

◆ COMPARE ◆

IVR

SYSTEMS



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1 Abstract

The purpose of this resource is to compare and organize information about Interactive Voice Response (IVR) technology, which allows a computer to interact with people by using voice and keypad inputs. In telecommunication applications, IVR gives individuals the ability to communicate with a firm's host system through speech recognition and their phone's keypad.

2 What Exactly Is IVR Technology?

IVR makes it easier for a person to direct their call by utilizing pre-existing options that have been detailed into a computer system. [Interacting via speech recognition or keypad presses](#) means callers can service their own inquiries. Integrated voice technology should be deployed in a manner appropriate to the call volume an organization experiences – the higher the call volume, the bigger a system is needed.

An IVR system is able to communicate with a person by using prerecorded or, in advanced systems, dynamically generated audio, which will direct a user how to proceed. IVR technology can be utilized whenever an individual needs to progress through a series of simple interactions and can be used to direct calls to departments and other automated systems.

The system is useful when there are high call volumes as it reduces cost and improves the caller experience, eliminating wait times and allowing the caller to direct themselves to the most appropriate person without having to be put on hold multiple times. Even if your company doesn't have high call volumes, smaller companies are able to use IVR through outsourced providers to make their firm seem larger than it actually is.

Due to the self-direction a caller can take, the most desired outcome of an IVR system is allowing an individual to solve their problems or answer their questions without needing to talk to a live agent.

IVR technology, like so many telephony advances, originated at Bell Labs in the 1930s with a speech synthesis project. While successful, it wasn't until the 1960s and 1970s that tone dialing methodology was created (by Bell) and speech and mathematics were linked. IVR as we recognize it today was deployed in the 1970s.

When the technology first came out it was complicated and expensive. Then in the 1980s as hard drive technology advanced, prices came down. Progressing forward, as digital technology became more powerful and simultaneously cheaper, the price of IVR technology continued to drop and it became a critical part of call centers and an organization's front-end customer service platform.

Integration with digital technology has enabled many advanced features. For example, many modern systems are able to log call information directly into a database.

3 How to Choose an IVR Provider

You should keep a number of things at the forefront of your mind when selecting an IVR provider:

- Do you need a standard IVR deployment or something highly specialized?
- Are features like text to speech or speech recognition important?
- Do you want the IVR to be hosted on-site or cloud hosted (remote)?
- Are analytics important?
- Do you need to control the audio settings?
- Do you want to enable balance checking?

We recommend that you take the time to create a formal list of requirements. That way you can check your requirements against our comparison chart to determine the best company for you. Should you be confused with any terminology, we've included definitions of common IVR related words on the site.

3.1 Standard Features of IVR Providers

The most common feature of all is call routing. This is offered by every single IVR provider as it is an essential part of the service – calls must be able to be routed from one part of the system to another.

There has been a trend in the last few years to move IVR to the cloud (it's much cheaper and far less bothersome for your organization). As such, nearly every provider offers this service.

Many providers offer speech recognition, some kind of database integration where information the caller inputs is recorded, and a few offer balance checking.

3.2 Definitions

IVR – An abbreviation for Interactive Voice Response

Speech Recognition – A technology that mathematically [links the human voice to a digital system](#), allowing the computer to understand what the person is saying and process that information

Text to Speech – Text to speech does exactly what you think it does – converts text into speech so that a person can hear it.

Name and Address Capture – Some IVR systems are able to log customer info to a database when they enter it.

Reverse Phone Look-up – Gather data about the caller automatically

Call Routing – Transferring a call from one part of the telephony system to another; every IVR is able to do this

Transcription Service – A service only offered by IVR Tech Group, live transcribers are able to listen to phone calls and messages and accurately write down the information

Balance Checking – Allows customers to use the IVR to check personal information such as their bank account balance

Cloud Hosted – IVR technology, like PBX systems, used to be incredibly expensive and required on-site installations. Cloud hosting is remote and requires no maintenance. It is vastly superior to the legacy method.

