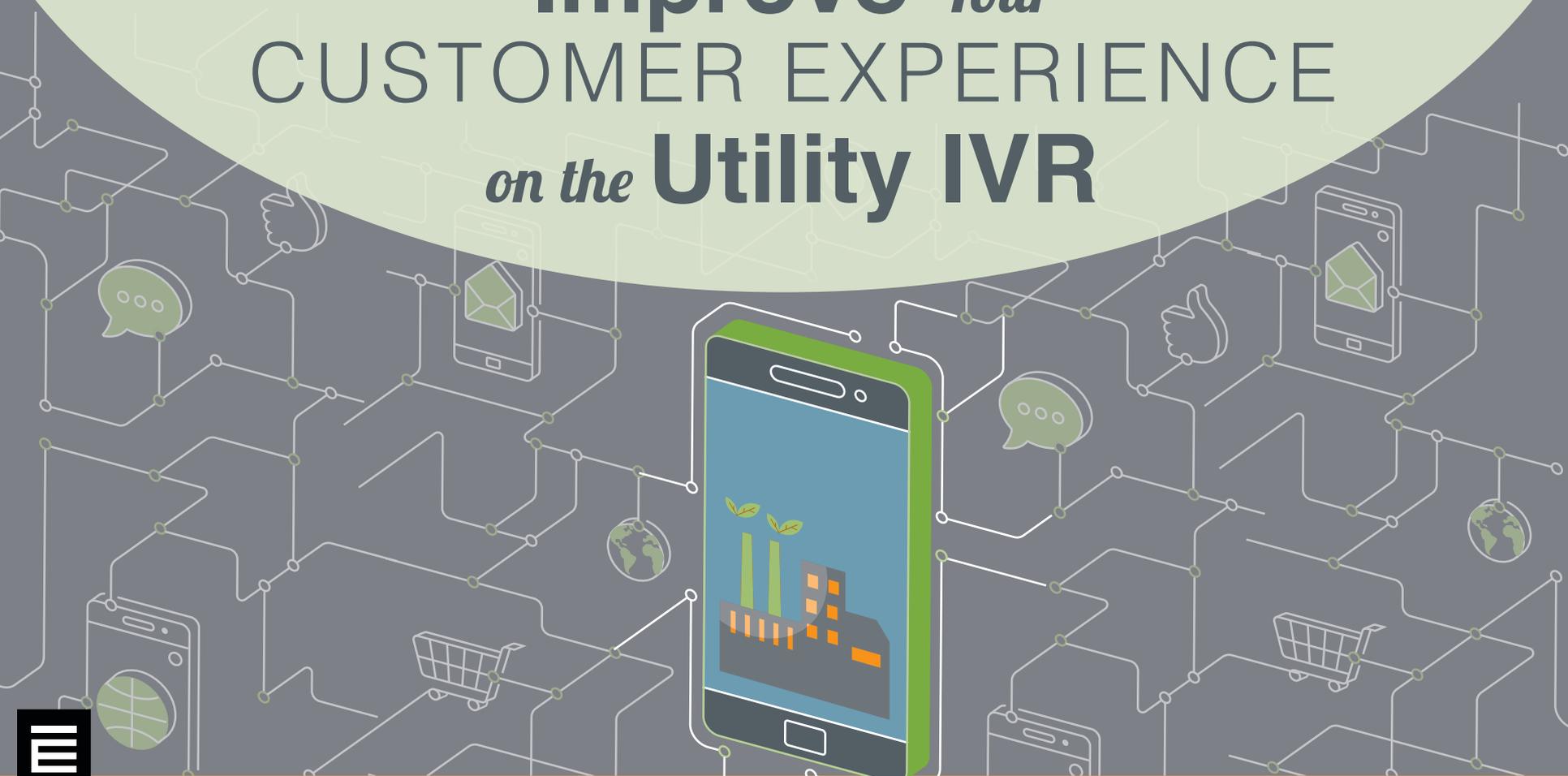




How to

Improve *Your*
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE
on the **Utility IVR**



What Customers Are Thinking

Customers Prefer Other Channels

IVR rated lowest for first-contact resolution and quality of service received among eight customer-facing channels



★ Customers would rather speak to a customer service representative (CSR) to resolve their issue than self-serve

© E Source; data from 2015 Omnichannel Survey



So What Can Utilities Do?



**Focus on improving
functionality**

**Enhance experience for credit-
and payment-related features**

**Automate authentication and
include only where necessary**

**Increase self-service
opportunities**



Focus on improving functionality

IVRs are reviewed using three usability components for each feature and functionality was the lowest rated, with an overall score of 3.8 out of 5 where 5 means “excellent.”



Delivery

How are the voice, tone, and pacing?



Navigation

How easy is it to find?



Functionality

How easy is it to use?

How can utilities improve the functionality of their IVRs?

-  Improve speech recognition by making systems more sensitive to a full and diverse range of customer inputs
-  Provide the option for touch-tone in standard speech-recognition systems
-  Keep IVR messaging brief or make hearing messages optional
-  Offer a callback option when wait times are long
-  Integrate customer data into the IVR system in real time

Enhance experience for credit- and payment-related features

Make a Payment and **Disconnect Status and Reconnect Service** were the lowest-performing features in both 2013 and 2016, meaning utilities have an opportunity to improve the customer experience.



