MARLUC

CASE STUDY · MARLUC SYNOPSIS

IKEA Billie chatbot and remote selling

IMPLEMENTED 2021 ONWARDS · RETAIL AND HOSPITALITY · GLOBAL · BAND B · CLAIMED ONLY

VERSION 1.1 · PUBLISHED 15 NOVEMBER 2026 · UPDATED 15 NOVEMBER 2026 · FACTS CHECKED 15 NOVEMBER 2026

Ingka Group, the largest IKEA retailer, put routine customer enquiries through a chatbot called Billie from 2021 and says it retrained 8,500 call centre co-workers for complex queries and remote interior design sales. The results are the company's own figures, repeated by Reuters in 2023 and Fortune in 2026.

ABOUT THIS SYNOPSIS

This is MarLuc's summary and grading of publicly available sources, for information only. It is not investment, legal, financial or professional advice, and should not be relied on for any decision. Readers must validate it against the original sources and, where appropriate, challenge its conclusions.

Facts and figures are as reported by the sources listed below, which may be incomplete, self-reported or out of date. Check the original source before relying on any figure.

The impact band, proof marker and SEAM view are MarLuc's opinion. The organisation is not a MarLuc client and has not reviewed or endorsed this synopsis. Names and trademarks belong to their owners.

NOTICE WORDING LAST UPDATED 16 NOVEMBER 2026

AT A GLANCE

AI used: AI chatbot using natural language processing, named Billie; the underlying model and supplier are not reported.

Implemented: 2021 onwards. Grade: band B, Operating model redesign, Claimed only.

Headline result, as reported: 8,500 call centre co-workers retrained as the Billie chatbot took routine enquiries, by Ingka's account

1 · The case

The facts, as reported by the 4 sources listed at the end. Where a source is silent, the field says "Not reported".

Organisation

Ingka Group (IKEA). Ingka Group, the largest IKEA retailer, with a presence in 31 countries. The change covered its customer call centres; 8,500 call centre co-workers were reskilled, by the company's account. Canvas block: 5. People and skills. Also 4. Operations and process, 3. Customers and proposition.

Business challenge

The challenge. Per Fortune, online sales grew sharply during the pandemic and Ingka's call centres were fielding up to three times their normal volume; most queries were fairly basic or about existing orders. Ingka said Billie was created as part of a wider strategy to give better value to customers and co-workers.

Who implemented it

Not reported

Technology (SEAM pillar E)

SEAM types: not established; the sources do not say how the system works. Deployment: Not reported. Vendors and products: Billie.

Where it was built in: A customer service chatbot answering routine enquiries ahead of Ingka's call centres, with complex queries and design sales handled by people in 24 remote-sales centres.

What changed

Before: call centre co-workers answered basic questions such as opening hours, per Fortune. After: a chatbot answers routine enquiries first, and the same workforce handles complex queries or sells interior design remotely by phone or video. [1] [2] [3] [4]

What it cost

Not reported. Per Fortune, reskilling the 8,500 co-workers took two years, and new hires now train for five to six weeks.

What it saved

By Ingka's account in June 2023: about 47% of enquiries resolved by Billie from 2021 to 2023, 3.2 million interactions, and nearly EUR 13 million in savings. Remote customer meeting points brought in EUR 1.3 billion in the 2022 financial year, 3.3% of total sales, by Ingka's account. Per Fortune in July 2026: Billie can assist 74% of customers who use it; remote-sales centres accounted for 1.25 billion euros in the last fiscal year, up from 1.08 billion; Ingka says its in-house customer happiness score is 89%, up from 60% before Billie. [1] [2] [3] [4]

Governance and control

Ingka's 2025 sustainability report describes a group Policy on Digital Ethics, an AI inventory with risk assessment, and responsible AI training for 11,062 co-workers since its 2023 financial year; none of this is specific to Billie. Per Fortune, complaints and furniture queries go to a person. Accountable owner for Billie and checks on its answers: Not reported.

S2 · Accountable owner · Not reported
Not reported.

A1 · Safe use · Claimed
Ingka's 2025 report describes a group Policy on Digital Ethics and mandatory responsible AI training before co-workers use its internal generative AI tool; nothing specific to Billie is reported. [4]

A2 · Human in the loop · Claimed
Customers with delivery complaints or modular furniture questions are routed to a person, per Fortune's account of the remote-sales centres. [3]

A3 · Monitoring and assurance · Claimed
Ikea says its in-house customer happiness score is 89%, up from 60% before Billie, per Fortune; Ingka's 2025 report describes an AI inventory with risk assessment. [3] [4]

A4 · Vendor AI · Not reported
Not reported.

A5 · Agent controls · Not reported
No agents described.