Analytics – Some companies allow you to see analytics and metrics about your callers

Audio Settings Control – Allows you to tweak how the audio sounds

Language Translation – Translate speech from one language to another.

3.3 IVR Service Providers

3.3.1 IVR TECH GROUP

Pros

With over a decade of experience, this company has a solid IVR offering.

Cons

None

Conclusion

IVR Tech Group knows their phone systems. They offer loads of services that link through to IVR (including custom deployment) so your company will get exactly what it needs and wants.

One of the branches of the U.S. Postal Service (Scottsdale, Arizona) relies on this company, as do many other firms and organizations. IVR Tech Group comes highly recommended.

3.3.2 VOXEO

Pros

Easy to understand service, more features than could ever fit on our comparison chart

Cons

No known cons

Conclusion

Voxeo offers a premium quality IVR labeled as “Prophecy.” This enterprise level IVR is remarkably easy to use and has literally every feature your business could ever need.

With inbound and outbound IVR support, built in conferencing and call recording, plus compliance with VoiceXML and a large number of other standards, we can’t think of a reason why you wouldn’t want to use this company.

Highly, highly recommended.

3.3.3 INCONTACT

Pros

A decent offering of services, good reviews online from those upgrading from legacy systems

Cons

Difficult to gather information about the IVR, limited number of services

Conclusion

InContact is a cloud hosted call center provider that offers a number of call center products. They get some good reviews online from individuals who are upgrading from legacy systems. However we suspect you’d be better off choosing a provider like Voxeo, which offers a much more comprehensive service.

If you’re going to go with cloud hosted IVRs you may as well choose a company that has more options available.

3.3.4 ELITETELE.COM

Pros

An established UK telecom provider with over one decade of experience

Cons

IVR system is somewhat lacking in features.

Conclusion

EliteTele.com was the first truly independent telecom provider after the UK government deregulated the industry. Over the last decade, this firm has grown rapidly, serving a variety of sectors and industries.

With a large number of telephony services offered, if your business is looking for a full solution and happens to be UK based, this is the company to look at.

3.3.5 NUVOXX

Pros

Allows queries of real time information like account balances

Cons

Very limited feature set on the hosted IVR product.

Conclusion

Nuvoxx is a Canadian firm that provides an excellent IVR backbone with a limited feature set. With that said, their IVR service may be deployed in a variety of specific ways including automated collections notifications, customer satisfaction surveys, and automated telephone appointment reminder services.

This positions the firm in a unique way: their core product, hosted IVR, is somewhat lacking in overall features but the amount of specialization is unparalleled. If you're looking for a company with specialized IVR deployments, we recommend Nuvoxx.

3.3.6 MICROTEL

Pros

None

Cons

See below

Conclusion

This Indian based company may seem like a cheap outsourced provider but literally, nothing good can be said about this firm. They offer the smallest number of features, only serve India, and their site is loaded with grammatical errors.

A good rule to follow with international companies is this: if they can't afford a proofreader to check the grammar on their site, you don't want to work with them. When that same company also has next to no features and inspires zero confidence, well, just avoid them.

3.3.7 IVR LAB

Pros

Offers voice translation

Cons

Limited feature list

Conclusion

While IVR lab only offers a few services on the comparison chart, like Nuvoxx, they have many specific applications.

This Florida-based company is able to check balances, facilitate emergency notifications, track orders and packages, and more. One great feature about this company is the facilitation of language translation.

4 IVR Matrix

	IVRTech Group.com	Voxeo	InContact	Elite Tele.com	Nuvoxx	Microtel	IVR Lab
Text To Speech	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Name and Address Capture	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Possibly	No
Reverse Phone Look-up	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Call Routing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Transcription Service	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Balance Checking	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Speech Recognition	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Cloud Hosted	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Possibly	Yes
Analytics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Uncertain	No	No	No
Audio Settings Control	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Language Translation	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes