



**TEETIME**  
ANSWERS FOR YOUR PRACTICE

## Issue #10: Human versus Robot

I'm a big fan of new technology, even though looking back at some of my purchases I realize that *new* does not always mean *better*.

Take the Lytro camera for example, which claimed it would improve the image focus after you took the picture. Sounded good at the time, but it was an epic fail in the land of gizmos.



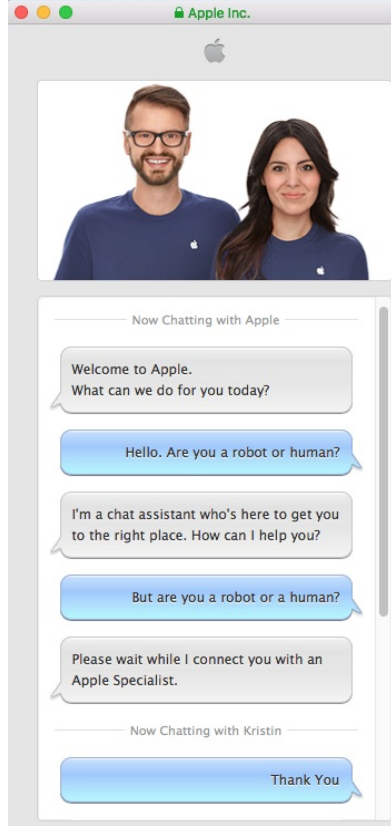
Lately, I've been reading about a future with self-driving cars (not for me!) and a front page *New York Times* story on fake Twitter accounts where a real person's identity is stolen and then used by a bot to build a user's following (frightening!).

And I recently discovered that those "live chat" support features on websites aren't always with real people. Here is a recent online exchange between Apple and me.

Although I've become accustomed to a computer answering the phone before I get to a human (United Airlines, for example), it was off-putting to see that I was now "chatting" with a robot.

Call me old-fashioned, but I think I just prefer human interaction when trying to solve problems.

I suppose there's a time and place for everything, including robots. The key is choosing appropriately when deciding which is going to be more effective: human or robot.



When it comes to medical care, there is a huge role for artificial intelligence. My son became interested in medicine after seeing a *60 Minutes* segment on how IBM's Watson is helping oncologists develop better treatment protocols. Watson can easily consume thousands of newly published articles with the latest data; humans cannot. Last year I wrote about [Everseat](#), a website plugin that allows patients to book appointments without having to call your practice. That's a great use of automation that improves the customer experience.

Contrast Everseat with the use by practices of IVR (Interactive Voice Response) where your patients are asked to "press 1" or "press 2" in order to route their calls. As my colleague and quality expert Greg Korneluk said, "phone trees are the end of quality." What seems efficient to the practice is often an exercise in frustration for the caller and negatively affects perceptions about the practice. And negative perceptions influence patient behavior.

The overall attempt here to replace human beings with automated solutions has led to **Get Human**, a website and app designed to help consumers reach a live person when calling a company. The fact that such a website even exists should be a warning sign to doctors or administrators who think they are helping their practice's bottom line by eliminating the person answering the phone.

The telephone call serves as a critical early impression that can make the difference between a new patient choosing your practice or going elsewhere. And the person answering it should be routinely described as *kind, friendly, patient* and *helpful*. Those are not the words I typically think of when describing a robot.

No matter how sophisticated technology becomes, some activities are just better handled by human beings. And when your business depends on how people feel about you in addition to you making them feel better, there is no substitute for that personal human touch.

## Everything Communicates:



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## About "Tee Time"

*Shareef Mahdavi has been helping doctors enhance their practices for years through technology, patient experience, and better economics.*

**Tee Time** provides answers to specific pain points within medical practices, offering advice and solutions from companies that have been reviewed and evaluated by SM2 Strategic.



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