Waterfield Technologies

5 tools for maximizing customer experience within the IVR

Voice engagement is the customer experience for many customers; businesses must ensure it is a good one.

Introduction

Customer experience—it's the hottest topic in the contact center for both business and IT stakeholders alike. In years past, companies often overlooked the role the IVR plays in facilitating a positive, customer-centric experience. But this is changing...in fact, in an executive report published earlier this year by CCW, it's stated that

"The customer contact center may be witnessing the so-called 'digital transformation,' but the voice channel is definitely not dead. Voice, in fact, represents the #1 channel investment focus for 2018."

"Voice engagement is the customer experience for many customers; businesses must ensure it is a good one." [1]

Despite the importance given to customer experience, improving speech IVR applications remains a challenge. Businesses struggle to connect the factors influencing customer experience with the quality of the applications that determine the experience. This struggle leads to complacency, inevitably delaying the adoption of simple measures that can directly result in a better customer experience.

In this white paper, we'll talk about five key tools that businesses can use to achieve better customer experience through their speech-enabled IVR— all as a natural extension of what's already in place.

The outputs of these activities each provide unique performance metrics and insights on how well the speech application aligns with the expectations and behaviors of the callers it serves and guidance to the ongoing grooming and evolution of the phone channel experience.

As we walk through the Who, What and Why of these 5 tools, keep these tenets in mind:

- **The Front Door:** The IVR serves as the "front door" of the company greeting thousands to millions of customers each month as they enter the business. Each call is an opportunity to delight customers.
- **Measurable Benefits:** Both operational and experiential benefits are easy to measure within the IVR. Customers WANT to help themselves. If you make it easy, they will love you for it.
- **Low Maintenance:** For most companies, once the IVR is launched, it just goes. Proactively evolving the quality of the IVR keeps you ahead of the game.

1 Cantor, Brian. "CCW Executive Report: Contact Center Priorities for 2018."
CCW Executive Report: Contact Center Priorities for 2018, CCW, 5 Feb. 2018, www.customercontactweek.com

If the call flow has not evolved for five years, it is likely to need a refresh.

Speech Tuning

Who

Customer care leaders who have not performed a tuning on their speech IVR, have not tuned it in a year or more, or have recently experienced organizational change.

What

Tuning is a set of activities aimed at improving the speech and speech recognition performance of an IVR. As a first step, actual interactions between the IVR application and customers are logged and recorded. These interactions are then transcribed and assessed by a Voice User Interface (VUI) design specialist to determine how well the system understands and responds to caller requests and its ability to route customers accurately. This is accomplished by measuring the effectiveness of the primary speech states and grammars utilized by the system. From the data collected, VUI and Speech architects provide a detailed analysis of past system performance as well as enhancement recommendations that directly map to improve the quality of speech recognition. These enhancements may be made to either the recognizer settings, the grammars, or both.

More customer-centric insights are often produced as part of the read-out and measure how well the IVR delivers on its customer experience responsibility. Some businesses uncover that their system was designed for the wrong audience, that they have not automated the right transactions, or that their customer needs have changed over the years.

Why

Speech tunings identify tangible means of improving the quality of speech recognition within the IVR enabling it to respond more accurately to the customer's input. Depending on the complexity of the application, the process typically takes between 6-10 weeks to complete.

How often should I tune my IVR?

During the pilot phase	Every 1-2 years
30-90 days post launch	Major business change

Data Collection

Who

Contact center leaders needing to validate or uncover what their customers are asking for and how they ask for it.

What

Data Collections have played a critical role in the evolution and adoption of unconstrained speech in self-service and remain a first step in the implementation of a Natural Language Understanding (NLU) solution. The exercise involves the partitioning of a small percentage of callers from the business' primary IVR, routing them through an open-ended prompt, then immediately delivering them to an agent.

After a pre-defined collection period, typically spanning 5,000 - 20,000 customer inputs, the collection process is shut down and each input is transcribed, and a report generated as a result.

