

SMALL TALK, BIG IMPACT:

How conversational IVR is revolutionizing the modern contact center



Voice, the most important customer service channel

In today's fast-paced and digital world, customer service has become more important than ever before. As consumers increasingly demand faster, more personalized, and efficient support, businesses have to adapt and modernize their contact centers to meet their customers' expectations. One channel that has stood out as the most valuable in delivering exceptional customer service is voice, better known as phone support.

According to **data from Zendesk**, 91% of customers believe that speaking to a live agent is the most effective way to get their issues resolved, and 59% of consumers **prefer the phone as their primary channel** for customer support. These statistics show that voice is a crucial touchpoint for customer service, and businesses that prioritize this channel are better positioned to meet their customers' needs and expectations.

However, delivering high-quality voice support at scale can be a challenge for many organizations. Long wait times, frustrating IVR systems, and untrained agents can all lead to a negative customer experience, which can result in lost business and damage to a company's reputation. This is where conversational IVR comes in.



INTRODUCTION

Conversational IVR is an AI-powered technology that allows businesses to automate their voice support channels, providing faster and more efficient service to their customers. This technology can handle simple inquiries, such as checking account balances or changing passwords or be combined with backend systems like Robotic Process Automation (RPA) to perform more complex tasks and transactions, freeing up human agents to focus on more nuanced issues.

Moreover, voice bots powered by conversational IVR can provide personalized and contextualized experiences to customers, making interactions more pleasant and engaging. They can use natural language processing and machine learning to understand customer queries and respond appropriately, providing quick and accurate resolutions to issues.

In this guide, we will explore how businesses can leverage conversational IVR and voice bots to deliver exceptional customer service. We will discuss the benefits of these technologies, the challenges that businesses may face when implementing them, and best practices for designing and deploying conversational voice support. With the help of these technologies, businesses can revolutionize their customer service and create positive and lasting impressions with their customers.

Voice bots - what are they?

Similar to a chatbot, a voice bot is an artificial intelligence application designed to interact with humans. Voice bots are powered by conversational IVR which allows them to understand human speech and respond in a natural way.





Why call automation matters in a contact center

Contact centers need automation to enhance their operational efficiency and reduce the workload on their agents. Automation can help with call routing, identification verification, and answering frequently asked questions. By automating these routine tasks, agents can focus on more complex customer concerns that require a human touch, leading to better customer satisfaction levels.

Automation also helps contact centers to reduce call handling times and queue times, leading to a better overall customer experience. Conversational IVR systems have become increasingly popular as they allow customers to interact naturally with the system. By doing so, customers can get answers to their questions quickly and efficiently, which leads to a more satisfying experience. With automated systems in place, customers do not have to wait for long, which reduces their frustration levels. Additionally, automation enables contact centers to collect and analyze data continuously, leading to better decision-making. Whereas legacy IVR systems are essentially a black box of frustration that crucial customer data disappeared into, by analyzing customer interactions with automated systems, contact centers can identify areas of improvement and make data-driven decisions to improve customer satisfaction levels, reduce call handling times, and streamline their operations.

“Anyone calling customer service outside of opening hours is directed to our voice bot and they get instant help. We can now offer 24-hour service on our phone channel.”



Knut Veulf Holme,
Senior Advisor, Posten Norge



5 key issues with legacy IVR*

46%

report that
menus are
too long

63%

report being
forced to listen to
irrelevant options

54%

report being
kept from
getting through
to a human

35%

report that
legacy IVR
systems waste
their time

65%

report the
reason they
called isn't listed

*Data from **Vonage**

Conversational IVR is the answer

Interactive Voice Response (IVR) systems have been around for decades and are widely used by businesses to handle high volumes of customer inquiries. However, traditional IVR systems can be frustrating for customers, with long wait times, confusing menus, and limited options. Voice bots powered by conversational IVR, on the other hand, offer a more intuitive and personalized experience, which can lead to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty. Below are some benefits of conversational IVR over legacy IVR systems:

Increased accuracy

Voice bots use advanced speech recognition technology, such as deep neural networks, to accurately recognize spoken words and phrases, even with variations in accents and dialects. This results in more accurate and reliable interactions for customers, leading to increased trust and confidence in the system.

Integration with other channels

By integrating with other customer service channels, such as chatbots or messaging apps, conversational IVR can provide a seamless and consistent experience for customers across multiple touchpoints. This integration can help businesses build stronger customer relationships and increase customer loyalty.

Flexibility and scalability

These systems can be customized and scaled to meet the specific needs of different businesses, industries, and customer segments. Voice bots can handle large volumes of calls and inquiries, making them ideal for businesses with high call volumes or seasonal spikes in demand.

Reduced costs

Voice bots can help businesses reduce their customer service costs by automating simple and repetitive inquiries, such as checking account balances or password resets. This frees up human agents to focus on more complex issues and reduces the need for additional staff during peak periods.

Better analytics and insights

You can gain valuable data and insights into customer behavior and preferences, which can be used to improve products and services, target marketing campaigns, and optimize customer service operations. This data can also be used to identify trends and patterns, leading to better decision-making and improved business outcomes.

So, how does a conversational IVR interaction work?

Let's consider an example:

A customer calls a bank's customer support line and is greeted by a voice bot. Conversational IVR then uses NLP to understand the customer's query and can respond with a natural language prompt such as, "Hi there, how can I help you today?" The customer can respond with their inquiry in their own words, such as, "I need to check my account balance."