A6 · Standards and regulation · Claimed
Ingka says it signed up to the EU AI Pact, committing to be an early adopter of the EU AI Act. [4]

What worked, what did not, what is unproven

WORKED

– Routine enquiries moved to the chatbot: 47% resolved in 2021 to 2023, by Ingka's account, and 74% assisted by 2026, per Fortune.

– Call centre co-workers were retrained instead of laid off, per Fortune; none of the 2026 corporate layoffs affected the remote-sales centres.

– Remote-sales centres grew 15% to 20% a year over three years, per Fortune.

DID NOT

– Not reported

UNPROVEN

– The savings, sales and satisfaction figures are Ingka's own; no audited or independent figure was found.

– Whether the aim of 10% of sales through remote channels by 2028, as Ingka told Reuters, is on course: Not reported.

– How many of the 8,500 retrained co-workers remain in the new roles: Not reported.

– Ingka's chief digital officer did not rule out future layoffs, per Fortune.

Timeline

2021 Billie chatbot rolled out in Ingka's 2021 financial year [1]

Apr 2023 Interior design services extended to the UK and United States [2]

Jun 2023 Ingka reports 47% of enquiries resolved and 8,500 co-workers reskilled [1]

2026 Ingka lays off corporate workers; remote-sales centres not affected, per Fortune [3]

Jul 2026 Fortune reports Billie assisting 74% of customers who use it [3]

2 · Grade and SEAM assessment

MarLuc's opinion, made on the evidence above. How cases are graded: marluc.co.uk/case-studies/how-we-rate

Level of change and impact

Claimed: Not applicable. Grade: B, Operating model redesign. Proof: Claimed only. Level of change: Operating model.

The SEAM view and lessons learnt

The chatbot took the routine work, and the capacity it released was given a new job with its own sales line. The join between technology and people was planned: training took two years and ran alongside the chatbot's growth, per Fortune. For a mid-sized or larger organisation, the transferable point is to decide what released capacity will do, and how that will be measured, before automating the routine work.

1. Decide what released capacity will do before automating routine enquiries.
2. Budget time for reskilling; Ingka's took two years, per Fortune.
3. Publish results on one consistent measure so that progress can be checked.

Evidence

Score 2 of 4. Self-reported: the results are Ingka's own figures, given in its 2023 release and to Reuters and Fortune; Fortune's 2026 reporting from inside remote-sales centres confirms the new roles exist.

Evaluation method. Self-reported company figures and press reporting: Ingka's 2023 release and statements to Reuters, and Fortune's 2026 visit to remote-sales centres; baseline and method not published.

Sources disagree. Ingka's 2023 release says Billie resolved about 47% of the enquiries it received; RTÉ's report says it handled 47% of customers' queries to call centres; Fortune says it could assist 47% of customers who used the tool. Ingka reported EUR 1.3 billion of sales through remote customer meeting points in its 2022 financial year; Fortune reports 1.25 billion euros for remote-sales centres in the last fiscal year, up from 1.08 billion. The sources do not say whether the two sales figures measure the same thing.

Status. Ongoing: Billie and the remote-sales centres were operating in July 2026, per Fortune.

3 · Original sources

Read these in full. To challenge a fact or a grade, use the contact form at marluc.co.uk or the link on https://marluc.co.uk/case-studies/ikea-ingka-billie

[1] Ingka Group: AI and Remote Selling bring IKEA design expertise to the many (June 2023)
https://www.ingka.com/newsroom/ai-and-remote-selling-bring-ikea-design-expertise-to-the-many/

[2] RTÉ: IKEA to hand more customer queries to AI bot Billie (June 2023)
https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2023/0613/1388839-ikea-to-hand-more-customers-queries-to-ai-bot-billie/

[3] Fortune: Inside Ikea's big bet on humans in the age of AI (July 2026)
https://fortune.com/2026/07/30/ikea-ai-workforce-reskilling-jobs-billie-chatbot-global-500/

[4] Ingka Group: Annual Summary and Sustainability Report FY25
https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/files/pdf/c7/70/c7703fa5/ingkagroup_annualsummaryandsustainabilityreport_fy25.pdf

Ingka Group (IKEA) website: https://www.ingka.com

Version 1.1 · Published 15 November 2026 · Updated 15 November 2026 · Facts checked against sources 15 November 2026 · Downloaded 26 November 2026. This PDF may be out of date: the latest version, and a way to report an error or a better source, is at https://marluc.co.uk/case-studies/ikea-ingka-billie

VERSION HISTORY

v1.1 15 November 2026 Method update: technology type set to "not established" where the sources do not say how the system worked.
v1.0 15 November 2026 First published