5 SIMPLE STEPS

## TO MODERNIZE YOUR IVR WITH THE POWER OF CLOUD, AI AND ML

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The current generation of customers expect their voice interactions to be conversational, personalized, and dynamic. While mobile, web, chat, messaging, and social media channels are increasing in popularity, phone calls are still the primary channel customers use to interact with businesses. What does this mean for your legacy-hosted interactive voice response (IVR) applications?

Enterprise IT and contact center operations teams find it challenging to streamline customer interactions using legacy-hosted IVR applications. These applications have limited capabilities when it comes to cross-platform integration accessing customer data, knowledge bases, business processing and workflow systems, and other information sources to guide customers and agents through interactions.
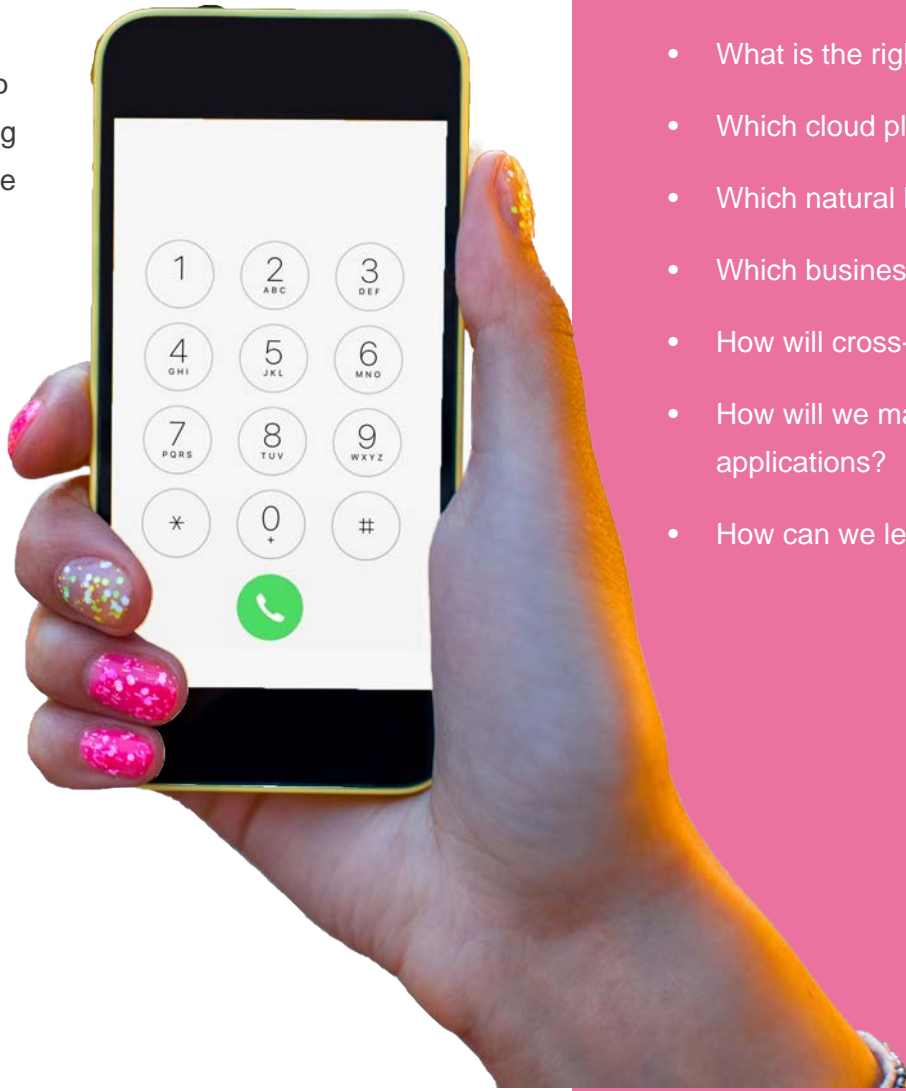
ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Key questions your IT and contact center operations teams should ask when planning to modernize your IVR applications include:

- What is the right architecture?

- Which cloud platform should we use?

- Which natural language understanding (NLU) technology is best?

- Which business processes need to be automated?

- How will cross-platform integration work?

- How will we maintain and support operational contact center and IVR applications?

- How can we lead and make this change while currently in operation?