Make a Payment

Although this feature is found on many utility IVRs, customers aren't having a good experience

Availability

Make a Payment



Usability Score

3.5
out of 5

To improve: Ensure a seamless transition to a third-party provider

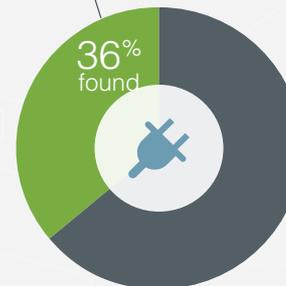


Disconnect Status and Reconnect Service

Many utilities don't have this feature, which could force customers facing a difficult situation to turn to more-costly channels

Availability

Disconnect Status and Reconnect Service



Usability Score

3.5
out of 5

To improve: Provide more information for this feature while using clear language, so that customers don't get confused with similar-sounding features such as Moving



Automate authentication and include only where necessary

The top 10 ranked utilities in the IVR review wait to have customers authenticate their accounts until after the caller has identified what task they wish to perform on the IVR, rather than requiring callers to authenticate their accounts at the start of the call.

Best practices for authentication:

Automatically recognize callers by detecting their phone numbers.



Provide at least one authentication option that a caller is likely to have memorized, such as a phone number.

Ask for two pieces of authentication information. Fewer may make the customer feel unsafe and more takes up too much of their valuable time.



If you require authentication before transferring to a CSR, pass the authentication information to the agent.



Increase self-service opportunities

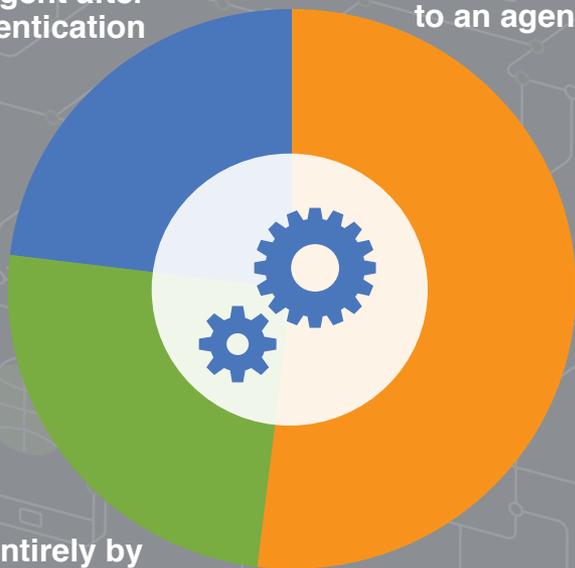
Only about half of secure features are fully automated, which presents an opportunity for utilities to expand the functionality of their IVRs.

Callers accomplish their task...

With an agent after authentication

Without talking to an agent

Entirely by speaking to an agent



Do you offer a self-service experience on one channel but not on your IVR?



You should prioritize this addition. Customers expect to perform the same transactions regardless of channel.



Do you use journey mapping?



Understanding a customer's journey can help your utility figure out where self-service is failing.



Do you showcase the benefits of choosing self-service over speaking to a CSR?



Using phrases like "for the quickest way to pay your bill" rather than "for our automated system" can entice customers to make use of your IVR's self-service capabilities.

IVRs of the Future



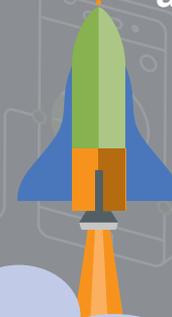
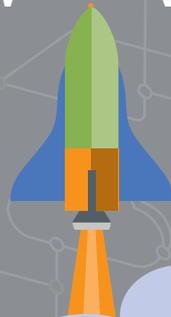
Just over half of customers prefer touch-tone IVRs, but watch out for speech recognition improvements because they could present efficiencies in the future. With advancements in speech recognition technology like Apple's Siri, this could become the new customer expectation.



While some strides have been made toward automating authentication, more can be done to make this process easier and more secure for customers. For example, voice print technology identifies callers by their unique voice characteristics.



Utilities need to keep mobile usage top of mind during IVR design. For example, new technologies are emerging that allow callers to interchangeably use their mobile screen to interact with the IVR, such as to schedule a service appointment.





The E Source Review of North American Electric and Gas Company IVRs: 2016 assessed the IVRs of 90 US and Canadian utilities. Between January and March 2016, a group of residential customers reviewed the top 10 IVR features. These features are informational or transactional and were identified by E Source market research, input from industry thought leaders, and E Source expertise as the features residential customers most wanted to hear on their utility's IVR.

Data in this ebook are also drawn from the E Source Omnichannel Survey 2015 where noted. The E Source Omnichannel Survey 2015 assesses the strategic omnichannel efforts of the utility industry across eight customer-facing channels, based on a representative sample of over 50 utilities and 800 residential customers across North America.



For more information, visit www.esource.com
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