[24]7.ai

ARTICLE

Evolving the Digital Journey: Innovating the Traditional Phone Channel

Deliver a Digitized Interactive Customer Experience

In today's digital world, your customers want to self-serve and demand experiences to be more personalized and delivered on their terms. Consumers are continuing to purchase in greater numbers using digital channels. Companies must be prepared to deliver a personalized experience for today's digital consumers.

Since consumers are no longer bound by the traditional paradigms when interacting with companies for service, the traditional Interactive Voice Response (IVR) has to evolve to fit today's digital consumer. This doesn't mean your IVR is obsolete and you have to start over. Rather, there are things you can do to augment and improve the service your IVR provides to your customers.

In many cases, companies are embracing today's digital consumer trends and technologies to engage their customers throughout every step of their journey. Unfortunately, in the phone channel, traditional IVR's are stuck in the 1990's. IVR systems, traditionally used to route billions of calls and provide a basic level of self-service, have been a workhorse on the front lines of customer service for decades. A modern IVR, however, can be the missing piece in the digital consumer's journey. While the digital age has made shoppers more tech-savvy and digitally-minded, they certainly haven't abandoned the phone channel; they're just using the phone in different ways:

1. ### Customer service journeys today begin on the web
   Customers prefer to self-serve for answers and only resort to the phone channel in instances when they can't find the answers or complete their journeys on digital channels.

2. ### The phone channel is now the 'second-line' of support
   Customers entering the IVR are often well along in their sales and service journeys using other channels. When they do eventually call to complete their journeys, their expectation is that the phone channel becomes a natural extension of the journey they already started. Customers don't want to have to repeat themselves when moving from, for example, the web channel to the phone channel.

3. ### The journeys and intents that people bring to the IVR are more complex.
   With many calls being 'escalation' in nature, the traditional rudimentary IVR features for self-service and routing will only serve to frustrate savvy customers who expect service quickly.

4. ### Customers are already on your site when they call your IVR.
   Since they started their journey on the web, why force them to leave? (Hint: You shouldn't.)

The internet is the dominant channel for consumers

60%

use it at least weekly

—Accenture, 2015

64%

of consumers today begin their service journeys on the web

—[24]7.ai Customer Engagement Index, 2016

In today's digital world, consumers expect an interactive experience across all channels—including the IVR. Unfortunately, most often the IVR experience isn't interactive. In addition, those who are on the web and on the phone simultaneously have to track two fragmented interactions. This results in a disjointed experience requiring higher customer effort, especially since voice interactions and web content typically are not designed to work well together.

The Solution for Companies: Make your IVR Web-Aware

For companies to optimize their IVR to keep pace with rising consumer expectations requires fusing the website with the IVR to transform it to a "Web-Aware" IVR. A modern, "Web-Aware" IVR will deliver seamless cross-channel customer experiences, with lower customer effort and frustration.

The Benefits of a Web-Aware IVR

The benefits of a Web-Aware IVR are:

- **Reduce repeat contacts:** Allows customers to complete transactions and resolve issues quickly leading to lower service costs and customer effort.
- **Eliminate channel switching:** Customers that can't self-serve on your website and must pick up the phone to call are already on their second channel. By knowing where the customer is in their journey, the IVR is better able to predict the intent and complete the journey quickly in the IVR.
- **Reduce agent transfers:** A web-aware IVR that understands customer intent and captures key customer information along the journey will be able to route the call to the agents with the correct skill, thereby reducing unnecessary transfers.
- **Eliminate repeat information:** Preserves content when customers switch between the web and IVR channels, thus eliminating the need to repeat information.

The Keys to Success to Deliver a Web-Aware IVR

1. Understand customer journeys to solve the right problems.
2. Orchestrate customer experiences within and across channels.
3. Digitize your IVR.

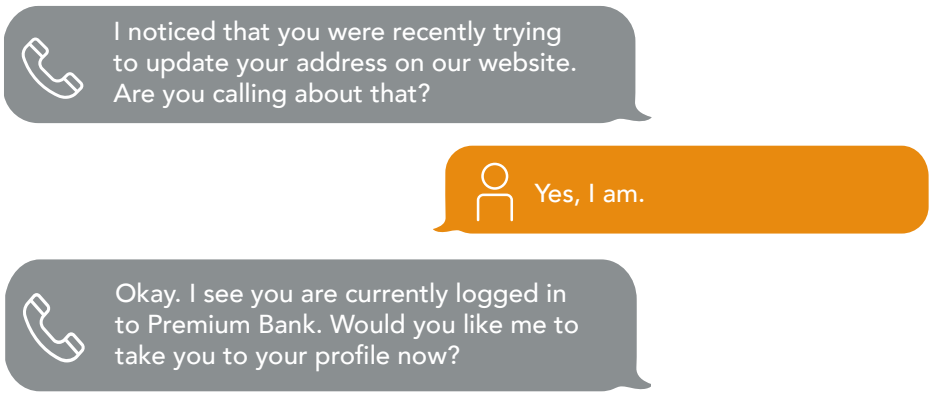
1. Understand customer journeys to solve the right problems.

