**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

**What is IVR?** IVR is the commonly used acronym for Interactive Voice Response systems. It is a technology that allows a computer to interact with humans through the use of voice and touch-tone telephone keypad inputs.

**Who uses IVR systems?**
Who doesn’t use an IVR system may be more accurate. Everyone and their grandmother have interacted with an IVR system at one point or another, whether calling their Bank to check account details or calling a Pharmacy to update a prescription. An IVR allows customers to select the reason they’re calling through menu driven options so they can be routed to the appropriate agent or ideally have the option to self serve their own inquiries by following the IVR dialogue and having their issue resolved quickly and simply without interacting with a human.

**Good vs. Bad IVR Experiences**
Since everyone has used IVR, everyone has an opinion on IVR and those experiences are mixed. Assuring a quality customer experience through your IVR can be a make or break situation as customers have come to know and appreciate the difference between systems that are efficient, effective, and easy-to-use and those which simply frustrate them and make them angry. Add to this, more and more customers want a personalized experience and have come to expect that from the organizations they interact with.

**Is it time to make a change to your IVR?**
Look closely at your own IVR. Is it time for your company to invest in a new IVR? Should it be a cloud-based IVR? One that will utilize CRM or other data to seamlessly service and support your customers? We will explore IVR systems over the next four chapters to help you determine if you have the right IVR strategy for your business and if it’s time to upgrade your IVR.

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CHAPTER 2: DETERMINING YOUR IVR NEEDS

To compete effectively, organizations often acknowledge they should implement a best in class IVR to deliver optimal customer experiences. However, for reasons that range from cost to a daunting IT project, many organizations relegate the IVR to the back burner. Follow these steps to determine what IVR needs your company has today.

Three areas an organization should review carefully when determining their IVR needs:

1. **IVR Platforms**
2. **IVR Applications**
3. **Telephony Infrastructure**
IVR Platforms

IVR platforms are the “server and operating system” on which IVR solutions run. IVR platforms, at a minimum, provide the ability to play and record prompts and gather touch-tone input. IVR platforms may also offer the ability to recognize spoken input from callers (voice recognition), translate text into spoken output for callers (text-to-speech), and transfer IVR calls to any telephone or call center agent.

With the advance in recent years of security in the cloud, IVR platforms are now available as fully cloud-based with the reliability and security that equals (or sometimes surpasses) on-premise deployments. Plus, a cloud-based IVR enables complete scalability for companies who may have spikes in inbound call volume – there’s never a concern about a caller getting a busy signal again!

Does your current IVR platform have what it takes to be best-in-class? Does your platform have easy to use tools that put you in control or are you reliant on IT staff?
IVR applications are designed to replicate conversational flows and respond to customers in the IVR. Best-in-class IVR applications put the customer experience first in the design and are not focused purely on reducing calls to live agents. When self-service IVR applications are designed optimally, customers feel empowered to handle their issue and at the same time enjoy the convenience and ease of doing so without needing to interact with an agent.

An IVR applications that ties into existing data stores can leverage known data about the caller, then gather additional information through prompts to complete a transaction automatically. In the event that a transaction (or at the preference of the caller) cannot be accomplished in the IVR, customers can be seamlessly transferred to live agents. IVR applications that integrate with back-end database and application servers to retrieve records and information create the best customer experience; these applications proactively direct the caller based on data that exists instead of generically forcing every caller down the same path.

When assessing your own IVR application, is it creating customer joy? Is it integrated with existing data stores?
Telephony Infrastructure

Telephony infrastructure includes telephone lines, call switching equipment, VPNs, MPLS connectivity, and call center Automatic Call Distributors (ACDs). Telephone lines for IVR can be standard analog lines, digital T1, or a SIP trunk. These lines are connected on one side to the IVR platform and, on the other, to call switching equipment including Telco switches, Voice over IP gateways, and corporate PBXs, or directly to a call center's ACD.