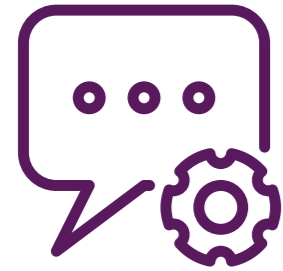
The voice bot then uses the customer's response to identify the appropriate action and provide a response such as, "Sure, I can help you with that. Please tell me your account number." The customer can then provide their account number through voice or touch-tone input, and the system can use this information to retrieve the customer's account details and provide an up-to-date balance. The system can then offer additional options such as transferring the customer to a human agent or ending the call.



5 steps to a successful voice project

Success in the voice space requires the right technology and approach.

The elements for successful voice experiences include:



Speech flexibility

Allows organizations to use the speech services they prefer



Strong NLU*

The ability to actually understand user intent



User-friendliness

The organization of data, information, and content design

*Natural Language Understanding

Step 1: Define use cases and prepare for success

Before deploying a voice bot, it's important to ensure you have the right technology in place, understand your use cases, and have aligned stakeholders. Work together to scope out what is expected and what the goals of the project are. Make sure that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of what the voice bot can and cannot do.

For example, while FAQs may not seem like the optimal target for a voice bot, if they are structured in a way that can be easily navigated using conversational IVR, they can act as a soft launch and align decision-makers on the potential of the technology.

Step 2: Optimize for each channel

Once a project is underway, it's important to begin the process of optimization. This means training the model and gathering data on end users. If you are deploying both voice and chat, make sure to optimize for each channel specifically. It is important to offer the same level of customer service across channels.

The content can (and should) differ depending on the use case, whether you have a narrow set of use cases or a broad scope that covers varied support scenarios.

Step 3: Don't set it and forget it - continuous improvement is key

Deploying a voice bot is just the beginning. There's an incredible opportunity to gather real-world data from users and use it to optimize even further. Pre-deployment, the data gathered often presents an incomplete picture of how a voice bot can help serve customers.

It's only after the channel is live that you can start filling in the gaps as users ask for things you may not have scoped for and as their expectations increase now that they are interacting with the channel. Continuous improvement is key to making sure your voice bot is meeting the needs of your customers.

Step 4: Education is crucial

From project start to finish, education is crucial and often overlooked. Whether you're working with AI trainers, engineers, the contact center, or marketing, everyone needs to be up-to-speed and aligned on how the project functions and fits within the organization.

Business decision-makers also need to be educated on the value of conversational IVR and how it fits within the overall customer service strategy.

Step 5: Test for the unexpected

Testing is how we avoid (as much as possible) any unexpected hiccups. Before a project goes live, make sure to test it thoroughly, not just the happy path but deep and broad, and those things you think users may not ask because they are likely to come up. Testing can help ensure that your voice bot is functioning as intended and meeting the needs of your customers.



Speak easy: Voice bot benefits of boost.ai

When it comes to automating telephony channels and delivering exceptional customer experiences, boost.ai is a market leader. Our platform offers a range of benefits when it comes to building voice bots that can revolutionize the way customers engage with businesses. Here are just a few of the benefits that boost.ai offers:

Unparalleled automation power

- Empower customer self-service across busy telephony channels, while keeping human interaction available to ensure optimum customer experiences
- Deliver lightning-fast customer service and resolve inquiries 24/7 with automated voice transactions
- Accurate routing and automated voice transactions free up human agents to resolve more complex queries
- Lower waiting times, handle times and drop-off rates by routing directly to the source, increasing First Call Resolution rates

Integration flexibility

- Easily connect to any speech service provider of your choice
- Use custom speech models or existing ones
- Fully flexible and compatible with any STT / TTS tool





User-friendly conversation design and analytics

- Easily build and manage voicebot conversations
- Get actionable, real-time insights from user interactions
- No coding required - upskill existing staff into AI trainers

Strong language core

- Market-leading NLU for accurate and efficient responses to user requests
- Large knowledge scope coverage enables voicebots to handle a wide range of topics and queries
- Self-learning capabilities for continuous improvement and enhanced performance over time

About boost.ai

Committed to delivering outstanding customer experiences, boost.ai stands at the forefront of enterprise-grade conversational AI. Driven to enable unparalleled interactions between people and organizations, boost.ai harnesses cutting-edge technology to push the boundaries of AI responsibly. Its proprietary self-learning AI platform empowers businesses to automate interactions at scale, enhancing efficiency and driving positive outcomes. Trusted by enterprises across various industries, boost.ai's virtual agents consistently maintain resolution rates above 90 percent, automating thousands of interactions daily. Founded in 2016, boost.ai is backed by Nordic Capital and operates from its headquarters in Sandnes, Norway, with global offices in cities including Los Angeles, Copenhagen, and London.



Transform your customer experience with AI

Are you ready to revolutionize your customer experience with cutting-edge conversational AI? At boost.ai, we offer innovative solutions that can transform your customer service into a more efficient, engaging and responsive experience.

Request a demo today and witness firsthand how conversational AI can elevate your customer experience to new heights. Join the ranks of businesses embracing the future of customer engagement.

Contact us:

www.boost.ai
contact@boost.ai



[Book a demo](#)