Most Common IVR Use Cases

The IVR (Interactive Voice Response) is used to automate the interaction between human and computer applications using telephony generated DTMF tones. You can read an exhaustive definition for IVR systems here.

Why use an IVR

IVRs can be used in a variety of scenarios, from a simple replacement of a call dispatcher inside a company (receptionist) to complex, database driven IVRs used in call centers, banking, retail or televoting. Generally speaking, IVRs are used to automate workflows and processes, replacing the human operator.

Simple use cases

Auto-attendant

In this case, an IVR is used to automate the flow of incoming calls inside a company. Callers are guided to connect with phone extensions by means of built IVR menus with prerecorded messages. This task is usually performed by a human operator (a call dispatcher or a receptionist). Using the IVR technology, this process is automated, leaving the receptionist with more time to perform other tasks.

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"Welcome to ABC company! For Sales, press 1. For Support, press 2. To send a fax, press 3. Thank you!"
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Using the terminal keypad, callers are put through to Sales or Support or, by pressing 3 on the phone keypad, they can send a fax. If they know the phone extension of the person they want to speak to, they can connect to them directly.

IVR in call centers

In case of an inbound Call Center, an IVR is added to a call queue that connects callers with sales or support agents. This is a typical scenario for insurance/banking/financial services/utilities companies which offer customer services in various languages.

Once the connection is made, the IVR invites the caller to choose a language, then to select the service they want. Eventually, the call is moved to a queue where agents respond in the language selected by the caller. Optionally, the call may be recorded by the queue.

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"Hello and welcome to Hosting services! For English, press 1. For Spanish, press 2."
"If you want Sales, press 1. If you want Support, press 2. For billing and invoicing, press 3."
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Upon selection, the caller is directed to the Sales, Support or Accounting call queues.

Complex use cases

Premium support services IVR

There are companies that provide highly specialized phone support services. For instance, a software house that sells premium support services including telephone support. Customers buy VIP support packages, consisting of a number of minutes per month (e.g. 60 minutes/month).

Customers dial the IVR and the IVR asks for a unique ID such as a PIN number or a customer ID. The customer enters the code using the phone keypad and complies with the authentication process. The IVR links with a database storing all customer IDs and validates the input.

If authentication is successful, the next step is to check if the customer has available minutes left for the current month. This is done by querying a database where all customer calls are recorded, including the call lengths.

If authentication is successful and the caller has still got free minutes left, the caller is put through to an agent which starts logging the call. If authentication fails or there are no minutes left, the caller receives an error message and the call is closed.

IVR in utilities

Sometimes, customers can use the IVR to send utilities companies (water, electricity, gas, etc.) specific information about their consumption rate. This can be done very easily: the customer calls the IVR, provides their customer ID, and enters the counter readings for the gas consumption in the current month using the phone keypad. The value is stored in a database, compared with the last month reading and the difference is used to generate the invoice for the current month consumption. The entire process is done automatically, without any human operator intervention.

IVR in transportation

IVR applications are used in the freight/transportation industry to confirm the delivery of goods/packages to their destination. Upon delivery, the freighter dials the IVR number, performs a PIN-based authentication, and confirms the status delivery of the package by entering the transport ID or airway bill (AWB) using the phone keypad. The number is stored into a database and the transport is confirmed. Based on this transport status, other processes on the workflow can be triggered.

IVR in commercial airlines

Passengers can use the IVR to track down their luggage during commercial flights. When a passenger wants to locate their luggage, they dial a number (printed on the back of their ticket) and enter their flight number and seat. The IVR connects with back-end databases and identifies the actual location of their luggage and the next destination. The response is played to the caller using a text-to-speech application.

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"Dear customer, your luggage is currently in London Heathrow."

"Next destination is Miami Florida USA, with ETA 8.15 PM. Thank you."
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IVR in televoting

In the case of public events such as TV shows, charity actions, etc., the IVR is used to receive calls from the public which votes for their options. Usually, this sort of events generates a tremendous amount of calls over a short period of time. Therefore, you are advised to carefully consider designing and planning the capacity for such systems.

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