

FROM THE MEHRUTHERM BLOG · AI AUTOMATION

A Customer Has a Question at 9 p.m. Your Website Says Nothing.

Most of what people ask is the same handful of questions, and a lot of them ask after you've closed. Here's how an assistant can answer from your own information, and hand you the rest.

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Think about the questions you answer over and over. What time do you open. Do you do that particular job. What does it roughly cost. Where exactly are you. Can you take something on next week. For a town hall it is the same shape: when is the water bill due, how do I get a permit, when does the transfer station open, who do I call about the road.

Most of these are not hard questions. They are the same few, asked again and again, and answering them is a quiet tax on somebody's whole day. Worse is the version that never reaches you at all: someone lands on your site at nine in the evening, doesn't see the answer, and moves on to the next business down the list. You never learn that person existed. The sale, or the saved phone call, just never happens.

Your website could answer for you. Not with a wall of text nobody reads, but with something a visitor can actually ask, in their own words, any hour of the day.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Most customer and resident questions are the **same small set**, and a lot of them arrive **after you've closed**.
- An assistant on your site can answer them in plain language, drawing only on **your real information**: your hours, prices, services, and pages.
- Built right, it **answers from your files and says so when it doesn't know**, instead of guessing.
- What it can't handle, it **hands to a person** to follow up, so nothing important gets a made-up answer.
- The win is two-sided: **fewer repeat questions** for you, and **fewer people who leave** because no one was there.

The same few questions, all day

Every business has its greatest hits. Answering them is easy, which is exactly why it is so easy to underestimate the cost. Two minutes here, a callback there, a message you meant to reply to yesterday. None of it feels like much until you add up a week of it and realize how many hours went to saying the same five things.

We have seen this pain up close. One shop we built a site for was worn out by the phone: call after call just asking the price of a job, instead of anyone placing an actual order. Clear prices on the page helped a lot. An assistant that can answer "do you do X, and what does that run" the moment someone wonders it, without ringing your phone at all, closes the gap the rest of the way.

The customer who came at the wrong hour

The repeat questions are the visible cost. The hidden one is bigger.

People look things up when it occurs to them, and that is rarely during business hours. It is after dinner, on a weekend, late at night when they finally sit down. If your site can't answer them then, a good number simply leave. They are not upset with you. They just needed an answer, didn't find one, and found it somewhere else.

An assistant that is awake when you aren't turns those visits into answered questions instead of lost ones. This is the same idea as having a website that does more than sit there: the point of the thing is to do work for you, including the work that happens after you've gone home.

It answers from your information, not from thin air

Here is the fear, and it is a fair one: everyone has seen AI make something up with total confidence. You do not want a helper inventing a price you never quoted or a service you don't offer.

So the whole job is building it the careful way. Instead of a general chat tool that will cheerfully guess, the assistant is grounded in your actual information: your hours, your prices, your service pages, the answers you would give yourself. It works from that, the way it can [answer from your own files](#) rather than from the whole internet. Ask it something covered there, and it tells you plainly. Ask it something that isn't, and it doesn't fill the silence with a guess.

When it doesn't know, it hands you the question

No assistant should pretend to know everything, and a good one is built not to. When a question runs past what it can answer, or when it's the kind of thing that really needs a person, it does the honest thing: it takes the person's details and passes the question along so someone can follow up.

That handoff is the safety valve. It means the assistant never has to bluff, because "let me get that to the right person" is always an acceptable answer. You are not promising that someone is standing by at midnight. You are making sure the question is caught and waiting for you in the morning, instead of walking out the door with the customer.

A general chat tool bolted on

- × Knows the whole internet and nothing about you
- × Will guess at a price or a service to seem helpful
- × No way to hand a real question to a real person
- × Sounds generic, because it is

An assistant built on your business

- ✓ Answers only from your hours, prices, and pages
- ✓ Says it doesn't know instead of inventing an answer
- ✓ Passes anything it can't handle to you to follow up
- ✓ Sounds like your business, because it draws on it

Where it fits, and where it doesn't

This is not the right tool for everything, and it helps to be clear about the edges.

It is a strong fit for the routine, answerable questions: hours, services, rough pricing, directions, how to start, how to pay, what to bring. For a town, it is the resident who wants to know a due date or which form to fill out. These are the questions that eat time precisely because they are simple and constant.

It is the wrong tool for anything sensitive, high-stakes, or genuinely case-by-case. A medical question, a legal one, a dispute, a decision that costs real money: those should reach a person, and a well-built assistant is set up to route them there rather than attempt them. The same rule runs through all of this work: **let the software carry the busywork, and keep a person on the judgment**. An assistant that knows the difference is worth far more than one that tries to answer everything.

ISN'T THIS JUST A CHATBOT FROM A FEW YEARS AGO?

The old ones followed a script: press 1 for hours, press 2 for location, and a dead end for anything else. They were frustrating because real questions never fit the menu. What changed is that an assistant can now read your actual information and understand a question asked in plain words, then either answer it or admit it can't. That is a different thing from a menu wearing a friendly face.

None of this replaces you. It handles the hundredth time someone asks the same simple thing, and quietly catches the person who showed up while the lights were off, so your attention goes to the questions that actually need you.

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Tired of answering the same questions and wondering who you missed after hours? Get in touch and we'll look at what your customers or residents ask most, and whether an assistant built on your own information would earn its keep.

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