

The **new rules** of call containment.



The new rules of call containment

In the face of the seemingly impossible task of boosting customer satisfaction while cutting costs, increasing call containment is one of the key strategies you must master.

When done correctly, keeping calls within your Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system will allow you to give your customers the kind of service they now crave (self-service), at the lowest possible cost to your organization.

But while getting call containment right is critical, focusing on it at the expense of your customer's experience can also be a road to ruin.

Consider this:



“Today, **37% of consumers** say they might decide to stop doing business with your company altogether after a single bad IVR experience.”¹

So if your IVR is guilty of any of the top eight IVR complaints listed here, it's not only call containment or costs, but the health of your business that's at risk.

This is why the rules of call containment have changed.

To achieve the benefits of call containment (lower costs, reduced average handle time, etc.) it is no longer just about keeping customers within the IVR. It's about using the IVR to speed their journey to a resolution. This is what leads to both happier customers and lower costs over the long run.

So what does a well-honed call containment strategy look like?

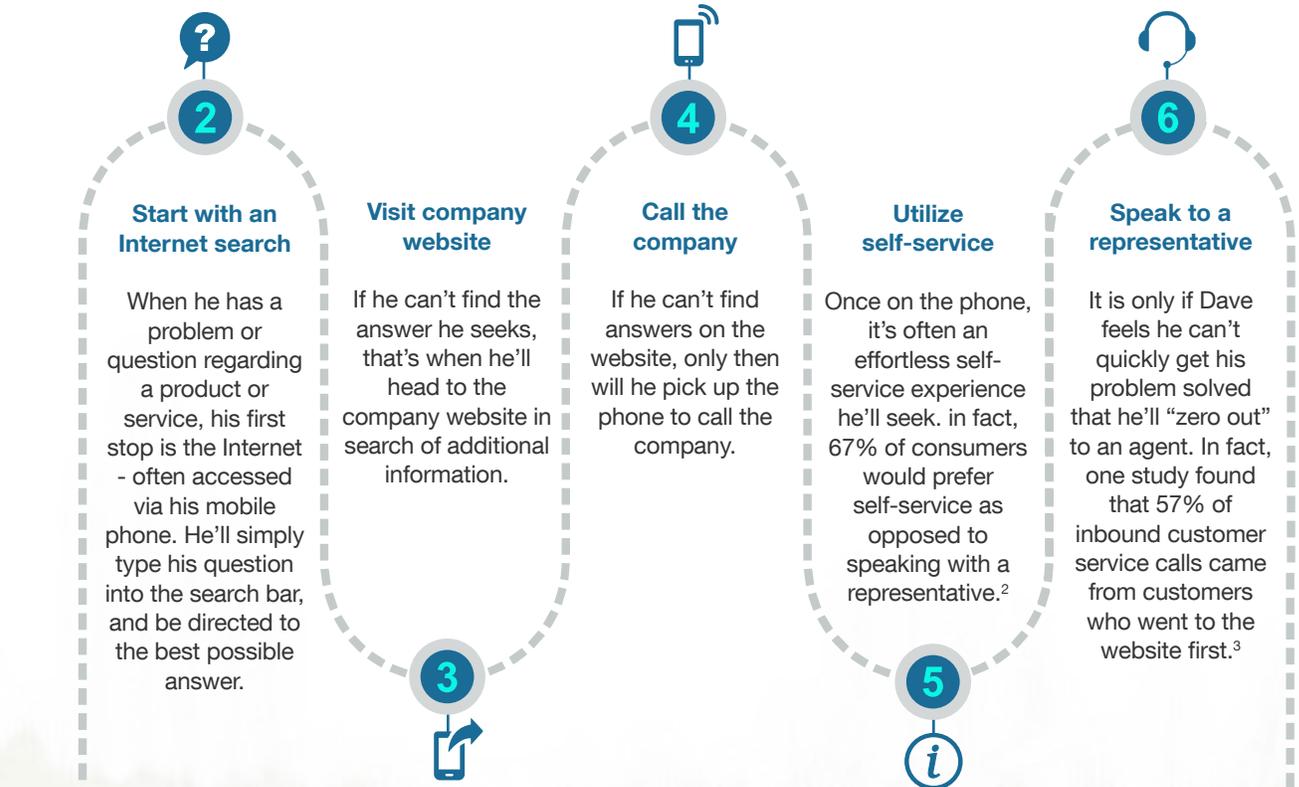
To understand this, we must first understand the new customer journey of a typical American consumer.