Is your infrastructure where it needs to be and poised for growth? Are you utilizing hosted cloud services to gain flexibility, scalability and seamless access to customer account information?

After the needs evaluation is completed, a company can look to implement changes to bring best practices to their IVR, upgrade or automate the way they interact with their customers, and ultimately create an IVR system that delights customers, reduces costs, and gains productivity.
CHAPTER 3: GAINING PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH GREAT IVR

One of the hallmarks of a good IVR is the ability to interact with the caller and answer questions, complete transactions or solve problems without directing the call to a live agent. Historically, IVR solutions have used pre-recorded voice prompts and menus to present information and options to callers, and touch-tone telephone keypad entry, to gather responses. Modern IVR solutions also enable input and responses to be gathered via spoken words with voice recognition.

More recently, in the age of personalization, self-service, and the Cloud, customers may also want to handle or manage issues or questions on their own, without needing to interact with a live agent. Data-driven outbound IVR can also be used to get information to or from the customers without waiting for them to call. In short, the cloud allows for a hosted system to keep data driven information accessible by utilizing access to the CRM to gain productivity.

What is important to consider is the caller. How is their experience interfacing with the IVR? If it’s a positive experience, the caller may choose to self service or reach the live agent with information already available on the agents screen that will help the call to be more productive.

To ensure that this is achieved, it is necessary to make clear to customers what your IVR system can help them with. If the system has a single purpose, introduce that purpose to callers up front. If the system can do several different things, create a clear and concise menu structure that quickly educates callers about their automated and self-service choices.

In any case, with the ability to reduce contact, while keeping a high level of service and customer satisfaction, enterprises are increasingly turning to a cloud-based IVR to reduce the cost of common sales, service, collections, inquiry and support calls to and from their company to gain a productivity edge.
CHAPTER 4: DRAWING UP THE RIGHT IVR STRATEGY

Choosing the correct technology for your IVR is critically important – but there is more to building a successful IVR system than just choosing the right technology.

From a technology perspective, there has been a major shift by organizations to the cloud. As companies start to build out and implement their cloud strategy, they are realizing gains in many areas – giving them a competitive advantage and opening ways to interact with their customers.

- **Instant** scalability (for example: to address unexpected spikes or seasonality)
- **Compliance** issues such as PCI are also easier and more cost effective vs. an on-premise deployment, which would be costly each year to stay compliant.
- **Speed and ease of upgrades**, no IT or Ops monitoring and lengthy software deployments.
Through the Customer’s Eyes

As organizations implement more of their services in the cloud, they will continue to see growth in the benefits of a cloud strategy. IVR and call centers, with their inherently high costs and low margins, would benefit greatly from a cloud strategy.

So, beyond the cloud, how do you evaluate your IVR strategy to make sure you have the right plan in place from a business perspective? One area that unfortunately gets overlooked in the quest to design an IVR to best suit the company, is looking at the IVR through the customer’s eyes.
Caller Bill of Rights

We developed a Caller Bill of Rights to highlight the 10 key items from a customer viewpoint when designing your IVR. Easily finding the information they need, knowing what they can handle through self service, how to reach a live agent when needed, and personalized service are all critical in achieving a successful customer interaction that will ultimately become an excellent customer experience.
CHAPTER 5: ACHIEVING POSITIVE ROI FROM YOUR IVR

Once your updated, cloud-based IVR is in place, and firing on all cylinders, you can realize and evaluate the IVR’s immediate Return on Investment (ROI). Implementing a cloud-based solution is very cost effective, it scales up and down with business requirements allowing you to better manage your call center. Self service choices built into the IVR can also reduce the costs associated with live personnel. The average cost of inbound call handle time for US in-house call centers is $0.96 per minute according to MetricNet’s 2013 survey. It is easy to see how offering a cloud IVR to route callers to the right agent, have customer information available through CRM interfaces, and using self-service options to reduce agent contact can have an immediate cost benefit.

The following are Genesys case studies that illustrate the ROI for different levels of IVR platforms.
Genesys Case Study: AstraZeneca

AstraZeneca is a global, innovation-driven biopharmaceutical business with more than $33 billion in revenue and 61,000 employees in over 100 countries.

Challenge
Intense government regulations of pharmaceutical companies, results in a high volume of changes to marketing programs. For AstraZeneca, a complex tangle of interactive voice response (IVR) systems, grown over time and managed by multiple vendors across multiple brands meant even minor changes were cost-prohibitive and could take as long as eight weeks. It also left the company without a holistic view of multiple programs across its six different brands.

Solution
Genesys Cloud replaced complex, disparate, and costly IVR applications with an enterprise, self-service voice solution in the cloud. The Genesys Cloud on-demand model supports immediate scalability without the costs of traditional IVR, while dramatically reducing the costs associated with hardware, software, maintenance and staffing.

Outcome
In approximately two years, the company’s containment rate increased from 40% to 80%. Now that data is coming through one system, brands can share best practices, and it’s possible to gain a holistic view of programs. Changes are no longer held up by an offsite vendor – changes that used to take 4 to 8 weeks can now happen in real time.

KEY BENEFITS
- Increased call containment
- Saved millions of dollars per brand, per year
- Gained holistic view across programs, brands, and voice applications

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Genesys Case Study: Securus Technologies

Securus is the premier provider of innovative communication solutions for approximately 2,200 correctional facilities across the United States.

Challenge
The company was relying on an outdated premise-based IVR and contact center platforms that had grown costly to maintain and upgrade, and couldn’t keep pace with users requirements. They needed to increase call containment in order to reduce rising labor costs.

Solution
Securus revamped their IVR and call center platforms from premise-based to a pure cloud solution that allowed the company to maintain 24/7 call center services, quickly implement changes, and protect personal customer information with high security, including PCI compliance.

Outcome
This cloud-based customer experience solution has allowed Securus to cut call center labor costs in half, even as monthly call volumes in the IVR doubled from 1.8 million to 3.2 million, as well as embrace the instant surge in customer demand when online payment services went live.

KEY BENEFITS
- Year-over-year increase in collecting funding via inbound and outbound IVR applications
- Application refinements, new call sequences, and other iterative improvements have increased IVR call containment to 83%
- Quick ramp up time whenever Securus wants to add a new capabilities
- Ability to make informed decisions, based on detailed analytics

Read the Complete Story
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Customer interactions, across all channels, are of strategic importance in today’s world. Managing those interactions to assure the customer is seeing the best face of the company is vital. At the forefront is making sure you are providing a useful, easy to navigate cloud-based IVR system for your customers – one that places the emphasis on meeting the customers needs, the increase in self service options, and done in an intelligent, efficient way that drives costs down and satisfaction up.

This playbook offers a snapshot of what should be under consideration – whether using outdated, on-premise solutions, or if you have already moved to a hosted cloud platform, but your IVR needs re-evaluation.

Your IVR system should grow and change with your business and its customer base. By keeping current, adding self-service options, and employing best practices you will make a good first impression, and reinforce that feeling on each subsequent interaction -- delivering the ultimate customer experience.
Is Your IVR Scoring Points with Your Customers?

Be sure you are running the right plays with Genesys!

For many, the IVR system is the first interaction a customer may have with your business. Make a good first impression, and ensure you’re taking the opportunity to build loyalty and satisfaction instead of seeming antiquated and causing frustration.

Let Genesys help you score wins across the business, with your customers, and achieve your IVR goals!
Genesys is the market leader in multi-channel customer experience (CX) and contact center solutions in the cloud and on-premises. We help brands of all sizes make great CX great business. The Genesys Customer Experience Platform powers optimal customer journeys consistently across all touchpoints, channels and interactions to turn customers into brand advocates. Genesys is trusted by over 4,500 customers in 80 countries to orchestrate more than 100 million digital and voice interactions each day.