Are you letting customers mind your store?

by Hsuan-min Chou on May 23, 2012

That's a great question asked by Emily Yellin, author of *Your Call is (not that) Important to us* ("We Really Are Happy to Serve You…"http://bit.ly/KaNBDb, *Speech Tech Blog*). And what is Ms. Yellin's answer? She's essentially saying that, "You have this great opportunity to make your company seem like the angel in your customers' eyes, and you're blowing it."

And how are companies blowing it?
According to Ms. Yellin, companies are designing IVRs to be in the their best interest, not their customers. We've all encountered them: A company-centric approach that is so de-humanizing that it asks "the customer to work really hard just to get a something basic done"—what's more de-humanizing than that? For instance:

- **The first thing a customer hears is the history of the**

company

Who cares? I'm not a reporter. I'm not looking for info *about* the company. If I want to know that, I'll check the company's Web site.

- **The IVR's voice recognition doesn't really understand a thing you're saying**
  It's like the Doonesbury cartoons lampooning the Apple Newton in the early 90′s (http://bit.ly/IQju2O). Hilarious to everyone except the target!
- **The IVR's menus are infuriating**
  You have to go through menu after menu to get a live agent. And more often than not, the IVR hangs up. The YouTube video, "Rafi vs. NYS Education Department Office of the Professions" (http://youtu.be/m6owPbzQA1g) illustrates this well.

Alas, being put on hold is almost unavoidable

With the amount of calls companies receive, it's no wonder we get put on hold so often. That's why they started implementing IVRs in the first place. But is the goal to get the the caller to a live operator as fast as possible? Or is it to give the customers the answer they're looking for as quickly as possible?

I would say, the latter: Get them information quickly

The goal of an IVR should be to give people the information they want quickly and easily, whether you get it from a live operator, or a robotic voice. People call companies to:

- addresses and phone numbers
- tech support
- weather

- get answers about where sales are
- entertainment schedules

And when they get this information quickly, either through automation or a live agent, not only is that good customer relations, it's good marketing. A well-designed IVR can make a company shine. Ms. Yellin says says it herself: "once [the IVR] starts not making sense for the customer and only making sense for the company, that's when you have to stop and reconsider."

And if companies really thought about it, if they designed their IVRs with a customer-centric approach, they *would* be putting the IVR in the company's best interest.

http://www.phonemarketinginsider.com/are-you-letting-customers-mind-your-store/

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