Why

The data collection exercise captures, in their own words, the customer's intended action. It uncovers the terminology they are using, requests for self-service transactions that may or may not exist in the system today and the frequency of these requests. Discover what questions your customers have when they arrive at your front door with zero risk of exerting influence over their requests. These insights can be used to discover gaps in the system and opportunity for design enhancements that reduce customer effort making it easier for them to complete the most requested transactions.

Example of an open-ended prompt

"Please say in a few words, what you are calling for today. You can say something like...

'I want to pay my bill' or

'I have a question about my account.'"

Usability studies allow you to gather in-the-moment feedback on the IVR's design and ease of use

Usability Study

Who

Customer care advocates seeking to boost engagement by improving ease of use and speed of getting things done.

What

The usability study is a focus group consisting of demographically representative subjects, resembling real-world customers. During the recruitment phase, stakeholders identify the audience they are most interested in receiving feedback from. They may be current customers, former customers or individuals they are looking to attract. Participants are asked to complete everyday tasks while observers watch, listen and take notes. The study concludes with an in-depth interview to obtain additional feedback on usability and raw reaction to the system. Questions such as 'Do you like the system?' or 'What can it do better?' give insight into

- Whether or not participants are able to complete specified tasks successfully
- How long it takes to complete specified tasks
- How satisfied participants are with the system
- And changes needed to improve the customer experience

Why

The usability study allows you to connect more directly with end users of the IVR, gathering more complete, direct and honest feedback from the end customer on how well it performed for them. This feedback addresses common usability questions such as 'How easy is it for customers to use the application?' and 'Where and how can the system be simplified to decrease caller frustration and reduce overall time spent in the IVR?'.

Personalization Assessment

Who

Customer Care leaders interested in transforming their approach to self-service through their voice channel.

What

Not all customers are the same. They are each unique with unique business conditions based on their state or lifecycle within your business. So how can you use the information you know about this customer to drive a better interaction for your caller?

A personalization assessment evaluates the conditions within your business that could drive smarter interactions with your customers. For instance, if the caller just paid a bill or has an item on backorder- how could you make use of

this information to adjust the interaction with the customer on this particular call?

Once uncovered, these conditions are then mapped to recommendations for tailoring the IVR experience to the specific need of the customer.

Why

Personalized speech applications provide callers with an enhanced experience, maximizing customer loyalty. Just a few simple data-driven business-rules can greatly elevate the level of conversation with your customers and increase self-service containment.

Persona Assessment

Who

Contact center leaders and customer care advocates seeking to ensure that the IVR represents accurately the brand of the company.

What

How well does your IVR portray your corporate identity and brand? When a customer picks up the phone, their first impression of your business is formed by what they hear from your IVR.

Persona is more than a voice- it's a carefully crafted blend of a company's mission, personality, and values. Through stakeholder interviews and analysis of organizational policies and guidelines, the persona assessment ensures these brand elements are represented appropriately in the IVR through its prompts, tone and voice.

Why

The IVR remains a consistent entry point for customers month after month, year after year. Taking the time to understand and develop the persona assures a unified experience across the organization further aligning the voice channel with corporate goals and customer care strategy.

Conclusion

The IVR is often under-valued, and more often under-utilized, making investment that much more valuable. It requires a commitment of time and attention from senior leaders and dedicated resources in the areas of VUI design, development, solutions engineering, software development and more. But the reward is transformative and long-lasting. The tools covered in this paper each deliver mutually exclusive benefits to your strategy, so do not be shy about doing them all.

There are big wins tied to your IVR- go out today and ask yourself if your IVR is providing the right experience for your customers!

Waterfield Technologies designs, integrates, and supports cloud and premise-based contact center solutions designed to build and sustain engaging customer experiences. Bridging today's phone, digital, social and voice-first channels, Waterfield specializes in helping businesses of all sizes connect with customers more efficiently, maximize customer loyalty, and provide analytical insight into the contact center's contribution to revenue growth.

Waterfield Technologies

waterfieldtechnologies.com
+1.800.324.0936