With so many tax-related changes happening in 2018 and beyond, you may be thinking about adding a chatbot to your website to help with customer service and to increase lead generation opportunities. But, is it a good idea?

What does a chatbot do?
A 2016 Deloitte Insights article said, “Chatbots – software applications that engage in natural-language dialogues with users and perform tasks on their behalf.”

In some cases, firms use chatbots to tackle repetitive accounting functions, such as expenses, and to simplify administration processes and workflows. In other instances, chatbots are used to answer client’s tax-related questions or to pull data from a source file related to their business.

In a 2017 article from The Association of Accounting Technician’s in the UK, they feel, “...chatbots will likely take over menial tasks so that accountants can use more of their expertise to add value for clients. In fact, for those who engage, chatbots may even help attract new clients and impress old ones.”

Similarly, Gappify’s CEO, Jotham Ty, said, “Bots ... will handle the traditional number-crunching and repetitive manual work, while we accountants become the analytical and strategic partners of organizations that guide companies through the increasingly dynamic nature of today’s business [world].”
Are chatbots a game changer for firms?

Chatbot Pros and Cons

Pros

- Can handle business queries around the clock
- Cost-effective, fast, and accurate
- Have **limitless patience, flawless memories**, and a tireless work ethic
- Take over time-consuming tasks, freeing up your time to help with more complicated jobs
- Geosensing options help people to search for an accountant in their area
- Provide a personalized experience.
- Data recollections and analytics

Cons

- Limited accounting functionality
- Simple tasks only and answer templated questions
- Inflexible due to programming limitations
- Costly for in-depth logic
- Time-consuming setup

Current Chatbots

There are several accounting chatbots currently available, including:

- Sage’s [Pegg](#) and [AskMyUncleSam](#)
- Xero’s [Hey Xero](#)
- Gappify’s [Alan](#)
- Intuit’s [QuickBooks Assistant](#)
- Unit4’s [Wanda](#)
- Capital One Financial’s [Eno](#)

Each were developed to help business owners do accounting tasks more efficiently and to provide customers with answers to quick, simple questions, like this one from a QuickBooks user, “What the [heck] did I spend my money on?”

Currently there are about a dozen chatbot plugins available for WordPress websites. Bots, such as Giga Messenger-Express, IBM Watson Conversation, Collect.chat, Marketeer, Free live Chat Bot Assistance for Website or Blog, and more. Learn more about the plugin and its
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functionality before activating it on your site. Also, test it fully before letting your clients know it’s available.

If you’re looking to automate some of the day-to-day questions clients ask about, a chatbot integration might be right for you. With so many possibilities, are you willing to implement this potential game changer for clients in 2018?