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NAB says customer engagement rose with AI as BUPA joins tests

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National Australia Bank's new consumer focused AI tool has driven a 40 per cent increase in customer engagement since its launch last year.

Customer analytics and decisioning executive Jess Cuthbertson revealed the statistic about the "customer brain" during a keynote presentation at a convention for software company Pega in Las Vegas on Wednesday (Australian time).

"As soon as we plugged the brain in we saw a 40 per lift in customer engagement … which is absolutely massive for our customers."

"It shows the fact that we're being more relevant," she said.

"So it might mean that we actually speak to some of our customers less but when we do, they can trust that it's going to be something that's relevant in the moment for their need."

Following stories published about the technology from late last year, during a breakout Ms Cuthbertson declined to provide further statistics about how the customer brain further impacted on their customers.

"The customer engagement stat is one that I love because it's customers' reaction to what we're doing with the brain," Ms Cuthbertson said.

"But we do also track the outcome. So did the customer do the thing that we wanted them to do," she said.

The technology uses machine learning AI to analyse customer habits and anticipate their needs.

Currently, the customer brain is used for business accounts to prompt users to complete forms and to encourage users to update their personal information in line with regulatory requirements.

As well, it attempts to safeguard consumers from scams and fraud by prompting those with high daily transfer limits to lower them.

Asked if NAB was investigating using generative AI with the customer brain platform Ms Cuthbertson, joined by head of customer decisioning Lisa Marchant, said "not with this platform at the moment".

"But we are in market with other Gen AI use cases and we're exploring all opportunities," she said.

NAB, Commonwealth Bank and ANZ all use Pega software and presented at the same conference.

As well, private health insurer BUPA tested the company's generative AI features.

Data, Digital & Marketing Health Services director Cale Urwin told The Australian the company tested the technology in house (with no customers) to create prompts for how to communicate with consumers instantly based on their profile.

"It's more than just the communication and what content variants we serve. It's the end to end experience of how we would deliver engagement be it a phone call or a piece of content, via email, or print," he said.

In the past, teams of people would look up profile details of customers to determine the best way to reach them at what time, but this technology boosted BUPA's productivity, Mr Urwin said.

"Undoubtedly we saw 20 to 50 per cent operational efficiencies," he said.

"There's always going to be a human element, but the potential is that if you were to feed in your brand guidelines or your legal guidance around what we can and can't say around your product promises … (but) when you start to feed that insight into it, then it is able to automatically (suggest) tone of voice.

"Traditionally speaking that's done through steel technology, but over days as opposed to minutes."

Mr Urwin said BUPA's approach to AI is "conservative" because it values the "clinical responsibility that comes with healthcare".

"But to even say that you can generate a concept instantly in minutes as opposed to … up to three days, it's an unbelievable unlock of value."