As a first step to make your IVR web-aware, it's important to focus on the highest-value customer journeys. This requires the use of structured and unstructured data to understand where customers fail to accomplish what they're trying to do. Understanding this will help since the same intents are carried to the IVR. The next step is to find the right channel strategy to address those intents for customers who departed from a sales or service journey depending on the value and intent. Finally, experiences need to be designed for journeys where customers strayed or discontinued. For example, knowing the customer's web presence when they call the IVR allows you to dynamically offer the right experience.

While looking at the data, the primary task is to analyze channel leakage patterns. For example, look at whether customers are leaking from web to IVR, web self-service to chat, or chat to IVR for specific sales or service journeys.

The next task in using data is to focus on the right journeys in addressing intents. Certain intents and journeys are great candidates for self-service. Others require assistance and end up getting escalated to agents. Assessing those journeys (their volumes, value, and how best to treat them) will help companies understand how best to solve the right problem.

One common scenario today is consumers who would first go to the web to change their address on their account. However, if the customer can't find where to make the address change, they would most likely call to speak to an agent to help assist them. Once they call in and reach the IVR, using presence, the IVR is aware that the caller was recently on the web and knows precisely what they were doing. It can prompt them appropriately, and, if they are still on the site, push them a widget on the website that allows them to quickly update their address on their account page. Understanding this intent and correlating across all journey touchpoints will help understand leakage patterns and typical intents of customers.



2. Anticipate and understand consumer intent to orchestrate customer experiences within and across channels.

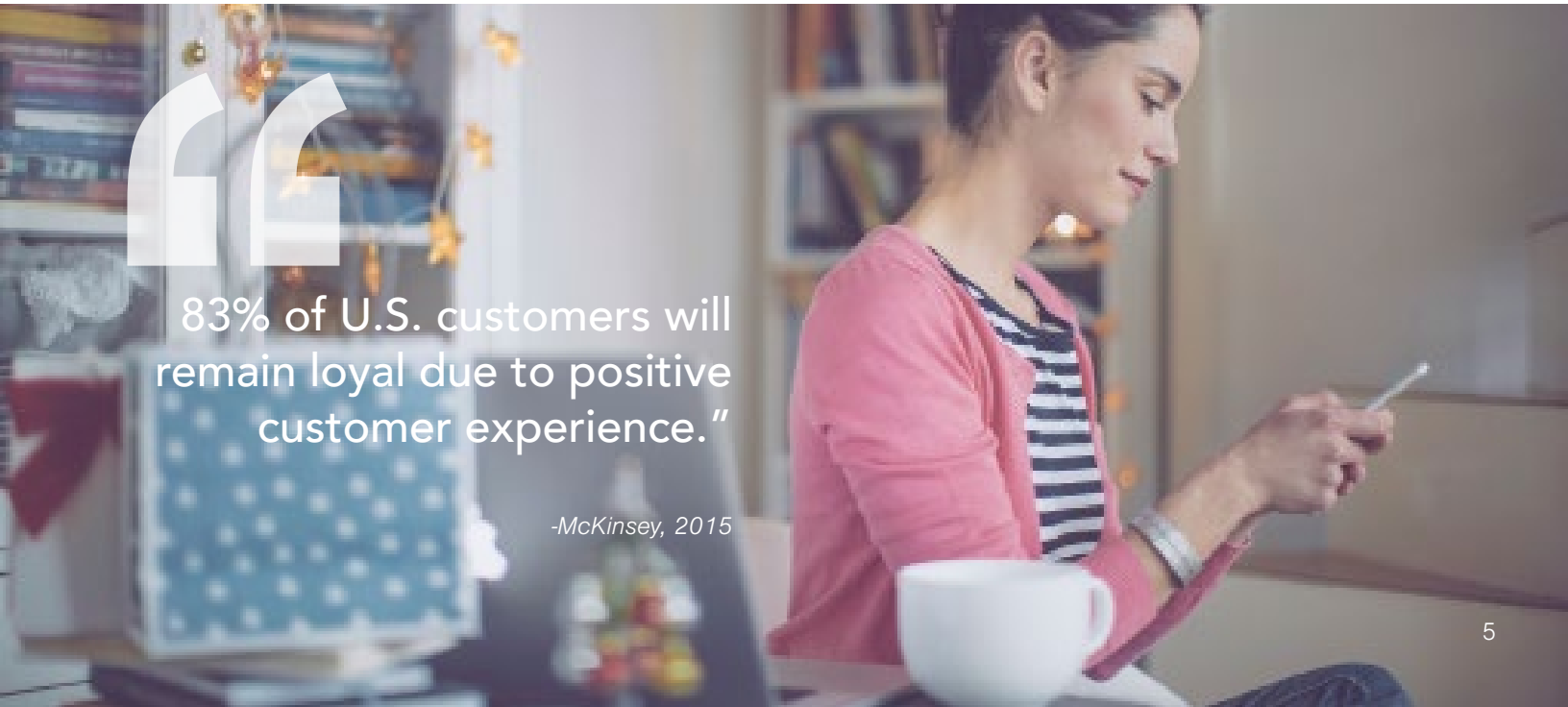
There are three key elements to ascertaining a complete picture of customer intent. The first element is using predictive models to understand intent. Shaping an experience based on intent makes it more personalized, thus lowering customer effort.

