Voice is Still King

The common perception is that the way customers communicate with businesses has changed dramatically in recent years. The fact that they are now called “contact centers” and not “call centers” should tell you something about the changing face of communications within the enterprise. They’re probably not receiving as many calls anymore, and other communications options such as chat, social media, and email are taking over, right?

As it turns out, wrong! Voice is still #1, and it’s not even close:

![Inbound interactions by channel](chart)


The reason behind the ongoing domination of voice calls as the preferred customer communications channel comes down to speed and complexity.
As outlined in the chart below, telephony remains the fastest way to have your complex needs met:

![Chart showing the speed of response and complexity of interaction for different communication channels with telephony at the top and slowest response time for social media at the bottom.](chart)


**Caller Satisfaction Impacts Your Brand**

The red arrows in the preceding diagram indicate areas where leading businesses continue to pursue new innovations to both shorten interaction and response times. With 70% of all customer interactions happening via telephony, efforts to create efficiencies across this communications medium are a priority in today’s competitive marketplace, where customers may decide to take their business elsewhere if their telephony interactions aren’t prompt and pleasant.

As part of an overall customer satisfaction strategy, voice calls play a vital role in how customers view your brand. A phone call is often the first person-to-person interaction a customer may have with a business. It creates an opportunity to reinforce your brand values and show that you value the customer's business. Yet, more often than not, the difficulties in balancing service for callers with costs lead to compromises that can cause long ring and hold times, unavailable operators, or rushed interactions with operators or agents that leave the customer’s needs unfulfilled. The repercussions of such poor service to callers can go well beyond the potential lost revenue from that single customer.

To put this in perspective, consider the following facts:

- A dissatisfied customer will tell 9-15 people about it. And approximately 13% of your dissatisfied customers will tell more than 20 people about their problem.  
  *Source: The White House Office of Consumer Affairs, Washington, DC.*
• It costs five to six times as much to get a new (first time) customer as it does to keep a current one
  
  *Source: the White House Office of Consumer Affairs, Washington, DC.*

• It takes 12 positive service incidents to make up for one negative incident
  
  *Source: “Understanding Customers” by Ruby Newell-Legner*

Set Yourself Up for Success

One effective strategy for improving caller satisfaction and thus overall customer satisfaction is to create an automated/live operator partnership that delivers the right service to the right caller at the right time.

In this arrangement, your greatest call handling asset — operators — remain available to handle complex caller requests and questions while an automated operator manages the routine requests. And since as much as 70% of calls into a business are of a routine nature (“Can I have Bob Smith?”, “Human Resources please”, “I need Billing”), operators can enjoy ample time to provide excellent service to callers by concentrating on the 30% that need their help.

At Parlance, we partner with our customers to deliver Operator Assistant™ automated operator solutions that connect routine call requests to their destinations in seconds. Operator Assistant also uses real-time analysis of caller behavior to determine when an operator’s assistance is required, and immediately connects these calls to operators and agents who remain available to patiently service more complex needs.

Using a fast, simple, and intuitive automated interaction process that emulates a live operator (“Good Morning, Acme Corporation. Who would you like to reach?”) to connect routine calls to their destinations creates a comfortable experience for the caller. Its exactly what an operator would say, and thus elicits a natural and instinctive response from the caller in comparison to traditional automated attendants or IVRs, which tend to frustrate and confuse the caller through lengthy instructions and options.

This automated/live operator partnership helps improve caller satisfaction for all callers by connecting them to either a requested destination or an operator in seconds without forcing the caller to jump through hoops, endure lengthy greetings and options, or figure out how to “beat the system” to reach an operator. Its intuitive, its fast, and its natural.

Coupled with Parlance’s streamlined implementation process (total customer time required is roughly 20 hours for implementation) and ongoing performance management processes, an automated/live answer partnership can begin improving caller satisfaction at your facility in just a few short weeks.

Summary

Voice calls continue to be the driver of business communications today, accounting for 70% of all customer interactions. The first impression of your business often comes from that first phone call. A positive experience
reflects positively on your brand, while a negative experience can have drastic consequences beyond that single call.

Make sure you’re ready to support customer satisfaction through caller satisfaction. Quickly greet the caller and ask them what they need, eliminate hold times, and increase operator/agent availability with Parlance Operator Assistant. Up to 70% of your calls will get where they need to go within a few seconds, and the rest will enjoy excellent service from your knowledgeable (and now available) operators or agents.

**About the Author**

As Director of Marketing at Parlance, Mark Bedard is responsible for promoting the value of Parlance and Operator Assistant in the marketplace. Mark possesses more than a decade of experience in helping technology companies align sales and marketing efforts with their customers’ needs.

**Parlance Operator Assistant™**

Parlance Operator Assistant™ is specifically designed to deliver a positive caller experience that yields greater levels of self-service for callers to and within your organization. A fast, simple, and intuitive call connection means happier callers, more available (and less stressed) operators, and time and cost savings for the enterprise. Operator call load is reduced, operational costs go down, and callers get to where they need to go quickly while never feeling trapped or isolated.

**Parlance Corporation**

Parlance helps a growing number of healthcare facilities, colleges & universities, and large enterprises deliver a positive caller experience with auto attendant solutions that callers actually like. Elevate each caller experience, drive efficient operations, and move beyond the typical auto attendant.