

Speech Recognition White Paper

There can be little doubt that a major shift is taking place in the way that consumers interact with organisations, both public and private, to pay for products and services and to request information. The standard 9 to 5 working day is now rapidly expanding into a requirement for service availability and potential response virtually on a 24 hour basis – yet very few consumers are prepared to pay appreciably more for the increased levels of service they are now actively demanding.

In this new operational landscape, with all the ever increasing internal and external pressures that apply, it is essential that customer service levels are maximised, whilst costs are strictly controlled or, ideally, reduced.

Speech recognition, which is now virtually 100% accurate in both its functionality and abilities to recognise all accents and dialects, when properly implemented, has the potential to radically improve the caller contact experience, whilst simultaneously meeting all customer service department targets for call management efficiency, but without necessarily increasing staffing levels.

The correct speech recognition tools can, for the caller, turn a passive call to the call centre into the voice-controlled equivalent of the full web experience, allowing the caller to easily locate the information or services they need and to process these promptly and, in many cases, without agent input.

This hits all the call centre hot buttons; cutting call queues dramatically, enabling calls to be dealt with promptly and efficiently, maximising the use of agents time and knowledge and potentially reducing operating costs by making more effective use of existing agents and minimising or potentially negating the need for additional recruitment.

Customer self service applications that are powered by speech recognition technology are not only driving costs ever downwards in terms of increased efficiencies and reduced staffing requirements, as mentioned above, but are actually preferred by more than 80% of users of all ages, to the delays they currently experience when holding on for too long for too few staff to answer them. Independent research proves that people generally prefer using speech driven self service applications rather than the DTMF touch tone IVR multi-option menu driven versions, which attract so much bad press these days.

Equally, it has never been more important to understand the customers' potentially changing perception of the way an organisation performs. Speech driven telephone survey functionality for example, now enables an instant assessment of customer views on service levels, product effectiveness and so on without the expense and time constraints of calling in external agencies.

The utilisation of speech recognition functionality has already been proven and can be experienced now in many everyday caller requirements – some examples of common sector specific applications, which are now in regular use, are shown below:

Local Government / Public Sector

- ✔ Find location of services – nearest library, schools, leisure centre etc
- ✔ Making automated payment – council tax, parking fines, fixed penalties etc
- ✔ Voting & opinion polls – local elections, local issues, referendums etc
- ✔ Automated applications – vehicle registration etc
- ✔ Local service status – schools closed by bad weather, industrial action etc
- ✔ Environmental services – missed bin collection, abandoned vehicles etc
- ✔ General citizen contact – graffiti, vandalism, faulty street furniture etc
- ✔ Speech driven citizen surveys
- ✔ Directory service – directing callers to required named staff or department

Travel and Transport

- ✔ Checking status of tickets / voucher codes etc
- ✔ Brochure / catalogue / information requests
- ✔ Checking prices and availability of services linked to peak / off peak travel times etc
- ✔ Standard arrival / departure time checks
- ✔ Vehicle rental / specific vehicle availability & location checking
- ✔ Checking hotel room availability, pricing and reservations etc
- ✔ Speech driven customer satisfaction surveys
- ✔ Directory service – directing callers to required named staff or department

Utilities

- ✔ Recording meter readings
- ✔ Change of address, name, billing or contact details etc
- ✔ Balance checks on pre-paid accounts
- ✔ Problem reporting – broken water main etc
- ✔ Service updates – temporary disruption to service, road works, diversions etc
- ✔ Setting up initial Billing record – Bank / credit card details etc
- ✔ Emergency calls – escalating to “on-call” staff members
- ✔ Speech driven customer satisfaction surveys
- ✔ Directory service – directing callers to required named staff or department

Finance

- ✔ Checking account information – balances, direct debits, standing orders etc
- ✔ Statement requests
- ✔ Locate nearest cash machine or branch
- ✔ Check status of bank loan, mortgage application etc
- ✔ Share trading services
- ✔ Make payments or transfer money from account to account
- ✔ Apply for loans, mortgages etc

- ✔ Speech driven client surveys
- ✔ Directory service – directing callers to required named staff or department

Retail

- ✔ 24 hour product ordering
- ✔ Brochure and catalogue requests
- ✔ 24 hour order tracking
- ✔ Store locator service
- ✔ Payments by credit or debit cards
- ✔ Standard and bank holiday national store opening hours
- ✔ Speech driven local and national customer surveys
- ✔ Directory service – directing callers to required named staff or department

Insurance

- ✔ Give broad details of policy types offered
- ✔ Specific details per policy type – exclusions, term benefits etc
- ✔ Renewal date checks
- ✔ FAQ's per policy type
- ✔ Check current status of no claims bonus
- ✔ Check changes in terms and conditions of specific policies
- ✔ Speech driven policyholder satisfaction surveys
- ✔ Directory service – directing callers to required named staff or department

Macfarlane Telesystems have recently launched “SpeechPlus Speech Attendant”, a leading edge Voice Dialler, powered by Nuance technology, to enable callers to be correctly delivered simply by speaking the name or department they require. Similarly, we are currently working on other applications utilising speech recognition to deliver self service solutions such as those shown above, at reasonable or no cost, when ROI benefits are taken into account, within the appropriate sectors.

For further information, informal advice and assistance on potential speech recognition driven solutions within your organisation please contact Macfarlane Telesystems on 0207 314 1314 and ask for “sales”