The second element is making the experiences as conversational as possible. For example, a virtual agent or chatbot—which is at the "front door" on the web just as the IVR is the front door to voice agents in the contact center—should be highly conversational. Providing a consistent self-service experience via a virtual agent requires unified natural language models that work across the IVR and virtual agent. All of this helps to increase self-service levels.

The third element involves leveraging the most advanced speech technology. For example, leveraging Deep Neural Network (DNN) technology in speech can dramatically improve the ability and accuracy of the recognition in the most challenging acoustic environments. It makes the speech engine much more effective in addressing different accents, particularly for people who are non-native speakers of a language or when there is a lot of background noise. The upside is that it's a lot easier to understand what the caller says so the experience can be treated appropriately. The above three elements work together to help anticipate and understand what each and every customer is trying to do.

> ***Deep Neural Network*** *(DNN) is Speech recognition technology inspired by the workings of the human brain that improves speech recognition rates, self-service rates, and customer satisfaction*

The final element is the choreography of a consumer's experience within and across channel pairs such as web to IVR, virtual agent to chat, or mobile app to agent. Channel orchestration combines different channels either simultaneously or sequentially. It depends on the nature of the experience and what needs to be done.

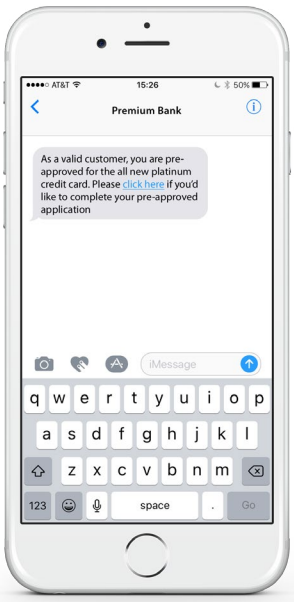


For example: a customer calls into the IVR to make a payment to their credit card and is offered an opportunity for a credit card upgrade, at which point the customer is transferred to an agent and completes the journey online.

IVR: Thank you for your payment. With a Premium Bank Platinum card you could be earning double rewards on all of your Mastercard purchases. Would you like to upgrade to a Premium Bank Platinum card?

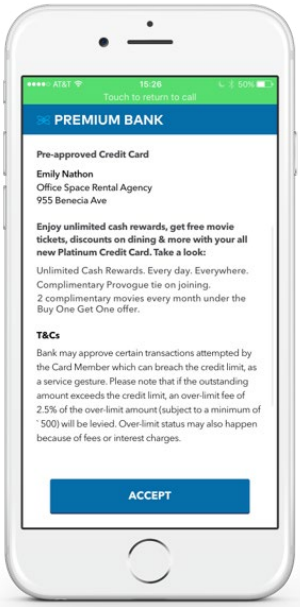
Customer: Yes.

IVR: Ok. One minute while I transfer you to an agent.

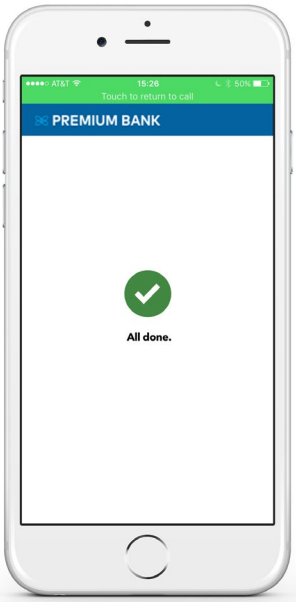


Agent: Hi. I'm Cindy. I'll be helping you with your upgrade today.

I'm sending you a link to your updated terms and conditions. If you have any questions, I'm happy to answer them.



Customer reads and accepts terms and conditions on the screen.



Agent: Thank you for confirming. You should receive your new Premium Platinum card in 2-4 business days. Do you have any questions or is there anything else I can help you with today?

Customer: No, that's all.

Agent: Great! Thanks for banking with Premium Bank.

