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## 4 Ways to Earn Customer Raves with Your IVR System

### ***“How can we design an IVR system that our customers will actually use?”***

Providers of speech-enabled IVR systems are asked this question on a daily basis. Some of us joke that we even hear IVR systems in our sleep! There’s a reason for this high level of visibility: Developing an IVR system that meets the needs of everyone involved – from customer service, IT and marketing teams to the end users themselves – can be a tall order.

Well-developed, intuitive, user-friendly IVR systems may be the exception rather than the norm, but that doesn’t have to be the case for your company. Technology exists to build IVR systems that are fast and easy to deploy and make the end user’s call experience accurate and enjoyable. Here are four ways your company can earn raves from customers with a well-designed IVR system:

### **Know Your Customers**

One of the key complaints end users have of most IVR systems is an abundance of confusing or irrelevant menu items that accompany even simple requests. Many of these extraneous options are the result of an incomplete knowledge of callers and the information they seek when they call your company.

A valuable IVR provider can help you design a system based on what your callers actually seek to accomplish on the phone. Research should be conducted to determine what callers are requesting through your current system and with live agents, before we develop an IVR interface to handle those callers. Keep caller demographics in mind as well; younger users may be more likely to try a complex task with an automated system, while older callers may be more apt to “zero out” to a live agent at the first hint of confusion.

### **Avoid Overstuffing**

In the IVR world, we use the term “elegant” to describe how a well-engineered speech-enabled IVR system handles its tasks. It’s a simple rule of thumb: Any task that can’t be performed elegantly by an end user through the automated system should be directed to a live agent.

With the highly-advanced speech recognition and data management technologies employed in today’s IVR systems, it’s tempting for companies (and IVR providers) to try to automate as many tasks as possible. But overstuffed IVR systems are unwieldy to navigate and often wind up driving more traffic to live agents – the opposite of what they’re designed to do.

Once you’ve analyzed your current call center needs and created a wish list of features you’d like in your IVR system, sit down with your IVR provider to determine which tasks can be handled elegantly for end users through a speech-enabled system.



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### **Involve Customer-Facing Employees**

An automated IVR system is a major touch point for your company's end users. It conveys as much about your brand image and selling proposition as any advertising and marketing campaign. Rather than limit IVR design to business owners and executives, involve call center representatives and marketing managers. These customer-facing employees will lend invaluable insight into what your end users will find most helpful.

### **Pay Attention to Every Detail**

Even the most carefully-crafted, expertly-designed IVR system will fall flat if little annoyances impede the user experience. For example, consider carefully the persona with whom users will interact throughout a call. Your system's persona should be easy to understand, consistent throughout the entire call and free of annoyances that turn users off, such as over-produced or phony-sounding voices.

Recovery strategies are another area that can make or break an IVR system. Keep in mind that, ideally, users will liken their IVR experience to having a conversation. When people don't understand each other, they ask questions or rephrase statements to keep the conversation moving. Your IVR interface should employ similar conversational strategies to keep users confident and engaged when misunderstandings occur.