



EBOOK

# How Airbus Improved Their Candidate Experience Globally with Bessie the Chatbot

**AIRBUS** jobpal



# Introduction

# AIRBUS

## Authors



**Bill Boorman**

Recruiting Innovation Expert &  
Judge #CandE Awards



**Dave Mills**

Recruitment Innovation &  
Airbus Chatbot Product Leader

## Company Profile

### Industry

Aerospace

### Employee No.

130,000+

Dave Mills is an innovator, although he didn't always see himself as one. In the 23 years spent working in the recruitment sector in the UK and the last decade in Toulouse at Airbus HQ, Dave's successful career is driven by a belief that separates him from others in his field.

**“If you don't keep up to date with technology,  
you're dead in the candidate market”**

At a time when Airbus saw a tremendous shift in the candidate market, Dave was the recruitment innovator who took on the challenge to find a revolutionary solution. This is Dave's story about how he improved the global candidate experience at Airbus with Bessie the Chatbot.



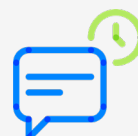
**12k+**

talent interactions every  
month



**74%**

of all questions asked are automati-  
cally answered by Bessie



**60%**

of candidates ask questions  
outside working hours

## The Problem

In the past, the candidate personas at Airbus had a background in traditional engineering and manufacturing. But over the last 20 years Airbus, like many other global organisations, shifted from being a traditional organisation to a digital organisation – which meant Airbus have to hire a new set of employees.

Although there will always be a need for aerospace engineers, Dave's focus was on attracting talent in one of the recruitment industry's most competitive spaces – digital profiles. Also, the recruitment team needed to hire outside Airbus' main candidate market for new recruits.

**"Today we are recruiting and competing against every other company in the world. A supermarket, a restaurant chain, banking, insurance, everybody's recruiting the same profiles."**

## The Solution

Improving Airbus' global candidate experience became the clear goal. But it's a monumental task for one person. The urgency to attract new talent pushed Dave to convince his superiors to find an innovative solution. Grated support from above, Dave assembled a team of HR and IT members to help him.

Now that Dave had a goal, a team and a budget, he broke down the main objectives that would get Airbus the talent they needed.

## Main objectives

### New Employer Branding

The first step was to revamp the hiring strategy. Starting with rethinking attraction beyond the Airbus brand. Dave knew he needed to represent Airbus as a leading-edge digital employer and make the aerospace sector look exciting for these candidate profiles.

### Streamline Candidate Engagement

The Airbus careers site receives a high volume of traffic but not as much engagement as Dave would like.

### Provide 24/7 Service

Dave found that candidates were sending questions around the clock. Which was creating a backlog of email tickets for the recruitment team.

### Eradicate Repetitive Tasks

Answering the same questions again-and-again proved time consuming for recruiters. If Dave could find a solution to remove the majority of this workload it would allow more time to focus on higher priority tasks.

## The Eureka Moment

Now it was time to start the research process. Dave spoke with the IT team to see what big digital trends they were looking at. Artificial intelligence was a trend that stood out and chatbots, being a subset of AI, caught Dave's attention.

**"Traditionally when candidates had a question, we would have a recruiter behind an email address who would respond. However, it wasn't instant. It took time. Not to mention resources."**

But how to use AI in recruiting? Looking at the growing popularity of chatbots in a customer interface, Dave could see a similarity between customers and candidates. Consumers expect instant access to information and personalised experience. Candidates are no different. The same experience should be the benchmark for a career site.

Introducing this sort of benchmark would be a big change for the Airbus careers website. But Dave thought that this pivot is exactly what his team should be striving for. The current flow wasn't engaging enough.

**"Could we use a chatbot on our career site to interact with candidates, to be able to give them answers to their questions instantaneously, 24/7? And this is where we then came to jobpal."**

## The journey

Dave knew AI was a great opportunity to modernise the hiring strategy, but as an early-adopter solution in the recruitment sector he needed to convince his superiors it was a great idea too.

Working closely with Chris, VP of Sales at jobpal, Dave built a use case that would start small and make an impact on their main pain points, modernising candidate communication and engagement. It was decided as a priority that the chatbot's first job would be to answer frequently asked questions (FAQs). Now it was time to jump into the implementation process.

