

# Managing the Customer Experience during Phone Calls

Using Real-Time Word and Phrase Spotting To Influence the Outcomes of Calls

Research Perspective

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## Evolution of Speech Analytics

Benchmark research conducted by Ventana Research shows that 80 percent of organizations record inbound phone calls, and nearly half (46%) record all of them. Typically, however, they don't gain full value from these recordings because their review process involves someone listening to recordings and making assessments of the content. This method necessarily limits the number of recordings that are reviewed, and assessment tends to focus mostly on agent performance. The emergence of speech analytics allows organizations to realize more value because, being automated, it can examine 100 percent of recordings to spot recurring issues, highlight trends and uncover insights into customer behavior as well as agent performance.

The drawback to this approach is that analysis cannot occur until a call is finished and the recording is available. It thus offers no way to address issues as they arise during a call or to influence its outcome. To do that, organizations need to use real-time word and phrase spotting operating during the call. But if used correctly, such real-time speech analysis allows organizations during the call to influence agent behavior, the customer experience and the outcome.

## Advantages of Spotting Words and Phrases in Real Time

Unlike most other forms of interactions, a phone call is answered in real time and organizations are thus dependent on the person, typically a contact center agent, answering the call to shape its outcome. An analysis of a recording after the event can reveal that an agent didn't follow the right process, didn't provide the right answer to the customer request, missed opportunities, failed to comply with regulations, or acted inappropriately; however it cannot retrospectively influence how the call was conducted or its outcome. Even analyzing a call recording that is made available immediately as the call finishes may occur too late to influence the subsequent behavior of the caller – to, for example, dissuade him or her from posting a negative comment to social media. To influence the outcome of a call, organizations need to carry out the analysis in real time.

**41% of organizations find real-time analytics very useful to guide agents handling interactions.**

Ventana Research ,  
"The State of Customer  
Contact Center  
Technology," 2011

Tools that support real-time word and phrase spotting enable organizations to specify words and phrases that will be spotted when they are used (or alternately will issue an alert if they have not been used when the call is about to be completed). When these trigger words or phrases are used by either the agent or the caller, the tool can take a defined action: show an alert on the agent's desktop, send an alert or message to a supervisor, and/or

deliver information to the desktop to guide the agent through the best next action.

Real-time word spotting can be used to enforce positive or eliminate negative behaviour on the part of the agent. It can, for example, recognize that the caller has asked about a particular product and automatically pop information about it onto the agent's desktop. It can identify an agent's most recent action and prompt him or her what to do next. Or it can identify that the agent is struggling to deal with the caller's request and provide advice on how to deal with the situation. It can also use the caller's profile information and an analysis of what is being said during the call to prompt the agent about a potential sales opportunity. In negative circumstances it can spot the use of inappropriate words or a phrase by either party (and alert a supervisor to intervene), spot that the agent hasn't delivered to the caller the required statement of statutory rights, or tell that the agent hasn't collected the correct information from the caller.

The most innovative real-time word and phrase spotting systems can deliver all these capabilities, but organizations must recognize that they cannot fully exploit them without putting in time and effort to prepare the system. The first step is creating the table of words and phrases to be spotted, and then

**42% of organizations said that providing agents with relevant information will have the biggest impact on performance.**

Ventana Research,  
"The State of Customer  
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Technology," 2011

refining this to take account of variations in language and accents and the likely occurrence of false positives – that is, when the tool incorrectly returns alarms that a word or phrase has been used. To gain maximum benefits, organizations have to invest in processes and supporting systems to raise alerts for supervisors and in systems that use the outputs to automatically pop information or alerts onto the agent's desktop.

## **Business Benefits of Real-Time Speech Analytics**

Several immediate benefits may be realized by deploying real-time speech analytics:

- Improved compliance with regulations by ensuring that agents deliver required information
- More consistency in how calls are handled, leading to improved operational and customer metrics
- Improved outcomes from calls by ensuring that agents collect the right information, give correct responses and don't miss new business opportunities
- More focused agent training that leads to lower training costs and improved agent performance.

Over the longer term, organizations can combine the outputs of real-time analysis and the analysis of call recordings to identify possible changes to call-

handling processes to make them more efficient and effective, improve agent training and coaching to ensure higher numbers of agents follow identified best practices, and make changes that will improve the customer experience. Used in combination with processes and systems that allow the organization to react in real time, these analytics support innovation in the way calls are handled, improved customer experiences and better long-term business performance.

## About Ventana Research

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