

speech self-service suite

{ The Market }

As the interactive voice response (IVR) systems market matures, vendors are continually trying to cram more capabilities into their packaged self-service suites, either through home-grown applications or partnerships with other vendors that can supplement their own offerings. The industry as a whole is also making a shift from legacy, proprietary systems to more open-source, VoiceXML-based applications. In fact, industry analyst firm Datamonitor predicts that 2008 will be the first year that VoiceXML-based IVR shipments will exceed more traditional applications.

This evolution is opening new possibilities for multimodal and video applications, which Datamonitor's senior analyst, Daniel Hong, calls "the next phases of IVR." As application deployment costs drop, Hong also expects many more midmarket companies to make their first forays into speech self-service applications in a hosted environment.

{ The Leaders }

Avaya scored above a 4.0 in all areas but cost, where it received a mediocre 3.5 score. This, however, is likely to change as the company revamps its focus to make solutions more affordable, especially for new small-business customers and previous customers that invested in the Avaya Interactive Response Portal and now want to upgrade to Avaya Voice Portal. The solution costs \$900 per port, and Dialog Designer is provided at no additional cost. The company is also making strong moves toward the Web, multimedia, and unified communications, all of which are expected to position it well moving forward.

SpeechCycle specializes in collections, technical support, and help-desk applications for the telecommunications and utilities markets. Despite its limited reach, "in their own little playground, they are very well-regarded and good at what they do," observes Susan Hura, vice president of user experience at consulting firm Product Support Solutions. This is evidenced in the fact that SpeechCycle was among the top scorers in depth of functionality, customization, integration, customer satisfaction, and cost, and did not score below a 4.0 (on a five-point scale) in any of these areas. The company is also

strongly grounded in innovation, continually revamping and adding to its technologies to improve the customer experience.

{ The Winner }

Voxeo this year improved the business case for speech applications by removing the barriers of cost and complexity, scoring an industry-leading 4.5 and 4.4, respectively, in those two areas. Helping its case, its open-standards-based Prophecy 8 solution for IVR and Voice over Internet Protocol telephony applications is available as a hosted on-demand service or an on-premises solution, and its Web-based Voxeo Designer tool, text-to-speech, and speech recognition engines are all included at no additional charge. Beyond that, the company also excelled in depth of functionality, with more than 20 new features and tools added to the latest version of its platform alone. Its customer satisfaction also clocked in at an industry-leading 4.5, mainly because, as Bill Scholz, president of the Applied Voice Input/Output Society (AVIOS) points out, "they have excellent customer support." —*Leonard Klie*

Vendor Contender

Intervoice repeats as this year's vendor contender, having held that spot last year as well. While the company scored high among analysts in most categories, it still suffers from what many perceive to be a high price tag. The company more than makes up for it, though, in innovation, having made advances in the use of State Chart XML (SCXML), VoiceXML, multimodal, and video applications, and the release of its Intervoice Contact Portal, which brings its already powerful Voice Portal, IP Contact Center, and Advanced Notification Gateway products together into a multichannel suite of contact center solutions. Where the vendor will finish when the dust settles from its recent acquisition by Convergys is anyone's guess, though early indications are that Convergys does not plan to dramatically alter its product road map significantly. —*L.K.*



SELF-SERVICE SUITE	DEPTH OF FUNCTIONALITY					COST					CUSTOMER SATISFACTION					TOP 3 VERTICALS
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Avaya	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	Finance, Telecommunications, Retail
SpeechCycle	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	Telecommunications, Utilities, Finance
Voxeo	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	Telecommunications, Healthcare, Insurance

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