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Top 5 Ways to Make IVR Work
for You and Your Customers

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Unless you've been living in some remote location without a phone, you've interacted with an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system at one time or another. They are increasing in popularity as more and more companies are turning to self-service solutions to reduce costs and serve their customers better. But as you may have experienced yourself or with your own customers, there is a right way and a wrong way to use an IVR.

IVR is a great solution to many call center problems and when used properly it can greatly benefit your call center, your employees and your customers. The problem is finding the right balance between financial efficiency and customer experience. To help you find this crucial balance, we have put together a list of 5 IVR best practices to help you ensure satisfaction all around. These methods have been developed by call center experts with years of experience in the call center space. While there are lots of ways to develop your IVR, these methodologies can give you a great self service foundation to build on.

1. The IVR Road Map

One Internet service provider had big plans for their IVR. Instead of tackling everything at once, they prioritized what things could help them the most and tackled them one at a time. They started by implementing a simple IVR process that informed customers when there was an outage in their zip code. With that little piece of functionality, callers could quickly determine whether they simply needed to wait for a regional issue to be resolved or had a service issue that needed to be proactively addressed. It was the simplest item on their IVR implementation list, yet one that solved a major customer headache while saving hundreds of agent hours.

Like this company, you should also create an IVR road map that prioritizes your particular objectives. Start with the things that are causing your contact center or customers the most pain or the find simple projects that can produce big results. Then, proceed with each project, one at a time. This will help you stay on track, see results faster and will help your customers the most.

2. Keep It Simple

One inbound sales contact center tried to put their entire product inventory in their IVR system. They went to a lot of trouble, and actually got it working. However, after

all that work, they discovered that the number of products and required IVR choices were very frustrating to callers. Without an agent to help, callers abandoned the effort and sales were lost. Customers want fast, simple answers and this IVR effort just didn't quite cut it.

The lesson here is keep it simple and don't expect IVR to solve every issue. Some things are just too complex and unwieldy to implement economically and effectively. These projects can wind up costing a lot to implement and cause customer dissatisfaction - exactly the opposite of the IVR objective. When it comes to IVR, simple and effective is best.

3. The Right Way to Utilize Self-Service

As we all know, given the choice, customers like to talk to real people. When it comes to setting up an IVR, help them get to the right person as fast as possible. Over-automated systems frustrate customers and affect their desire to do business with you. After multiple menus and transfers, by the time they get to your service representatives, they are likely to be upset and difficult for your employees to deal with. This is a lose/lose situation for everyone.

That being said, when customers just want basic information like their account balance, the status of their order, or just want to pay a bill over the phone, they love the convenience of automated options that are fast, easy and available 24/7. Not only do they love it, but these days, they expect it. To customers, a good IVR shows them you are a big enough, solid enough company that is equipped to help them, even after hours. No matter your company size, IVR just makes you look good.

4. Make Sure IVR Aligns With Current Processes

One company implemented a new IVR payment system that utilized a unique integration to their customer accounting system. Although it worked, payments didn't

post along the same timeline. When customer's checked to see that the payment had posted online, they panicked because of the time delay in posting. This caused confusion and call volumes to escalate. Then agents had to learn two distinct processes to mollify anxious callers. The IVR added more work instead of reducing agent hours.

When it comes time to implement your IVR, make sure it aligns seamlessly with current processes and technologies. When it isn't aligned, it can create higher call volume, reduced efficiency, and backend overhead, defeating the entire purpose of implementing the IVR in the first place.

5. Use a SaaS IVR

As a Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) provider, of course we are going to say that, right? While we may be biased towards inContact, it doesn't change the facts. The facts are that traditional, premise-based IVR solutions involve a significant upfront capital expense, aren't nearly as easy to develop or operate, and are dependent on a technical staff to run. As if that weren't bad enough, every few years they "expire", requiring expensive upgrades to keep running.

Good SaaS solutions like inContact's don't require an up-front capital expense. Instead, you are billed incrementally— basically you only pay for what you use each month. No upgrades are necessary either. You are automatically updated every time we advance our product, at no cost to you. That means you always have the latest and greatest solution for your call center.

Of course, while the executive staff loves the millions of dollars they can save over time, the people that actually work in and run the call centers everyday love the functionality and flexibility SaaS/cloud solutions offer. inContact's cloud-based IVR is simple to use, makes managers more effective and doesn't require a technical team

to operate. Overall, it just makes managers' jobs easier and their representatives and customers happier. It's win/win for everyone.

IVR is a powerful tool that can greatly improve call center effectiveness and customer satisfaction. It offers your customers the around-the-clock service they expect, saves money, reduces agent workload, and gives managers the tools they need to make the most of their resources. When you are looking for ways to improve your customer interactions and call center operations, consider IVR. It is an exceptional solution that should be an integral part of any world class call center's relationship management strategy.

Resource Box
Want more insight? Watch video and read IVR-related Blogs:
Fox Business Interview
BLOG: IVR Blunders That Make You Want To Scream
BLOG: Do You Think R2D2 (Think Star Wars) Was Built By A Phone Company?

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About inContact:

inContact is the world's leader in cloud-based call center solutions. inContact provides call centers with cost-effective tools that help them increase profitability and can drastically improve the quality of their customer interactions.