

THE FUTURE OF IVR SERVICE ASSURANCE

Voice of the Customer (VOC) programs have a very attractive return on investment story, with organizations seeing revenue increases from customer referrals of 7.6% and a 6.3% reduction in the average cost in customer contact.¹

Consumers today are more socially aware of products and services, and customer retention is critical to profitability since acquiring a new customer is the most expensive phase of the relationship. The challenge businesses face is how to proactively serve their customer in a mutually satisfactory way, with customers feeling empowered to use self-service tools and programs.

Voice of the Customer (VOC) programs have a very attractive return on investment story, with organizations seeing revenue increases from customer referrals of 7.6% and a 6.3% reduction in the average cost in customer contact.¹ Many of these programs solicit feedback from customers who have interacted with an agent, but there are two deficiencies with this narrow focus. First, this may not be the majority of customer contacts; with the enterprise seeking higher margins and lower cost of contact, the overwhelming emphasis is on higher containment and more aggressive use of self-service application enablement, so agent and customer contacts are simply just the tip of the iceberg. Second, psychological studies and research have shown that consumers modify their answers in particular scenarios based on perceived consequences, whether they be in compensation and credits to their accounts or the reaction of the human agent they interacted with.

The role of the IVR is, in most instances, to “front end” the agent and hopefully enable customers to retrieve information or implement changes to their accounts easily. So, what is the impact the IVR is having on customer service and the customer experience? According to some research, the top two issues resulting in a negative contact center experiences, accounting for 77% of the cases studied, had to do with customers having to repeat information to the IVR.² So, in this instance, are agents being set up for failure? Is the onus on the agent to recover this CX experience? Does the VOC program even cover these instances?

In yet another study, almost 50% of those interviewed had a negative opinion on the value of an IVR and how it’s deployed to assist them. The outcome from this research points out that the younger demographic is more willing to use a self-service IVR platform.³

Data analytics and classifying issues in real time is how businesses will build their contact center assurance programs to ensure the IVRs of the future continue to protect customer satisfaction numbers.

THE HESITATION TO ADOPT CHANGE

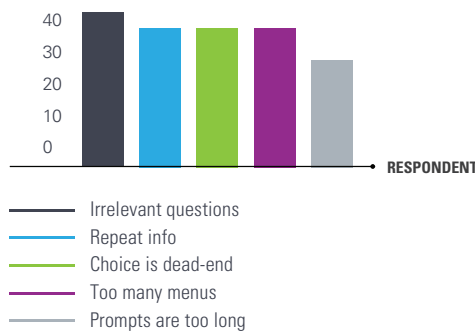
Businesses that adopt new technologies like voice biometrics, visual IVR, and natural language menu redesigns will find themselves in a finger-pointing game when the return on investment in terms of customer satisfaction and lower operating costs these new technologies offered is not immediately realized. This is precisely what occurs when faced with an inability to differentiate usability design issues, technological failures, and networking interoperability problems.

The true challenge of building a comprehensive contact center assurance program is getting reliable, objective metrics of the customer experience, external of the organization's technology, combined with the data and intelligence of the network and the applications riding on top of it. More importantly, the ability to segregate user and agent behavior from application performance, use, and capabilities in an objective, repeatable, and scientific fashion is the only way to establish a "control case" to map the technology changes, user interface changes, and the experience perceptions that all ultimately impact customer satisfaction.

DESIGNED POORLY WITH POORLY FUNCTIONING TECHNOLOGY

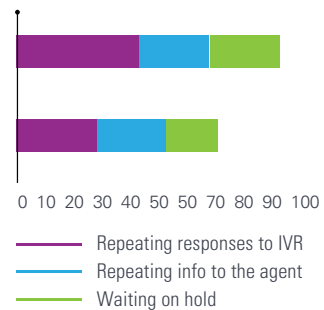
People view IVR's as obstacles to achieving their tasks. When asked why, they cited poor menu design and inaccurate recognition.

FUNCTIONS WITH IVR



NATIVE EXPERIENCE

Customers were asked to rank the reason for a negative contact center experience.



