



Is Your Self-Service Solution Self Serving?

Address the Impact of Market Pressures Now

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Executive Summary

Today's struggling economy has posed challenges to businesses and customers alike. Organizations must operate more efficiently while still retaining and attracting customers. Customers have less disposable income and are more apt to shop around when service needs are not met. Forgetting about your customer's needs and getting wrapped up in your business processes is a dangerous precipice. We've all teetered on that edge, and know the risks.

Self-service can satisfy the needs of both your business and your customers, but only when designed and deployed in a manner that is valuable to the customer and valuable to the bottom line. To discover the right mix of investment-and-return, organizations must partner with solution providers that possess the skill sets to leverage technology in a way that is deployable, practical and impactful. The underlying platform and architectural design must be scalable, manageable and able to effectively help you realize your future vision. The overlying applications should address

both the business goals and the user needs. Self-service has existed for years, but it's never been more important than it is now in a slippery downward-trending economy. And, as emerging technologies converge, organizations can take advantage of these converged and new media applications to better serve customers in a much more personal way.

Not Your Grandfather's Self-Service

Since the introduction of automated teller machines (ATMs) and interactive voice response systems (IVRs), organizations have leveraged technology to both enable their customers with 24/7 service while offloading redundant tasks that require no human intervention. Some customers have embraced self-service because of its ease-of-use and responsiveness; others have been frustrated by the assumed walls erected between them and the organizations from which they are seeking service.

Today, using self-service applications is a natural part of our business day and social fabric: we have communications devices becoming more embedded into our personal lives and we demand immediate and constant access to service and information. Organizations invest millions of dollars in market research, product development, and communication strategies, but they still sometimes fail to deploy technology solutions; rather, they implement technology-as-gatekeeper.

Being asked to do more with less is not a new imperative; but the need to do exponentially more, with significantly less may be. For an organization, the situation equates to economic survival. Economic reality equates to a continuous search for ways to wring more from less, and reduce risks while trying.

Organizations seek ways to retain customers and reduce costs when providing customer service and managing the solution itself. Customer service doesn't go away when the global economy

reels. In fact, it becomes even more important. Some statistics show that it costs a business five times more to acquire a new customer than it does to retain a current one by satisfying his or her needs. Customers have great leverage in awarding their business to the company that will provide the optimal mix of superior product and customer service. Just as one organization is slashing prices and costs to attract new customers, the competition is doing the same to expose the other's weaknesses. While this cannibalistic approach may cause long-term damage, it doesn't prevent customers from abandoning their brand loyalty to do what's beneficial for them in the here-and-now. In the end, a company's demise serves little purpose for its customer base: it diminishes the breadth of options for customers and results in direct and indirect costs for switching vendors. Organizations and customers share a similar dichotomy: organizations are more discriminate with their investment dollars and customers are more discriminate with their purchasing decisions.

Self-service can be a customer's immediate means to customer satisfaction or it can be a source of frustration. What customers want is resolution. They don't want to be forced into deducing inconsistent logic or navigating a non-intuitive self-service option. Organizations may only get one chance with their self-service options. When "stalemates" occur, customers will bail out and demand agent assistance, leading to increased costs for the business – countering the result they were trying to achieve. And the next time the same customer won't give self-service a chance, compounding the costs. In order to deliver usable self-service, businesses must deploy solutions that deliver a smooth and productive experience. User demographics and demands are changing rapidly with an ever-rising bar of user expectations. Quite simply, the dynamics of self-service are changing, causing organizations to re-think their spectrum of requirements.

Technology Investment Decisions

Self-service is often the voice and face of your organization. Those driving the business case need to understand both the business drivers and the potential of the technology. Self-service solutions should not be solely driven by technology experts, but rather should be driven by a partnership of those who own the business of customer service and those who own the day-to-day upkeep of the investment.

Performance data should be collected on existing solutions, and then categorized appropriately to establish a baseline for ongoing measurement and analysis. These metrics can also be extended to measure the performance of future solutions or enhancements. While call completions can be defined as never reaching an agent, how do you know if that is a satisfied customer who got the information needed or one who hung up in frustration? For an ROI analysis, the cost savings realized in comparing current and future states should be based on consistent assumptions and reporting metrics.

A chicken-and-egg scenario can play out when an organization imposes a return-on-investment (ROI) target, before a service roadmap is laid out. Organizations that focus on the investment rather than the potential return, will be doing themselves – and their customers – a disservice. Even though an investment is tangible and fairly predictable, it is the level of return that ultimately determines the investment's success or failure. The technology investment can span the financial gamut, but the right solution will realize targeted ROI.

Rather than chase timelines and budgets, project teams should stay on point by planning usable self-service solutions with clear technical architectures that will truly enable customers to serve themselves.

One company was challenged with an IVR platform that was nearing its end-of-lifecycle. With a platform decision to address, the easy path was to migrate the existing touchtone applications over to a new platform. However, a consulting engagement and subsequent financial analyses revealed that speech-enabling the current self-service solution with new functionality painted a better ROI picture. Address collection and sign-ups for new services were added to the self-service functions, increasing the platform's usage while reducing costs. Per the table on the following page, the cost for the final speech-enabled solution was greater than the initial estimate for migrating existing touchtone applications, but the increased usage resulted in a superior ROI for the business.

It takes vision to understand the underlying platform that is required to support a usable solution. One needs to think long-and-wide, with long being "how reliable the platform will be in the future" and wide being "how scalable the solution will be as the business grows." Self-service cascades across touch points. With the evolution of VXML and Web services, Web content is easily repurposed for a telephony solution. Consider: if you're offering certain self-service transactions via the Web, then you have the "plumbing" in place to do it over the telephone. These pluggable data connectors function similarly, whether over the Web or over the telephone, but the user interface overlay varies greatly in a visual-versus-audio environment. Take the time to understand the two and address each appropriately.

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Financial Analysis		
	“Like For Like” Touchtone Replacement	Speech-Enabled Enhanced Solution
Price Basis	100%	138%
Payback Period	29 months	14.25 months

Source: Avaya client utility company

Top Three Ways to Get the Most from Self-Service

Next-generation technologies are converging at a pace greater than what businesses can deploy and integrate. What was inconceivable 20 years ago is the World Wide Web today. Has self-service via the telephone kept up with that evolution? What will be the next generation of technology solutions? The devices that control these technologies are becoming more embedded in our everyday lives. It is important to plan for and adapt to these converging next-generation solutions.

1. Understand your customers and the entire self-service portfolio.

The demands of users for converging next-generation solutions have also changed. Now, customers are demanding the Web, speech-enabled self-service, kiosks, and other virtual channels. Organizations need to understand how these self-service options complement and supplement each other.

For example, a customer accessing his or her account transaction history by telephone receives quick, convenient, hands-free information, but cognition of the transactions is short and specific. Complementing telephone self-service with an account statement automatically sent to the customer's e-mail serves the customer's short-and long-term needs by allowing them to access their statement via a computer or their Web-enabled cellular device. These channels must be designed consistently in terms of branding, jargon, and business process. But, consistency does not necessarily mean that everything offered on the Web should be offered by phone. Visual consumption allows for more offerings on the Web while convenience drives IVR usage. These options should be designed with an awareness of the other's existence and purpose.

With the right technology strategy, solutions can be designed in a way that best matches customer demographics and service-channel preferences. Generation X and younger customers

have grown to expect fast and efficient automation, while more mature customers may need more support when accessing self-service applications. By understanding customer demographics, preferences and needs, businesses can deploy the appropriate self-service solutions to meet specific customer-segment needs.

2. Deploy and optimize self-service for today's dynamic environment.

User needs evolve over time with varying self-service channels. When self-service applications don't evolve, their usability and usage decline. A common mistake organizations make is investing in hardware but ignoring applications by just porting them over without reassessing current user needs. It's not uncommon to hear: "Give us a like-for-like re-write of our touchtone application onto the new platform." When delving into the history of the platform, it is discovered that the application has been migrated across multiple platforms over the years without ever being redesigned for current needs.

One insurance company deployed the same application functionality on a newer platform. Its main menu option included how to contact the company, with contact points including telephone, Web, and mailing address. (The telephone number provided was the telephone number the caller has just used.) The Web site is valuable, but from a user perspective, it is more likely someone would employ a Web search engine, rather than an IVR, to find the company's Web site. The mailing address is valuable information that can also be accessed via the Web; should it be included as a main menu option?

One emerging trend is the use of proactive, outbound solutions, such as payment notifications, appointment reminders, and collections. Even though outbound solutions have existed for some time, new applications continue to emerge. With well-designed interfaces and centralized data, organizations can readily personalize an outbound solution. However, personalizing a solution for a specific customer, yet designing it in a manner that is impractical may result in poor customer service. In the past, a customer may have answered his phone in the comfort

SOLUTION PROVIDER CONSIDERATIONS

- Understands all related technologies, your business and the marketplace
- Considers both short- and long-term strategies
- Has a track record of successful solution deployments
- Provides a network of delivery options, both through in-house resources and strategic partnerships
- Communicates openly and honestly
- Acts as a trusted advisor and partner.

of his home, easily processing this unexpected automated call. However, today, consider that many people are continually in transit. In this mobile environment, an outbound solution calling to satisfy a past-due payment may not be feasible or effective. When designing an outbound solution, business scenarios should be considered with strategies developed to address these situations, such as the opportunity to call back the customer at a more convenient time or more convenient telephone number.

A self-service solution can be liberating or paralyzing to the caller based on the number of options offered and the manner in which they are presented. An application should be judicious in design. Overall, at what point do you stop migrating a stale application and redesign to embrace other service touch points?

3. Leverage self-service as a competitive differentiator.

Appreciable money, time, and effort go into competitive analyses within a business environment. Are customer service needs accounted for when fiercely battling competitors for a shrinking consumer dollar? Does your organization critique its self-service solutions against competitors' self-service offerings? Do the business stakeholders ever consider how they use self-service in their day-to-day lives? Customer service pays off in retention of existing ones and attraction of new ones. As the saying goes, you only have one chance to make a first impression: Is yours a positive one?

Innovative speech-enabled self-service solutions today can:

- Gather and track customer buying behaviors and interaction preferences
- Initiate triage or end-to-end self-service for opening a new claim or asking a support question
- Survey customers
- Verify the caller's identify through voice biometrics
- Route calls in one-step
- Notify customers through outbound calling of appointment reminders and more.

Each of these functions may incur greater financial, technical and human resources to implement, yet these investments can deliver greater self-service usage and decreased costs, resulting in better ROI.

Your Solution Provider as a Trusted Advisor

Making these technology investments and paradigm shifts can be a daunting task. Having a technology vendor that serves as both a partner and a trusted advisor is imperative. The vendor must possess the consultative, business, and technical skills to travel side-by-side with you along your strategic roadmap. Your technology vendors are challenged with the same economy as you are. If you're not successful in leveraging their technology solutions and realizing efficiencies, they are not successful with capturing your business. The partnership should start long before any projects are funded or kicked-off. A business should demand vendors contribute to business case development and ROI analysis. Leverage the expertise of partners who have a track record of successful self-service implementations with metrics for usage, superior customer service, and cost savings.

The technology investment needs to be understood at two levels: the platform and the applications. The platform gives your organization the ability to manage the solution and scale for the future. It should give you the tools to understand real-time how successfully your customers are serving themselves. The old, proprietary "black box" platform has exploded into discrete, more manageable components. Today, a scalable self-service platform is made of re-usable pieces that can be leveraged across self-service channels and be supplemented as

demand fluctuates. But, even being empowered with a scalable and accessible platform, it is only as good as the applications that drive the underlying business case. Applications can either be deployed as gatekeepers or self-service enablers. Successful applications multiply into more innovative solutions. Poorly designed and unsuccessful applications become single points of failure. Applications must be designed in a way that the customer wants to use them and not be forced to use them. This perspective is what drives intended ROI. And each application becomes an incremental contributor to overall ROI.

Avaya Professional Services Value during Challenging Times

Now, more than ever, organizations are looking to minimize risks, reduce costs and make investments that will help them thrive and grow.

Avaya, with its extensive ecosystem of certified partners, offers one of the most complete, standards-based portfolio of solutions in the market with tight integration with its entire suite of contact center applications. Avaya speech-enabled self-service applications provide organizations the choice of integrating with a variety of market-leading technologies. As a recognized global leader in self-service and IVR solutions, Avaya has a proven track record in the delivery of integrated solutions that achieve real business results.

The Avaya Professional Services organization provides planning, design and integration services for all types of communications solutions, including self-service applications. The team's specialized knowledge and experience about the financial services, healthcare, retail, and hospitality industries as well as public sector can help organizations with their unique challenges and requirements. The team is comprised of a full range of in-house resources that work seamlessly together. Avaya clients reap the benefits of professionals that are delivering value, stemming from a combination of decades of consulting and technical experience, recognized certifications, and successful results with thousands of self-service engagements.

Our vast set of resources include the following expertise:

Business consulting principals that can assess the effectiveness of communications within an organization's current environment, and recommend communications strategies and a roadmap for improvements over time.

Self-service solution architects are skilled with third-party integrations and are certified VoiceXML designers; and development engineers are experts in self-service design, voice-user interface design and implementation.

TAKE THESE STEPS:

- Experience your contact center for a day and listen to your customers' pain points
- Gather analytics to better understand your customers' needs
- Consider how to leverage multiple channels to interact with your customers
- Benchmark your self-service solution against your industry and competition
- Account for emerging and converging technologies when making your purchasing decision
- Form a trusted partnership with your technology solution provider
- Consider all customer touch points when designing a holistic self-service strategy.

Speech design engineers create, evaluate and modify user interfaces for self-service applications in support of an optimal user experience. They are certified behavioral intelligence/human factor engineers and experienced speech scientists who can objectively analyze and recommend user-interaction strategies for organizations.

Software developers identify, analyze and create custom software applications that address the specific needs of the organization. They are well-versed in all aspects of software engineering and hold numerous certifications.

Quality engineers ensure quality practices are executed throughout the software development life cycle. They design, plan and execute the inspections and tests of software applications and documentation. Quality engineers have extensive experience in executing recognized best practices for reliable and high-performance software applications.

Custom application support analysts provide support services for organizations requesting help with customized solutions developed and deployed by Avaya Professional Services. Every analyst is certified in customer satisfaction techniques to handle all types of requests and scenarios with world-class services.

With over 400 professionals worldwide serving customers in over 10,000 consulting engagements, the Avaya Professional Services team is uniquely qualified to help organizations achieve maximum value from their communications investments.

For more information about Avaya Professional Services, visit us at www.avaya.com, or contact your Avaya Account Manager or your authorized Avaya partner.

About Avaya

Avaya is a global leader in enterprise communications systems. The company provides unified communications, contact centers, and related services directly and through its channel partners to leading businesses and organizations around the world.

Enterprises of all sizes depend on Avaya for state-of-the-art communications that improve efficiency, collaboration, customer service and competitiveness. For more information please visit www.avaya.com.