Top IVR complaints

-  Reason they're calling not in the first menu
-  Have to repeat same thing to an agent once they transfer
-  Overwhelmed by too many menu options
-  Can't get an agent when they need to
-  Pressing touchtone keys is annoying
-  Doesn't have the information to solve their problem
-  Designed to help the company and not the caller
-  Too wordy and takes too long to get the answer

¹ GMI Global Test Market Survey, 2014

The new customer journey



1

Meet Dave

He is a typical consumer.

Where an agent used to be the first point of contact, today it's often a last resort.

² Wakefield Research, 2014 – Consumer Preferences Survey

³ Dixon, Matthew; Freeman, Karen; Toman, Nicholas (2010). Stop Trying to Delight Your Customers. Harvard Business Review. Retrieved from: <http://hbr.org/2010/07/stop-trying-to-delight-your-customers>

The importance of an effortless experience

Here's a surprising insight – a recent survey of 75,000 consumers found that it's not delighting customers that inspires loyalty. It's reducing their effort, the work they must do to get their problem solved, that does.⁴ Dozens of other studies support this finding.

And when today's customers don't get what they want, such as when they are forced to search through an IVR maze, they aren't just "zeroing out." They are also mobilizing in record numbers.

In fact, 78% say they now take action after a bad customer service experience:

Frustrating experiences drive blowback in record numbers

Data excerpted from Wakefield Research⁵



⁴ Dixon, Matthew; Freeman, Karen; Toman, Nicholas (2010). Stop Trying to Delight Your Customers. Harvard Business Review. Retrieved from: <http://hbr.org/2010/07/stop-trying-to-delight-your-customers>

⁵ Wakefield Research, 2014 – Consumer Preferences Survey



The benefits of great customer service experience

On the flip side, getting it right can mean significant rewards – 88% of customers have also taken positive action after a good customer service experience.⁶

Great experiences earn loyalty and new customers

Data excerpted from Wakefield Research⁵



So what does a loyalty-inspiring call containment strategy look like? Here are three steps to maximize containment, and customer satisfaction.

⁵ Wakefield Research, 2014 – Consumer Preferences Survey

Three new rules to maximize containment and effortlessness

#1 Create a great first impression

Three new rules to maximize containment and effortlessness

When you call a company and are greeted by an IVR, what is your first thought? If you're like most, it's how do I get to an "operator." The reality is that today's customers are preprogrammed to believe that an IVR will not help them find answers quickly. Unfortunately, they've experienced too many outdated or poorly designed IVRs.

In fact, 57% of customers immediately "zero out" when experiencing an automated phone system.⁷ An additional 40% of callers will transfer to an agent if there's not a first-level menu choice that matches why they are calling.⁸

This is why one sure-fire way to increase containment, and self-service completions, is creating a great first impression.

Here are three ways to put your best foot forward.

<p>1 Avoid unnecessary upfront language</p>	<p>2 Streamline authentication</p>	<p>3 Streamline intent capture</p>
<p>Prompts such as "please listen carefully as our menu options may have changed" add no value. It is better to get right to the point.</p>	<p>Only ask for pieces of information which are necessary to identify the caller (identification) and offer security (authentication). Solutions such as voice biometrics are ideal for this – typically 80% faster than traditional authentication methods and provides significant cost savings (a recent deployment achieved \$15M in average savings over a three-year period).</p> <p>Learn more ></p>	<p>One way to do this is with Natural Language Understanding (NLU). This technology allows callers to tell you what they want in their own words. Incorporating predictive capabilities can streamline this further (more about this in section three). Using this approach means solutions to your customers' challenges are always available on the "first level menu." Below are examples of ideal interactions.</p> <p>Learn more ></p>

Predictive Natural Language Understanding (NLU) in action

A conversational IVR that leverages NLU allows callers to immediately and effortlessly express the reason for their call. Example interactions include:

- **Insurance Claims:** "I see you just opened a claim online. Is that what you're calling about?"
- **Bill Payment:** "Looks like your bill is due this week. Are you calling to pay it?"
- **Outage Notification:** "Due to bad weather, there's an electrical outage in your area. Is that what you're calling about?"

⁷ Wakefield Study; April 2015

⁸ GMI Global Test Market Survey, 2014

#2 Harness the secrets of effortless conversational IVR design

Three new rules to maximize containment and effortlessness

Maximizing self-service completions and containment means giving your customers an experience they love. Implement these two secrets to make your experience feel effortless.

1

Brief prompts are best

Use the fewest words you can without sacrificing clarity. Here's an example of an optimized first-level menu option.

Before

For billing, say "billing." To pay your bill, say "pay my bill." To transfer funds, say "transfer funds" or, if it's something else, say "it's something else."