77% Repeating to IVR
55% Repeating to Agent
45% Waiting on Hold

EMBRACE CHANGE AND DEPLOY WITH CONFIDENCE

Empirix can assist organizations looking to build a contact center assurance program that helps them:

- Automate customer use cases so developers can accelerate releases
- Deploy cutting-edge technology with confidence
- Ensure systems are operating as designed and intended
- Detect, respond to, and remediate service interruptions and measure their impact on revenue

Empirix routinely assist our customers measure and build best-in-class solutions for monitoring those individual components, mapping them to business based attributes and dependencies and offering automated methods for recovery.

AUTOMATED REGRESSION AND USABILITY TESTS

Automating customer use cases in a platform offering individual step-by-step performance metrics of the IVR system can measure the content, conformance and delivery of the IVR. The platform should also be able to use human-like intelligence to take action in those grey areas of a speech application to determine if it should or should not ask for clarification of what was spoken—this is crucial to understanding if the technology is consistent in the experience it delivers, enabling the business to understand if it is providing value or increasing frustration. This platform should also be able to swap out the gender and culture of the automated speaker so the IVR can be tested against regional differences and consumer demographics. This isn't necessarily a QA person's responsibility; this may be a UX/UI team's goal for objective measurements in non-visual interfaces.

SCALABILITY AND FAILOVER TESTING

The scalability of the solution and its viability in certain component-level failure situations isn't just an IT operations issue; it's a customer service issue, which cannot be measured without a controlled and repeatable level of testing from the customer perspective. The measurement of "event windows," detection triggers, and automated recovery is a complex endeavor; Empirix routinely assists our customers with measuring and building best-in-class solutions for monitoring those individual components, mapping them to business based attributes and dependencies and offering automated methods for recovery.

AUTOMATED PRODUCTION MONITORING INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CLOUD

Because these automated use cases are such a basic but useful tool, this work must be able to be leveraged (not recreated) by operations staff for ongoing continuous monitoring of what is known as the "control case." This "Proactive Automated Customer Experience" transaction will let companies measure the PACE of the production systems as a known and reliable use case. Executing outside of corporate systems and environment provides additional perspective regarding carrier utilization, and the public network offers insight into how the cloud is delivering on its promise—specifically, if it's causing any obstacles to customer satisfaction in terms of speed of access or availability.

COMBINED COMPONENT AND TRANSACTION-BASED MONITORING

Vendors offer insight into how their individual components are functioning, but they don't do a great job of mapping the interdependencies among the equipment handling the call, the equipment gathering the CTI data, and the routers getting information from or to third-party networks. They also can't accurately measure the user experience of those transactions, but this is, after all, the reason organizations deploy these solutions in the first place.

When containment rates drop 5% and customer satisfaction drops 3%, the business will feel its impact in real-time and direct operations teams to remediate the issue.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

When an IVR platform is refreshed—whether with a natural language menu rewrite, voice biometric passwords, or virtual on hold queuing—to offer a significantly improved customer experience with less IVR talk time, faster access to data, and more self-service options, the business wants to see positive results.

Over time, the workforce optimization platform adjusts to the new platform’s capabilities and re-distributes the workforce accordingly, but what occurs when the new deployment or platform was deployed using less than best practice methodology listed above?

The aggregation and organization of this data is critical when the IVR platform starts to re-prompt callers for information and callers get frustrated and either opt-out intentionally or are forced out due to application logic. When containment rates drop 5% and customer satisfaction drops 3%, the business will feel its impact in real-time and direct operations teams to remediate the issue. In situations like this, it isn’t the operational metric of Mean Time To Repair that is going to save the organization, it’s the Mean Time To Understand what is causing the issue before a plan to repair can be put into place. Having proactive automated customer experience transactions and back-end-transactions looking at application-level performance and system component health, overlaid on top of network statistics at a device and route level, gives teams the information they need to classify technical abnormalities and distinguish them from usability issues. The proactive automated customer experience transaction will assist them in understanding if the user theoretically could achieve their intended task rather than their desire to bypass it. Data analytics and classifying issues in real time is how businesses will build their contact center assurance programs to ensure the IVRs of the future continue to protect customer satisfaction numbers—rather than ruin them.

1. (Minkara, O., & Pinder Jr, A. (2014). Voice of the Customer: Big Data as a Strategic Advantage. Harte Hanks.
2. Schwitters, S. (2015, April 2). IVR Limbo: The Customer Experience Killer. Retrieved from Spoken.com: <http://www.spoken.com/blog/topic/survey>
3. (Katz, J. P. (2015). Human Touch and the Customer Service Experience. Center For Research on the Information Society.