Speech Self Service in the Customer Interaction Network: Increasing Efficiency and Enhancing Customer Satisfaction

Introduction

Few companies would argue the vital importance of customer care operations. Increasingly, customers are likely to interact with a company by Web, phone, e-mail or chat, rather than in person at a store or branch location. To meet this demand a company must adapt its customer contact strategy to integrate these channels of communication with customers. In addition to providing customers with the ability to access customer service via the channel of their choice, companies are looking to shorten response times to customer inquiries, by providing self-service options for customers. Self-service applications enable customers to quickly and easily get the information they need, which increases customer satisfaction and reduces costs through automation.

Recent studies have shown that 92 percent of U.S. consumers form their image of a company based on their experience with the company's contact center, and 63 percent will stop using a company's products or services based on a negative contact center experience (Source: Purdue University's Center for Customer-Driven Quality).

The Customer Interaction Network

Over the past several years, traditional contact centers have begun to undergo significant technological changes, with a requirement to blend voice, data, and Web-based communications in the customer care environment. Cisco Systems is leading this trend, evolving traditional contact centers to a *Customer Interaction Network*—a converged, distributed network that improves customer interactions, increases productivity and more effectively manages customers, customer information, and customer service resources (Figure 1).
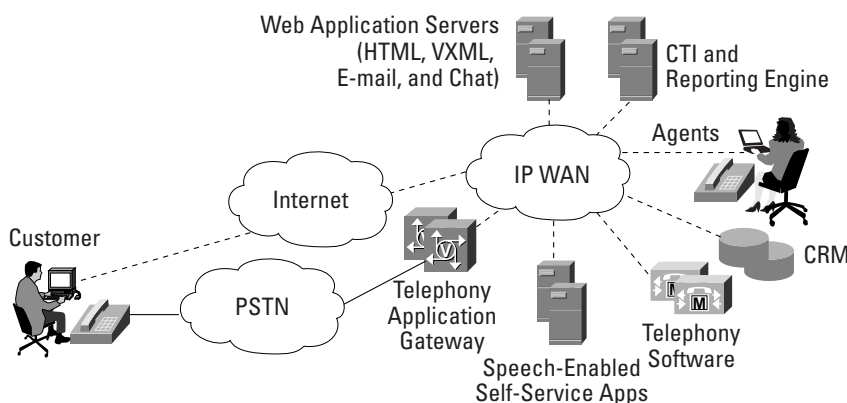

Figure 1: Customer Interaction Network
Customer Interaction Network: A combination of strategy and architecture to empower efficient and effective customer communication across an enterprise-wide, globally-capable, distributed, and resilient network that can deliver any application, to any resource, in any medium, anywhere.

Benefits of Speech Self Service

When customers require personal assistance or are looking for specific information, the telephone is still the most popular device used to contact your organization. Automated Speech Recognition (ASR) and Text-to-Speech (TTS) technologies can provide self-service automation to telephone contacts with clear benefits, including simplified access to information for your customers 24x7x365; significantly lower cost per transaction than live agents; higher customer satisfaction ratings; and increased brand awareness.

In addition, speech can automate transactions beyond simple touch tone usage, for example, speech-enabled name and address changes are easily done while they are nearly impossible using touch tones. Speech self service can also be aligned with Web self service investments to provide spoken information to customers from information that already exists on the Web. And, as customer preference for speech over touch tone increases, speech enabled automation rates in the contact center will increase accordingly—adding to the return on investment for speech applications. In fact, a typical return on investment is less than 12 months for a speech self-service application and average annual savings per speech application deployment can be as much as $1 million for mid to large size contact centers.

Integral with Investment in the Web

Cisco solutions are standards based, rather than forcing an enterprise to adapt to a particular architecture or configuration, and address the areas of primary significance to your organization's customer contact strategy. VoiceXML is used as part of the Customer Interaction Network solution to integrate the telephony channel with your Web self-service strategy to provide access to the same information over the phone as through a Web or micro browser. VoiceXML allows for significant reuse of programming and business logic built for customer contact on the Web by adapting the Web presentation layer for voice. For example, the same customer relationship management (CRM) application that determines if a customer has a gold or platinum card can be used to offer the same upgrade, service or special offer irrespective of whether your customer is at a service desk, accessing the Web site or has called your customer contact center.

Applications

Speech recognition technology from Cisco partners can accurately and reliably recognize words and phrases in grammars that contain more than one million entries. In addition, advances in Text-to-Speech technology enable natural sounding automated voice that can be used effectively to create dynamically generated prompts for customer data and also replace pre-recorded prompts entirely.

Applications of speech self service can be deployed across all major vertical markets including telecommunications, financial services, travel and hospitality, utilities, government and education, and retail. Applications can include order tracking, intelligent call routing, billing inquiry, information requests, password reset, voicemail, dealer locator, and name and address change, as well as many other self-service applications that can be customized for your business.

Cisco and its partners will work with you to investigate application possibilities and follow a defined process methodology to develop a technology roadmap and business case. This prepares your organization with a plan for an integrated voice and data channel with agent collaboration and universal queue capabilities that maximize both your customer's experience and your contact center operations.

In fact, the Cisco solution is so flexible that it can be used in single-site or multi-site contact center deployments with a mix of both TDM and IP PBX voice solutions. Deployment options also include premise-based or hosted through an Application Service Provider.

Proof Point: The Cisco Customer Interaction Network

Achieving superior customer service across eight individual Cisco support centers is the mission of the Cisco Worldwide Customer Interaction Network team. To achieve that goal, the group uses the Cisco IP Contact Center (IPCC) software solution to tie together all Cisco customer contact locations worldwide—creating a Customer Interaction Network. This virtual organization, responsible for the management of Cisco customer contact infrastructure, uses Cisco solutions to provide a single, integrated platform for every Cisco customer contact location and ensures that Cisco delivers seamless, consistent, and superior service to every customer.

About Cisco

Cisco Systems is the global leader in business communications, multi-media contact centers, VoIP, wireless and high performance Internet solutions. The Customer Interaction Network delivers superior service across all touch points of your business and raises the bar for productive, rewarding and truly engaged customer relationships over a cost efficient converged network. The Cisco product portfolio accelerates the integration of technology strategy with your business vision with the customer at the center of the Customer Interaction Network.

For more information please contact the Cisco sales office nearest you, or visit us on the Web at: www.cisco.com and start setting a new standard for customer interaction.

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