**NatWest – Supporting documentation**

**Jake Collins -**

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Our goal is to maintain Cora as the leading cognitive conversational assistant in the UK.

Jake joined the Cora team just over 3 years ago. He previously worked for IBM and Accenture, and very quickly established himself not just as someone who was technically skilled, but an energetic and focussed future thinker.

Jake is genuinely involved in idea creating for the majority of Cora’ technological

improvements and increased capabilities. His role has expanded over the last 18 months.

One of the key projects he has led has been the delivery of conversational AI within the bank’s telephony channel. This project was started by Jake within Cora’s ‘Futures Team’. Jake was a pioneer, researching the capabilities of Cora and how it could tie in with the bank’s current telephony infrastructure. This was a collaborative process which involved working with key stakeholders not only from within the bank, but also from outside. Jake led on all these discussions, thinking creatively as to how to respond to challenges to ensure the robustness

of our solutions. His lead on the architectural design and build, and his knowledge of underlying technology, not only meant he could have meaningful conversations around options, but his expertise meant that the germ of an idea could be worked upon with no additional expense being created with external third-parties. One of the key skills that is often missing on these projects is the ability to respond to challenge effectively without technically confusing an audience. Jake avoids this at all costs.

For the Cora team, we noticed that Jake also able to get his hands dirty and do a lot of the technological build that he had designed. If Jake does not know how to do something, he is happy to pick up with others across the bank and externally to upskill. Often, problem solving is done with Jake and external colleagues, but it is Jake’s knowledge of the bank’s own internal systems and his ability to visualise how new processes would work and what would need to change, is what is key to a lot of innovative thinking actually getting out of the lab and in the hands of

our customers.

Jake has also brought new technology into NatWest’s mobile app. Putting customers first shapes all of Jake’s thinking, and ‘deep linking’ provides a solution which allows the secure transfer of customers from Cora into the bank’s mobile app. This functionality means that Cora is able to navigate customers to parts of the mobile app that are key to solving a customer’s query. Cora’s ability to take customers to the exact spot simply removes extensive directions and wordy explanations, and positions Cora really as a banking assistant that makes engagement with the bank effortless.

One of the biggest challenges the bank has is around Security. Jake’s indepth technological knowledge meant that he could quickly identify changes that would be needed within Cora to solve a number of challenges we had around our overall security. When new requirements were asked for through a comprehensive audit of Cora’s components, Jake knew that the solution rested with the adoption of Enterprise Open source software by ‘Redhat’. Jake led

the technology team both in terms of design and implementation. This was a complex delivery which did not involve implementing an ‘off the shelf’ solution. It involved identifying synergies across the technologies and adapting to fit solutions across brands.

Collaboration was the key to success, but also managing expectations from Senior Stakeholders. This project encountered a number of bumps on the road, but Jake’s ability to assess the challenges, his ability to communicate and simplify the complexities of these challenges across the team, meant that everyone across the team knew what their role was and what was required for the. Jake knew where the team had to go, and the routes they had to take. Energy levels were kept high due to Jake’s ability to furnish everyone with the information they needed to get the job done but also that everyone’s input was important and essential for a successful delivery.

Jake has taken a lead role in the design and development of the strategy for Cora’s future vision. He continues to source, identify and bring new technology in to deliver new, exciting and innovative customer experiences.

Recently Jake was invited to speak at IBM’s ‘Think 2021’ conference on the use of OpenShift and CI/CD within Cora and the benefits this brings. Jake brought energy to the subsequent, but importantly allowed him to showcase his knowledge not just of how the technology works but importantly the challenges he faced with the implementation and how he overcame them.

Jake faces the diverse challenges he encounters head on, and uses a mix of his expert influencing skills, his deep technical expertise, his knowledge of the end to end Cora solution, his excellent understanding of the wider industry trends and emerging technologies and his collaboration and teamwork skills to drive our internal and external teams forward.

Jake is a key influencer and leader for everything Cora across many of our extended team and internal and external partners. He operates at many levels within NatWest and 3rd parties, specifically IBM and Accenture, including senior levels and shows real credibility and ambassador for NatWest.

His overall engineering contribution across Cora is deep, wide and influential, and he shows engineering coaching and leadership across the team. The NatWest Cora team and the wider Bank have a huge amount of respect for Jake. His honest and uncomplicated view of the challenges we currently face and those in the longer-term has enabled Jake to navigate often complicated internal structure. His voice can be heard and is listened to. We believe Jake exudes all the behaviours of one of the bank’s future leaders.