



ASSOCIATION of TRAIN OPERATING COMPANIES

PRESS RELEASE

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LISA ARRIVES TO HELP YOU!

National Rail Enquiries (NRE) has just launched 'Lisa', a new online Virtual Assistant. Lisa is now poised, ready to answer your train travel questions, 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

Who is Lisa?

Lisa is a state of the art virtual assistant - known as a 'Lingubot' and is a virtual interactive assistant capable of holding conversations with internet users in real time, 24/7.

Working for National Rail Enquiries, she knows a great deal about travelling by train and is there to provide you with information that will help make your journey smoother. She will help you with every step of your enquiry from helping you choose the best ticket for your journey, to telling you about what facilities are available at your local railway station. She can even take you on a step by step guide of our Online Journey Planner.

Lisa is the first Lingubot to use Flash Video of a real person, rather than animated cartoons or photograph stills - another first for National Rail Enquiries.

Where is Lisa?

Lisa can be found on the [National Rail website, under the 'Site Help' tab.](#)

Lisa is always learning – and we realise that she will not know everything just yet, but we regularly review the conversations that Lisa has with people, so we know where there are gaps in her knowledge.

Chris Scoggins, Chief Executive of National Rail Enquiries welcomed the latest addition to National Rail Enquiries;

“At National Rail Enquiries we are committed to providing excellent customer service to everyone looking for train travel information. There is a wealth of information on our website, www.nationalrail.co.uk and Lisa will help people to find the answers to their questions quickly and with a minimum of fuss. We hope

that Lisa will make the experience easier for everyone and encourage more people to travel by train."

Nick Wilson, Director of The Virtual Zone, whose team created Lisa said;

"We worked very hard with the National Rail Enquiries team to build a knowledge base that was as comprehensive and foolproof as possible and having internal staff involved with the project from the beginning will ensure that it continues to be a success.

"Our objective was to make the user experience as real as possible. Working with video images and the fact that Lingubots are based on real language is the key. The conversations with Lisa are certainly longer than with a traditional eFAQ application and more questions are asked. Of course Lisa will get the odd frivolous comment but at the same time she will be providing essential travel information to 1000s of genuine questions everyday.

"We are looking forward to further developing this project to include features such as helping the traveller complete on-line forms and helping to demystify peoples complex travel arrangements."

Managing Director of the digital design agency, Fortune Cookie, whose video work brought Lisa to life, Justin Cooke says;

"At Fortune Cookie we put our clients' customers' needs at the heart of our design process. National Rail Enquiries asked us to help them create an exceptional customer experience that would at the same time deliver excellent return on investment by persuading thousands of customers to use their website rather than the phone. Lisa will help NRE achieve both of these aims."

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Notes to Editors

About National Rail Enquiries and ATOC:

- National Rail Enquiries is the single most called telephone number in Britain – 60,000 people call National Rail Enquiries every day
- Around 100 million visits are made to the National Rail website every year

- National Rail Enquiries is run on behalf of the train operating companies through the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC)

For train travel information and fares, visit: www.nationalrail.co.uk

The Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) is the official voice for the passenger rail industry - representing train companies to the government and other opinion formers on transport policy issues. Britain's train operators are working together to change rail travel for the better.

ATOC manages many joint activities for train operators including revenue allocation and settlement, impartial retailing, National Rail Enquiries, Railcard marketing, staff travel arrangements, international products and travel agent licensing.

Website: www.atoc-comms.org

About Lingubots, Fortune Cookie and Virtual Zone:

Lingubots

Lingubots are virtual interactive assistants, capable of holding conversations with internet users in real time, all day - every day.

Virtual Zone

Virtual Zone developed the 'brains' of the National Rail Lingubot. The underlying technology is based on a sophisticated word and phrase pattern recognition system that matches pre-programmed responses in the Lingubot's knowledge base with questions typed in by users - creating the sensation of communicating with a 'real' person. The Lingubot can not only answer questions but can also understand the context of those questions. You can even hold an entire conversation - a feature that makes VirtualZone's solution unique - no one else's Lingubot system does that!

Fortune Cookie

Digital design agency Fortune Cookie designs and builds web sites for some of Britain's biggest brands, including Legal & General and Kuoni. Further information at www.fortunecookie.co.uk

Fortune Cookie developed the 'user interface' of the National Rail Lingubot. National Rail Enquiries are the first to use Flash Video in a Linguabot, in a system that integrates seamlessly into any web platforms. The user interface can be a very simple, static image. Or it could be a branded video like Lisa, on the National Rail site. Ultimately, the only limit to the look, size and scope of the Lingubot's knowledge and personality is your own.

Lingubots are now deployed across a variety of other platforms, including SMS in the form of innovative and high-revenue chat applications and WAP - where the

advent of truly interactive and 'real' Lingubot characters has added a new dimension to games and other applications.

For web users - particularly of content-rich web sites - Lingubots can deliver important information far more quickly and efficiently than conventional channels like email or telephone. The result is happier customers, increased online retention; plus reduced operational costs and resources for your business.

Getting to know the customer

Lingubot technology delivers valuable insights into customers' behaviour and interaction with your brand that simply cannot be achieved with traditional web analytics. Transcripts of user conversations with your Lingubot can be easily managed and analysed - giving you multiple, tacit views of your users, what they are saying, thinking and feeling. It's a far cry from just measuring traditional 'clicks'.