit the BMC Helix webpage