## Chatbot implementation timeline

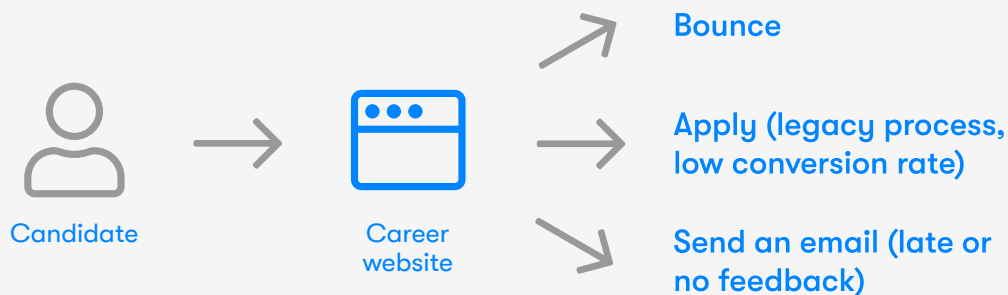
- 1 FAQ Training** – In preparation for the project kickoff Dave and his team set out to collect the most frequently asked questions from candidates and their answers. All of this information is combined into a FAQ dataset, which is essential for the FAQ Automation feature.
- 2 Chatbot personality** – Looking at how to take personalising the candidate experience a step further, Dave took the initiative to name the chatbot. But we'll go more into this later.
- 3 Implementation timeline** – Dave, his chatbot team and jobpal decided on the project timeline, milestones and a deadline for the chatbot to go live. As a result of the FAQ dataset being ready and the support was in place, the launch date was only 4 weeks from kickoff.
- 4 Conversational flow design** – The conversational flows are created and go through testing to see how different candidate personas would engage with the chatbot. Jobpal provides a chatbot mockup to demonstrate the prototype.
- 5 Implementation** – The chatbot and the FAQ Automation feature are brought to life with jobpal building the tech, and Dave's IT team implementing the chatbot onto the careers page.
- 6 Testing** – The conversational flow and FAQ Automation goes through internal testing among Dave, HR, the careers website team and IT.
- 7 Launch** – Bessie the chatbot is launched on the English version of the Airbus careers site.

# The journey

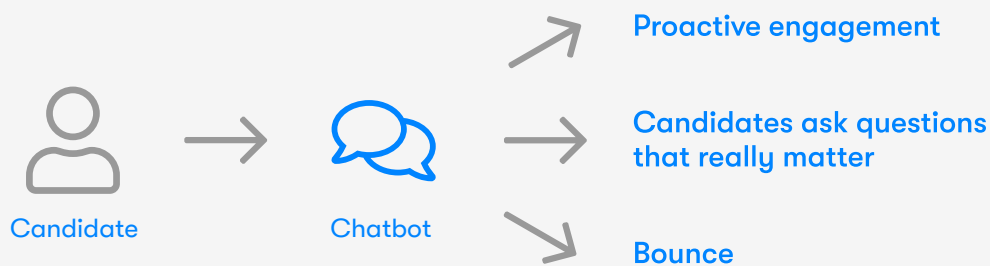
"Once we knew the chatbot is performing, we started removing email addresses. And then we've seen just phenomenal success..."

## Candidate Engagement Before vs After

### Process prior to chatbot



### New talent interaction

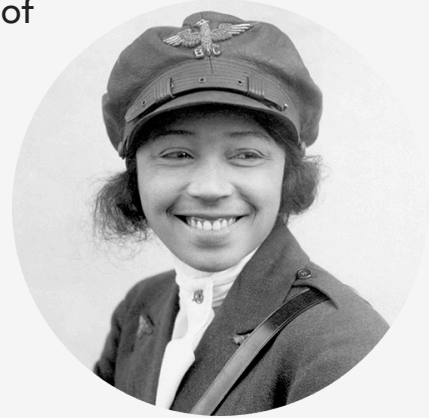




# Naming the chatbot – Say hello to Bessie

A chatbot can go beyond its main purpose of communication and engagement. Dave saw the chatbot as an opportunity to channel the Airbus personality.

"You need to consider the tone and appropriate personality for your chatbot, as with any communication. In marketing, candidate personas are always given names, chatbots are the same."



