

IVR: calling for a better experience

A new Nuance survey reveals insights on the IVR qualities that today's tech-savvy, connected customers expect, contrasting them with those that make callers phone-slamming mad. If callers don't like your IVR, they won't use it. The negative effect reaches beyond inflated call-handling costs.

In fact, 37% of respondents said they might decide to stop doing business with your company altogether after a single bad IVR experience.

Who's dialing 1-800-customer service?

Despite the variety of digital channels available to consumers, the phone is still consumers #1 choice regardless of age group.



Press "0" if every menu choice is irrelevant to you

People want the convenience of self-service.

Only 1% of respondents indicated they will never try an IVR before deciding to transfer to a customer service agent.

But, they have little tolerance for wading through menu mazes.

40% will transfer to an agent if there's not a first-level menu choice that matches why they are calling.

Calling it quits! Top consumer complaints about touchtone IVRs

- #1 Complaint**
The reason they're calling is not in the menu.
- #2**
Often have to repeat the same information to an agent once they transfer.
- #3**
Overwhelmed by too many menu options.
- #4**
They can't get to an agent when they need to.
- #5**
Pressing touchtone keys on the phone is annoying.
- #6**
Doesn't have the information to solve their problems.
- #7**
Designed to help the company and not the caller.
- #8**
Too wordy and takes too long to get to the answer.

Press "1" if you're annoyed with phone trees!

What callers want	Hanging up happy	Phone slamming mad	What callers get
To know that you care about them 	67% indicated an IVR that passes along their information so they didn't have to repeat it to an agent would result in a positive experience. 60% are more likely to use an IVR if they know they won't have to repeat information to an agent.	42% indicated IVRs don't seem smart enough to solve their problems. 46% said that IVRs have too many menu options to remember.	Generic, one-size-fits-all experiences
Speedy 	60% responded they would use an IVR if it gave them the answer faster than waiting for an agent.	40% said that IVRs are just too wordy and slow.	Sluggish
Helpful & easy 	55% said an IVR that let them speak like they would to an agent would produce a positive experience. 47% indicated a friendly and natural IVR would create a positive experience. 31% responded they would use an IVR if they could simply speak instead of using the telephone keypad.	38% said IVRs take too long to get to the point. The majority of usability test participants reported touchtone IVR increased their cognitive load during the call and that they felt an increase in stress.	Robotic & tedious
Personalized experiences 	55% indicated an IVR that knew them and would adjust the menu to their needs would produce a positive experience. 52% would use an IVR that adjusted based on predicting the purpose of their call.	57% indicated the reason they're calling is never in the generic menu tree.	Generic & impersonal
Options & control 	66% would use an IVR if they let them go to a live person when they want.	45% complained that IVRs lock them in so they can't get to an agent.	Prisoner of phone automation jail

What would it take for people to happily use an IVR?

- 62%**
would use it if the IVR knew who they were (using their phone number or something equally easy, such as a voice print).
- 57%**
said if it could consistently help them get what they called about.
- 53%**
said if offered the option to get a call back rather than waiting on hold for an agent.
- 23%**
would use an IVR if it provided the option to get a text, email, or phone reminder or confirmation.

More people would use an IVR if it provided the option to speak rather than press keys:

- 31%**
will use IVR if they can speak instead of using touchtone keys.
- 15%**
will use IVR while driving to use the hands-free interface.
- 11%**
will use an IVR when they're calling from their mobile phone where typing is painful.

Good call!



Comparing touchtone to conversational IVR

We asked respondents to compare two IVR experiences that each accomplish the same task. The first was a well-designed touchtone IVR and the second was a conversational IVR that used speech and natural language. Here is how they rated.

Touchtone IVR <i>"With the electronic voice I had to listen very closely."</i>	Conversational IVR <i>"I know I am talking to a machine but it's a more personal thing to be speaking to a person's voice."</i>
What respondents honestly thought:	In their opinion:
54% annoying & boring	65% friendly
47% irritating	64% easy
28% efficient	59% helpful & efficient
<i>"I had to concentrate hard"</i>	<i>"...it was a pleasant change over the old style! Made you feel better when you are done, didn't wear you down."</i>
How do they compare?	
70% think poorly of touchtone system.	32% are more likely to try the conversational IVR System.
67% believe conversational IVR is faster than touchtone IVR.	43% are more likely to trust a conversational IVR.

Would callers recommend your company based on the IVR experience?

- Conversational IVR: Yes!**
IVR that uses speech recognition, and is personalized to tailor the experience based on predicting the reason for the call received a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of **83%**
- Touchtone IVR: No**
IVR that provides a one-size-fits-all generic touchtone interface received a NPS of **-50%**

Findings are based on two sources:
Primary Source: Consumer survey fielded in the US between April 11 and 24, 2014 asking 1,000 adults regarding their history in contacting customer service and interactions with IVR systems. The survey was completed through GMI's Global Test Market, double opted in panelists who have registered to participate in online surveys. Respondents were adults age 18+.
Secondary Source: Qualitative in-person task-based Usability Study held in the US May 6-7, 2014 which observed and reported user physical reaction, as well as their stated preferences and feelings around touchtone and natural language IVR.

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