

Translating context: the power of the human voice

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Discovering the depths of conversations through an in-depth understanding of language pathology and human engagement.

The human voice can become the organisation's most valuable asset – understanding it, interpreting it and using it to transform communication, collaboration and business insights. As customers increasingly learn to vote with their feet in competitive markets, it has never been more important for companies to look to technologies that allow them to find fresh insights within the human voice.



Michelle Clifford, speech and language pathologist and contact centre and leadership training developer at Accent Labs.

“Voice is a channel and, as such, is important from an industry perspective,” says Michelle Clifford, speech and language pathologist and contact centre and leadership training developer at [Accent Labs](#). “Voice communications are increasing in popularity, even with the omnichannel and other forms of contact with companies. Statistically and numerically, voice channels continue to take the lion's share of the customer experience.”

In spite of the plethora of self-service options and chatbots, people want to connect with people. This is largely due to shifting engagements and limited social interactions during the pandemic, but is ultimately still indicative of how important it is for customers to hear a human voice. A human voice that conveys empathy, that recognises frustration and that can potentially transform a customer concern into a positive experience. However, this can work in the opposite direction if the contact centre agent hasn't had proper training or coaching.

“Sarcasm, condescension, patronising tones – these can be conveyed as clearly as empathy and support,” says Rod Jones, industry analyst and [Callbi](#) brand ambassador. “While the customer can't see the agent, they can certainly pick up these nuances through vocal tone. Which is why it's important to create contact centre environments that fully recognise the valuable role that the voice channel and the agent plays in engaging with customers and building loyalty and retention.”

Contact centre agents should be given coaching that helps them to fully realise the impact of their roles, and their voices, when communicating with customers. They can then learn to understand the messages they are giving off through their tone and, with this insight, can moderate and self-correct in complex calls. This is also becoming increasingly important as agents deal with multiple cultures and nationalities, and accents can equally influence tone and perceptions in unexpected ways.



Rod Jones, industry analyst and Callbi brand ambassador

“Many solutions have set out to analyse different accents so that their analytics and platforms can better interpret the data,” says Clifford. “The South African accent is perceived as relatively neutral by an international English-speaking audience. Most of the vernacular languages spoken in South Africa are predominantly vowel based and when these phonemes are mispronounced, intelligibility issues can arise. Mispronunciation can inter alia take the form of vowel substitutions where the long English vowel sounds are replaced by short phonemes ie. ‘master card’ becomes unintelligible pronounced as [musta cud]. This is making it increasingly important to look at tools that are capable of understanding and unpacking the richly layered nuances of local languages so that contact centres can get better results.”

In addition to using these insights and approaches to refine contact centre engagements between customers and agents, this focus on voice-based interactions can streamline and considerably shorten call handling times. This factor alone can have a considerable impact on reducing operational costs. Customers don't want to spend significant swathes of time on

the phone trying to resolve a simple problem or endlessly repeating themselves, so imagine the value that lies in removing these obstacles to engagement?

“In cases where strong accents or inappropriate pronunciations occur, agents need to work harder. Customers need to work harder. The experience increase effort on both sides of the conversation and decreases in customer satisfaction with every passing moment and interrupted interaction. This is not what any contact centre wants,” says Jones. “Plus, as the call handling times increase, so do the company’s core costs.”

Fortunately, there has been impressive work done on technologies such as speech analytics that facilitate insights and appropriate interventions that lead to easier communication and that are capable of interpreting the vagaries of the local accents. Designed to streamline processes and engagements, these tools make the experience far less effortful than in the past – for everyone – and they allow for companies to further analyse the data to gain insights that can be used to shift unexpected obstacles, or change unnecessarily complex processes.

“These solutions bring down the overall cost to company by creating happier customers, shorter call handling times and more engaged agents,” concludes Clifford. “They facilitate easier communication and remove the stress points and have an incredibly positive impact on operations.”

About Callbi

Callbi is a South African developed cloud-based Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) speech analytics solution designed to transform contact centre engagement. Recorder agnostic, low-cost, and highly effective, Callbi doesn’t require integration with existing platforms to deliver on its promises of providing insights that can drive maximised revenue and improved efficiencies.

Callbi’s proprietary speech to text technology is fully compliant with international data security standards, is designed to optimise customer experiences while providing contact centres with valuable insights and intelligence. Callbi’s goal is to help you reach yours with a smart, intuitive, and accessible solution that supports more than 20 languages and dialects.

Visit our website for more information: <https://callbi.io/>.

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