As an idea to promote the chatbot internally, Dave and his team held an employee-wide vote to name the new chatbot. The winning name was Bessie, named after Bessie Coleman, the first African-American female to become a licensed pilot. The choice of an early and inspirational aviator lends itself well with the Airbus brand.

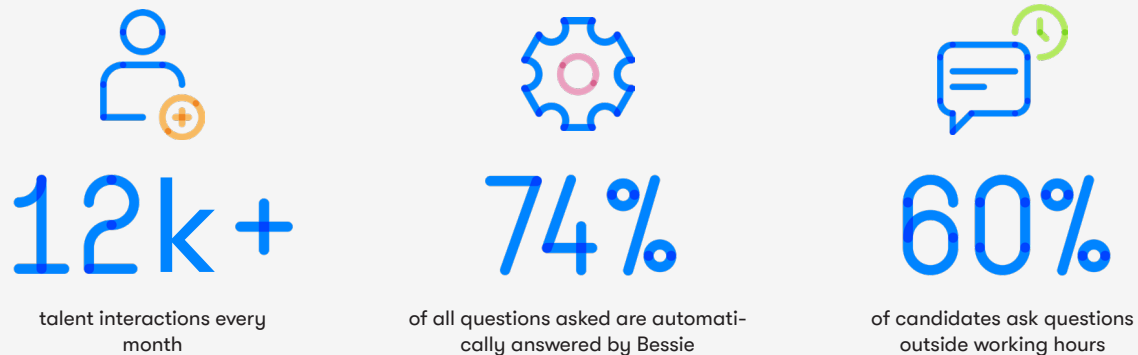
**"You've never lived till you've flown!"**  
— Bessie Coleman





# Key Chatbot Impacts

The deployment of Bessie has exceeded the expectation in the areas of candidate experience and satisfaction.



## Increase in applications outside Airbus' core market

"We've been able to give a lot more visibility to vacancies in the USA, India and China." - Because of the conversational flow, applicants can find jobs in their region easier, which has helped the Airbus recruitment team worldwide.

## Recruiters save time on repetitive tasks

"One of the biggest changes we've seen is that they [the recruiters] don't have to answer the same questions..." - Instead the team is spending more time engaging with in-demand talent and building relationships.

## 5 Extra Benefits

### 1 Time to ROI

The quality of responses and conversion rates have improved significantly since deploying Bessie. The growing success came earlier than expected—, with the conversation length thriving simultaneously with the ratio of Bessie's ability to answer questions and requests without deferring candidates to the recruitment team.

## 2 New and valuable data

Because of the conversational interface Dave receives new kinds of data. Open, unfiltered, honest questions from talent. The Airbus recruitment team is then in a position to provide much better responses to such questions.

The analytics from questions asked are also used to continually update the information on the career site, in changing the content available, or the process candidates need to go through during the hiring process. A measure of success is when the questions in these areas stop. The value of real-time feedback from questions should not be underestimated.

## 3 The Bessie Effect

Dave saw a huge additional benefit to the Bessie effect - that interactions between users and Bessie moved past static conversation. Bessie was offering an interactive personalised candidate experience at scale.

## 4 User-generated feedback

Where users continue to ask the same questions, the career site requires either greater clarity or additional new information.

Using questions as continuous and instant feedback means the career site can be continuously optimised in terms of information provided, navigation and design.

## 5 Faster response time to bugs

Another unexpected benefit was the opportunity to get instant feedback when the career site had performance issues as an early warning system. Issues can cause potential candidates to abandon (in high numbers) and not return when they can't do what they want. Whereas the chatbot is proving to be the way they are alerted of issues as they arise enabling quick resolution.

# What's next for Airbus and Bessie?

Bessie is held up as being a role model for chatbots at Airbus. Dave is now recognised inside Airbus as an expert on chatbots and has been a leading player in defining the chatbot strategy within Airbus. In addition he has helped many departments from all over Airbus (not just in HR) to get their chatbot projects off the ground.

## Coming up...

Expect to see Bessie speak three new languages this year including French, German and Spanish.

Continuing to reach his goal of improving Airbus' global candidate experience, Bessie the chatbot will offer job discovery as an additional feature for candidates. The job discovery feature provides an engaging browsing experience within the chatbot for candidates searching for specific roles – designed to improve candidate engagement.



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See how AI can improve your candidate experience.

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Senior Sales Manager

For press inquiries contact  
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Marketing Manager