

Speech in a Multi-Channel World

On Sunday, 1st August 2010 the annual AVIXD workshop was held in New York on the topic 'Speech in a Multi-Channel World'

Speech as a stand-alone application, living in its own silo, is coming to an end. As speech becomes more integrated with backend systems, other modalities are emerging as new opportunities to manage customer interactions. SMS, MMS, smart phone applications, live chat, "bot" chat, social media, instant messaging and other nascent media are gaining traction not only as stand-alone opportunities for new customer touch-points, but are becoming more integrated with each other.

The market is demanding a new class of tools and development methodology where speech is only one element of an integrated, multi-channel or multi-modal solution. Many traditional speech customers have also chosen to begin making it easier for their customers to reach live agents.

These three changes in the market directly threaten stand-alone speech IVRs: Customers are using channels other than speech as their preferred point of contact. Customers expect all channels to be aware of each other. Customers may fight an IVR to get to a live agent.

The Association for Voice Interaction Designers (AVIXD) is now publishing two papers on these topics.

The first paper 'Where does speech make sense – Now and in the future?' discusses the some of the pressures faced by modern IVRs as other channels such as the web and smart phones grow in importance. It then considers where speech makes sense, both in IVRs, and in contexts where other modalities may be available such as small form-factor devices.

The second paper 'Cross-Channel Awareness' discusses how customer contact spans different channels and input modalities. Distinctions are drawn between different modalities and cross-channel and multi-channel interactions. The importance of cross-channel awareness is then discussed with emphasis on the context of customer entry into these channels. Examples of good and bad applications are given. Finally barriers to better channel usage are discussed such as organizational problems, stove-piped architectures and the difficulty of making the cross-channel business cases.

We hope that you will enjoy these papers and find them informative.

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