After

How can I help you today? You can say things like "billing" or "transfer funds" or something else entirely.

2

Optimize the agent transfer experience

An optimized agent transfer experience means that customers can easily reach an agent when they need one. If customers must struggle, repeatedly ask for an operator or are trapped in a maze, it will give them a negative impression of your organization.

That said, there are ways to reduce the number of callers who ultimately transfer to an agent, and speed completions, without negatively impacting the experience.

Implement an agent intercept

If the conversational IVR might be able to help the caller, give them the option.

Talk to a representative!

Caller

To make sure I connect you with the right agent group, what did you need help with today?

Conversational IVR

I need to pay my bill.

Caller

(Checks to see that conversational IVR can automate the task)

I can get you to a person, or you can pay your bill here in the automated system. Would you like me to help you pay your bill?

Conversational IVR

Help them speed their completion

For example, if there's a long hold time, make sure to let callers know the conversational IVR can help them right away.

<Plays hold music>

Looks like there's about a 10 minute wait to speak with someone... Or, you can pay your bill in our automated system right away! Would you like to try that?

Conversational IVR

Connect your conversations

Agents should know what has happened on all your customer service channels (web, conversational IVR, phone, etc.) so callers need not repeat themselves. Connecting your systems means customers get answers faster and your organization lowers costs, average handle time, and more.

[Learn more >](#)

Bonus!
[Listen to US Airways' conversational IVR in action >](#)

#3 Proactively reach out to customers and anticipate their needs

Three new rules to maximize containment and effortlessness

Creating an effortless experience that will keep your customers happy (and agents focused on high-value interactions) means helping your customers avoid issues in the first place. One way to do this is by communicating with customers proactively via automated voice, text, email and smart-phone push messaging.

In fact, 85% of American consumers say they are interested in receiving proactive messages from the companies they do business with.⁹

The benefits to self-service completions and call containment are two-fold:

1 Fewer inbound calls

Communicating with customers proactively will help cut down on the number of inbound calls.

2 Faster resolutions

By syncing proactive messages with your inbound channels you can predict why customers are calling and help them resolve their problems faster. For example, "Hi Dave, I see you recently received a notification that your bill is due. Are you calling to pay your bill?"

Proactive Engagement in action

Taking the initiative to inform and remind customers reduces costs, improves business results and increases satisfaction. Here are a few ways companies use Proactive Engagement.

- **Notify them about upcoming or past due payments.** Leverage known channel preferences to prompt bill payment and improve collection cure rates.
- **Remind them of upcoming appointments or to refill orders.** Keep your business running smoothly by reminding customers of upcoming events and actions.
- **Inform them of events.** Proactively communicating about issues — from flight delays to power outages — will deflect inbound calls and increase confidence in your company.

[See Proactive Engagement in action](#)

⁹ Wakefield Research, 2014 – Consumer Preferences Survey

How Amtrak does call containment right

Amtrak had a problem:

Nearly 70% of their customers were exiting their touchtone self-service system to speak with an operator. Amtrak's solution was Julie, an automated agent, equipped with Natural Language Understanding.

Today, she answers nearly 20 million calls a year, an average of 50,000 per day and up to 95,000 during peak travel times. She completely handles an average of 25% of all calls received - approximately 5 million callers a year.

For those who use self-service (for example, those that don't hang up or ask immediately to be transferred to an agent), Julie fully handles an impressive 54% of calls.