This multi-modal experience allows companies to drive revenues by upselling customers, deepening the relationship with customers by offering products most relevant to them, and by lowering customer service costs by engaging with customers using the right channel for the right customer intent and journey. Once the journey is completed, the mobile app can be promoted with an option to download, thus promoting digital adoption.

3. Digitize your IVR

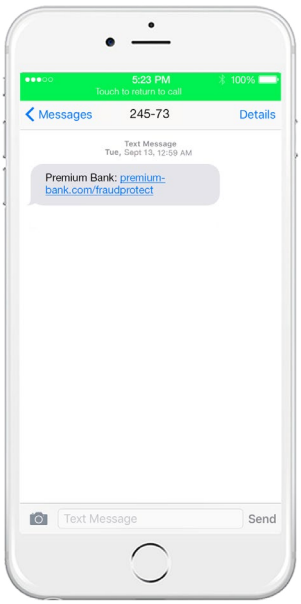
Research has shown the majority of customers begin their self-service journeys on the web. Similarly, a majority of customers cross channels if unsuccessful on the web. So, this third element in making an IVR web-aware is to determine the most logical channel pairs for your company. What are the high-volume channels that people use and tend to escalate from one to the next? Web and phone will be the logical starting point for most enterprises.

Let's look at an example of how these can be woven together: a consumer receives a fraud alert and engages with both the IVR and web to solve it. The company notices suspicious charges on a customer's credit card and the IVR proactively calls the customer to confirm the charge. The journey starts when the IVR calls the customer on their smartphone and notifies them of the unusual activity on their credit card. The IVR sends the customer a message with a link to a web page that lists the credit card activity. The customer reviews the list of charges and confirms that the charges are in fact theirs.

IVR: Hello, this is Premium Bank calling with a Visa credit card fraud alert. Is this Pat Wilson?

Pat: Yes

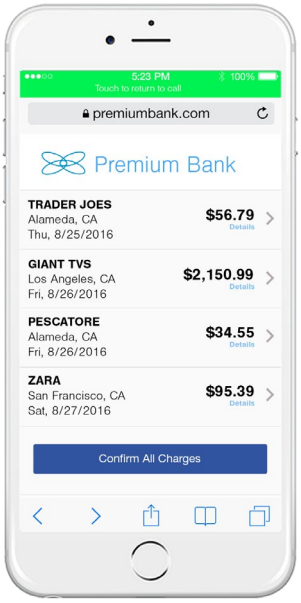
IVR: Thank you.



IVR: Over the past 24 hours we have identified some unusual activity on your credit card ending in 2354. Would you like me to send the details of your charges to your smartphone for you to review?

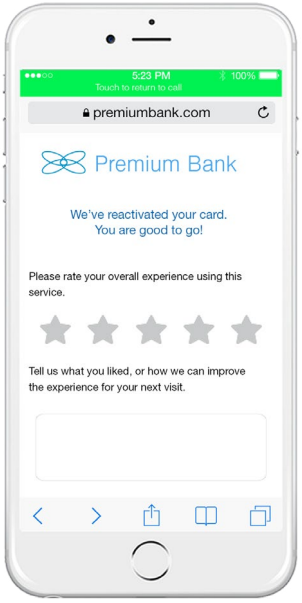
Pat: Yes

IVR: Ok, I've sent a link to a list of the charges. Just tap on the link to get started.



IVR: Here is the list of the charges for you to review.

Pat: All the charges are mine.



IVR: Thank you for confirming these charges. You may continue to use your card.

The digital integration of web and IVR makes the customer journey more personal and conversational, giving the customer a natural way to interact with less effort for their customer service needs.

Conclusion

Digital transformation has led to demanding expectations for customer experience where companies must deliver a consistently personalized, on-brand experience for each individual customer, at every touchpoint–anytime and anywhere. Companies looking to continue to grow their revenues, deepen relationships, and reduce costs would do well to learn more about their customers' needs, intents, and expectations. A modern, web-aware IVR helps companies bridge and connect channels to deliver the holistic, personalized, and continuous customer experience when high-value journeys leak from one channel to another. Replacing traditional IVRs with today's web-aware IVRs will enable companies to be well positioned to adopt a customer centric model which will help drive business outcomes.

Let [24]7.ai help your organization achieve extraordinary results. Contact us today.

www.247.ai

queries@247.ai

USA +1 855.692.9247
CA +1 866.454.0084
UK +44 0.207.836.9203
AUS +61 2.90025780

About [24]7.ai

[24]7.ai is redefining the way companies interact with consumers. We help you attract and retain customers, and make it possible to create a personalized, predictive, and effortless customer experience.

For more information visit: www.247.ai

1808AAEvolvingDigitalJourney
©2018 [24]7.ai Customer, Inc. All Rights Reserved