

Jump Start Your Strategic Thinking

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In the course of speaking at conferences and giving talks about customer experience and self service strategy, someone inevitably asks me the question, "But how do I increase use of my IVR?"

Unfortunately, too many people ask this question without fully understanding the strategic customer experience goals that they're trying to achieve. And so, I squelch a groan and gently bring the questioner back to our topic. But I also realize that most businesses today are running on *tactics*, not strategy. People get overwhelmed by the day to day fire drills and the need to do something now (or at least by next week). Frankly, that's the easy stuff. What's tough is taking the time and really getting our heads around all the things that drive getting more IVR usage – the *strategy*.

What happens if your company is stuck on strategic thinking? Here are some of the ways Vanguard works with clients to give them a jump start. One way is to change the way your team thinks, using resources like [Six Thinking Hats](#) by Edward De Bono or Roger von Oech's creative tools. Another way is to assign real customer attributes, or user profiles, to team members and have them walk through their ideal customer experience. These types of exercises can get teams "un-stuck" by changing the focus from internal products and processes to external customers, whose satisfaction is the result of a complex mix of emotion, value, and the overall service experience. And by thinking about what types of experiences your customers really want, you are more apt to think outside the box in ways that achieve corporate visions and goals.

So, how do I answer the IVR question? I say that in order to truly provide a consistent customer experience, companies need to be strategically driven. A strategy may be as simple as sitting down and defining what your customer's experience of your company should be and what the guiding principles are for that experience. For example, a young, hip company that appeals to 14 to 18 year olds may define their customers' experience as fast-paced, fun, and energized. How do you implement it? That's where tactics come in. So on the tactical side, this fictitious company may decide that its primary channels for customer communications will be the web and text messaging. They provide an experience that supports the strategy through use of bright colors, animation, and sounds.

This is a very simplified example, since building a strategy takes more research (including talking to real customers) as well as lots of internal debate. But the bottom line is that if you develop a customer centric strategy, you *can* increase use of your IVR.

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