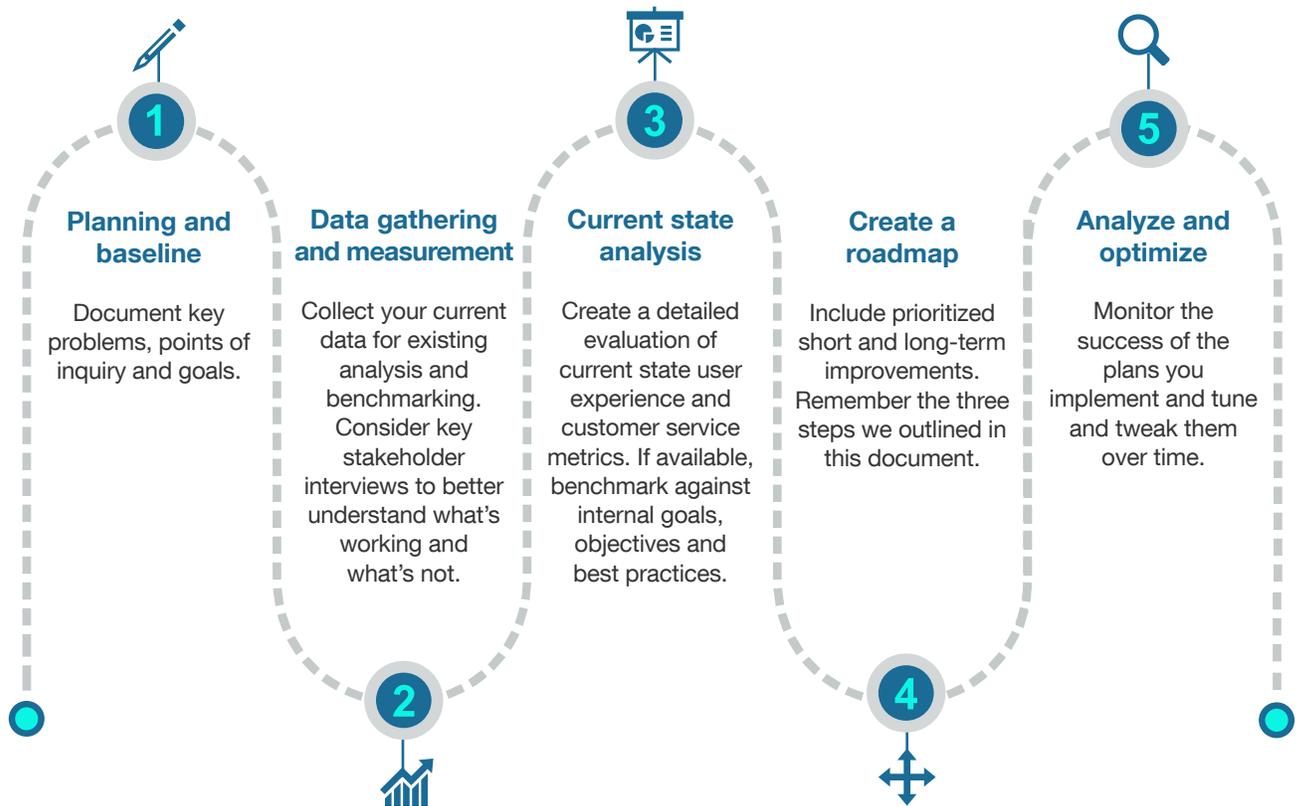
The result has been a 53% increase in customer satisfaction, as well as massive cost savings for the contact center.

[Read Amtrak's story](#)



Implementing the new rules of call containment

Finding success like Amtrak means following a proven roadmap. From our experience implementing hundreds of improvement programs, we've developed a methodology for evaluating and optimizing your containment strategy.



Next steps for conversational IVR optimization and effective customer engagement

Creating an IVR that delivers on all fronts discussed here can be a daunting but very necessary task. If you need help in developing a clear strategy and go-forward plan that includes a current state performance overview, recommendations, and roadmap, Nuance is here to help. Our professional services and business consulting teams have extensive experience in helping organizations achieve their customer service goals. Reach out to us at customerexperienceexperts@nuance.com.

Accelerate your success

Summing it up: The new rules of call containment

Maximizing the results of your containment strategy means keeping today's new rules in mind.

1

Make a great first impression

A great first impression will give customers confidence that your conversational IVR can help them solve their problem in an efficient manner. Key strategies include using a “conversational” interface, streamlining authentication and avoiding unnecessary language.

2

Make it effortless

The easier it is for your customers to find solutions to their problems, the more likely they are to self-serve. Make your experience effortless by using brief prompts, streamlining the agent transfer experience and “connecting” customer conversations.

3

Proactively engage customers

Engaging customers via automated voice, text, email or smart-phone push messaging will reduce inbound call volume and give you predictive capabilities to speed self-service completions.

Follow these three rules, and you'll reap the rewards in terms of lower costs, more self-service resolutions, faster average handle time and more loyal customers.



Replicate success

Get more insights to improve your customers' experience in these resources.

Stop trying to delight your customers

Discover why it's not delighting customers that inspire loyalty, but rather reducing their effort – the work they must do to get their problem solved – that does.

[Read the white paper >](#)

Millennialization of customer service

Across generations, what do your customers want in a customer experience? Find out in this report.

[Get the research >](#)

Benefits of refreshing the IVR

Renowned analysts Frost & Sullivan explore how refreshing the IVR improves loyalty and reduces costs.

[Get the report >](#)

80% Increase in call containment

Learn how a leading retail company decreased abandonment rate, total time in IVR and increased call containment.

[Read case study >](#)



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