

6 quick tips to prevent customers from saying "agent" on repeat

The Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system is your customer greeter, the first thing your customers interact with as they try to get an answer. But when the path to solve an issue is riddled with trap doors and tension, customers grow more frustrated by the second.

Customers know exceptional IVR exists, and they expect nothing less

Mainstream virtual assistants like Alexa and Siri are making today's consumers feel more comfortable talking to Artificial Intelligence (AI). As these user-friendly voice technologies continue to grow in popularity, they're simultaneously raising the bar for present-day call center IVR systems. And for the most part, contact center IVR is failing at every turn.



98% of consumers try to skip the IVR to get to a human agent.

The top three terms used are "representative," "customer service," and "live person."

2018 Customer Service Expectations Survey. Gladly, September 2018.

Progressive contact center leaders know how to make IVR less annoying.

Don't be one of those contact centers that simply shifts the IVR loophole from pressing zero to saying "agent," **use these 6 IVR system tips** to help get your voice operations to not only meet - but exceed - the expectations of today's customers.

1. Provide context continuity to set the stage for great customer experience (CX). Customers often start their journey in one channel and finish it in another — pivoting channels based on their location, accessibility, and timing.

Incorporating continuity of context across channels makes it possible for callers to bypass many IVR prompts to improve call routing, reduce average handle times, and increase self-service containment.

2. Predict customer intent to help build trust at incremental moments. Intelligent IVR systems can identify callers according to their recent transaction history, previous orders and/or reservations, and environmental impacts in their area.

Leveraging this kind of technology to predict customer intent makes it possible to address issues right away or offer modified prompts before presenting a full menu of options.



3. Adapt to each caller based on his/her experience level (i.e. first-time caller vs. regular caller) and perceived importance (i.e. silver or gold loyalty programs) to recognize his/her needs and expectations sooner. And then deliver optimal CX based on those specific criteria.

Today's advanced IVR systems can alter talk tracks, remove upfront identification questions, and serve up unique menu options based on how callers interact with the technology in real-time.

4. Call them before they call you with proactive communications (i.e. area outages) and reminders (i.e. appointment confirmations) to help customers stay up-to-date with relevant information, rather than hunt it down on their own.

Sophisticated IVR software can even take this a step further by permitting customers to make edits on the fly without getting an associate involved, such as confirming, cancelling, or changing a reservation.

5. Go digital with modern day mobile IVR solutions like Visual IVR and Text2IVR. Use this cutting-edge contact center technology to collect transaction data, communicate with customers in their preferred channels, and pass pertinent information from device to associate when necessary.

Visual IVR technology displays traditional automated IVR options on smartphones and websites, and customers can "click" or "tap" their way through IVR prompts.

Text2IVR uses Short Message Service (SMS) to identify customers and perform routine queries based on alphanumeric codes that are texted back and forth through the IVR.

These kinds of intelligent IVR technology literally lets customers 'take actions into their own hands,' propelling their unique journey without disconnecting them from your IVR.

6. Offer queuing as a self-service to give customers the option to request a callback from a live associate, rather than waiting on hold. With this new-age IVR software, customers can hold their place virtually without staying glued to their phone.

Contact centers that have already adopted this specific IVR feature report having shorter hold times, fewer call abandons, greater productivity, and better customer satisfaction.

Voice in the contact center isn't dying – it's evolving

The traditional IVR is not long for the modern contact center. However, voice assistants and Alexa-type devices aren't the end-all-be-all customer service solutions for the foreseeable future. It's essential to recognize what is and what is not working to support your customers and allocating resources to the right areas for the greatest impact.