

Fluency Voice Technology

Speech as a Hosted Service—Your Common Questions Answered

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Hosted speech solutions have been proven to deliver dramatic cost reductions and improvements in customer service. This article focuses on the most common questions asked when assessing speech as a hosted service for your business. All answers are derived from the experience of Fluency Voice Technology and in some cases we will make reference to specific experiences or findings of our customers.

How much money will it save me and how soon will I realize an ROI?

Hosted speech solutions eliminate hardware costs and replace them with transaction costs for each call processed. Fluency offers a success-based pricing scheme that means clients only pay for successfully processed calls (Card Payments, Balance Inquiries, etc.) and not for any call that might not be fully handled within the system (e.g. when a caller opts to speak to a live agent). As far as cost savings go, one of our hosted speech clients, a large UK water company was able to reduce the processing of a bill payment to 72 cents per completed transaction translating into a savings of \$2.16 per call. In addition to the cost savings, a Fluency hosted solution can be typically deployed within 6-8 weeks and ROI can be seen within just a few months.

Will our customers like it?

One of the top priorities on a customer's list of preferences is availability and convenience. The quicker a customer can carry out a transaction or get answers to a question, the more satisfied they are as they hang up the telephone.

Take another of our hosted speech clients, Travelodge, for instance, who faced the challenge to deliver an anytime, anywhere booking convenience at the same competitive price it extends to its Web customers. This includes the ability to quickly identify the nearest Travelodge hotel, locate the best rate for a room, and make reservations at any time of day or night. Travelodge

knew that a hosted solution would be most effective to conserve in-house resources and to deploy the system as rapidly as possible. It also meant saving much of the budget that went to the increased staff needed to handle peak travel times.

In relation to positive customer experience, an outsourced contact center client wanted to quickly roll out a pilot speech-enabled 'change of address' service for one of their clients. The end client was skeptical as to how their customers were going to accept the new approach to service so a survey of users of the service took place. Overall satisfaction was 87.7% with 41.3% being very satisfied.

How well do hosted systems scale up?

Hosted systems can in theory scale from very small to extremely large. This means that the benefits of speech recognition can be enjoyed by smaller contact centers that would otherwise not have the economy of scale to deploy their own dedicated systems. At the other end of the scale, the latest technology now allows hosted systems to scale to hundreds and even thousands of ports.

Before engaging a hosted service provider for the provision of a larger-scale service, it would be worth checking their credentials both in terms of system capacity and in terms of track record in supporting large-scale services. Another thing to look out for is a hosted service provider who can also offer a premise-based solution employing the same speech application software. This offers the contact center operator a choice of evolution paths in the future.

We have privacy and security concerns, should we still be looking at a hosted speech service?

Security of operation and privacy of data are key issues for any contact center, and any hosted service needs to address these requirements from both a network design and operational process perspective. Since hosted services typically share the same network infrastructure and also many of the associated supporting resources, this issue is

even more crucial. As a minimum, all speech services should be hosted on 'carrier-grade' high-availability duplicated platforms and housed in a secured data center with the usual array of multiple power and networking services as well as operational security and protection arrangements.

Fluency in Hosted and CPE Speech Solutions

Fluency has developed a configurable packaged speech application suite, the Virtual Speech Agent (VSA) Suite™. Fluency offers the VSA Suite via 'VSA on Demand', the hosted solution or as an on-site deployment. The option to migrate from a hosted to on-site solution is actively supported. The applications within the VSA Suite can process card payments, handle brochure/catalogue requests, activate call routing, identify and verify the customer as well as give out store/branch locations.

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