



Mobile Mania: Will this be your next big thing?

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As we talk with industry leaders through our project work, it seems like the topic of mobile devices, mobile applications, and their link to the contact center keeps coming up. An ever growing population of customers – young and old – spend their days with their heads bent over smartphones. It's just a matter of time before “mobility” will need to be factored into your customer service equation.

Things to consider

Mobile self-service ought to be a “no brainer.” You want your customers to interact with your company using lower cost channels. They want to interact with you using their preferred media and devices. As with IVR and the web, application design must be consistent with this channel's interface (i.e., visual, but distinctly small). But who owns this channel (IT? Mobile group? Marketing?) and how will it cross-pollinate with other channels? Fortunately, the vendors coming at this market (see below) create the possibility for contact center involvement, which we hope bodes well for cross-channel integration.

Good mobile apps offer the option to seek help. But rather than just dial a call to the center, these applications can pass information that is used to route the customer to the right person/group and provide the assigned rep with the “who” and “what” the mobile app may have already gathered. With some solutions, contact is made via an outbound call rather than an inbound call, sparing the mobile customer time-consuming and irritating navigation and waiting in queue. Looking beyond calls, some vendors offer the ability to send email or text messages. The contact center needs to integrate these mobile triggered requests for service alongside phone calls and email or chats coming off the web.

Most application platforms support multiple mobile operating systems – iPhone, Droid, Blackberry, etc. – although they may start with one of the most popular (iPhone or Android) only. They offer GUI interfaces for app development, recognizing it has to be easy to develop, update, report on and optimize these apps.

Some vendors talk up the possibilities for mobile agents, but we're not yet convinced that will be the next big wave. Many companies are just getting settled with home agents. Mobile agents may be a next step or a good fit for some smaller, more informal centers.

Things to explore

A variety of vendors pitch a variety of possibilities around mobile:

- Fonolo encourages mobile phone users to self serve, but when someone needs help, it uses the information provided to identify the caller and call purpose, route appropriately, and “pop” information. To top it off, they might survey the customer on the experience.
- Many know Virtual Hold, using it for callbacks to customers who dial into their center. Now companies can use it for callback to a mobile user, again using the information provided.
- Nuance Call Intercept helps callers “discover” mobile apps by intercepting calls and providing a visual interface. It sure beats playing irritating messages like, “Did you know you could visit our web site/IVR?” to make customers aware of options.
- Speech Cycle provides pre-built mobile apps for customer care and mobile service and a GUI interface for easy development.



- West (a major outsourcer) works with Syclo on mobile application offerings to customers through a hosted solution.
- CRM/KM vendors (like RightNow, Salesforce.com) offer mobile apps that parallel web offerings.
- Core CC vendors (like Avaya, Cisco, Interactive Intelligence) seem to be focusing on the mobile worker but also offer options such as video for the mobile customer.
- Many vendors provide tools and services for building mobile apps, including vertical market application starters. Some focus on email or chat offerings with these apps.

Things to do

If you want to improve the customer experience, you need to offer self-service and contact routing from the customers' media of choice. It's time to explore mobile and the impact it can have on your customers and your center. Work cross-department to build a mobile applications and integration strategy – defining what you will offer, when, in line with your other channels. Then, define requirements and find the right partners to help you deliver your strategy.