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YOU—AND YOUR CUSTOMERS—HAVE EVERYTHING TO GAIN

The traditional contact center operations approach is to plan and allocate human agents to handle voice demand and customer interactions. Customers often experience long wait times to talk to an agent. They dislike needing to repeat information as calls are transferred. Getting disconnected adds to the frustration. All these issues are due to inefficient IT infrastructure and limited cross-platform integration of IVR applications with enterprise systems that could guide the agent and customer through personalized, dynamic interactions. Lacking efficient cross-platform integration is costly to your operations, as well as damaging to your brand reputation.

Natural language understanding (NLU), machine learning (ML), and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies are the driving force behind the adoption of customer self-service interactions to replace talking to agents in traditional contact centers. While we cannot eliminate 100% of the need for human agents, we see a major pivot toward implementing NLU, AI, ML, and bots to streamline customer interactions, enhance brand presence, and create dynamic experiences.
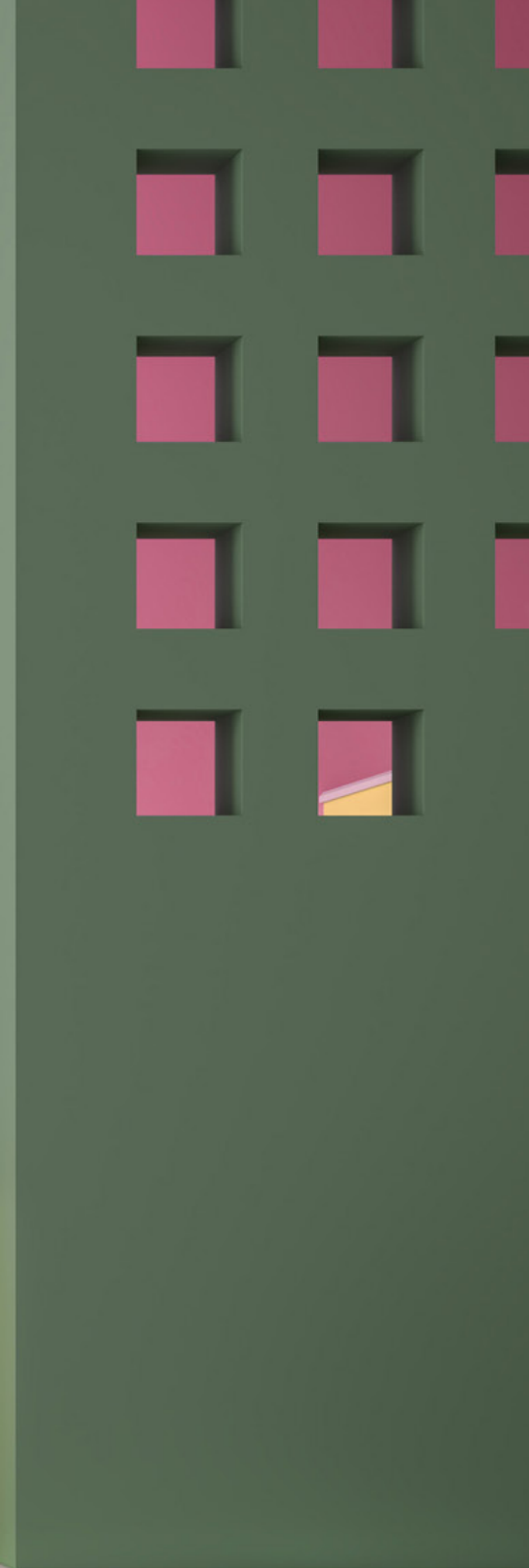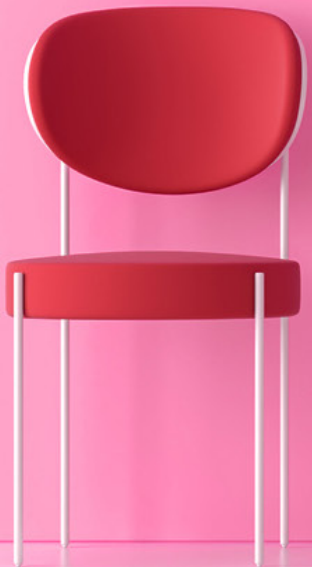
This paper reviews recommended steps to modernize legacy IVR applications to deliver an exceptional customer experience with cloud and AI/ML technologies.
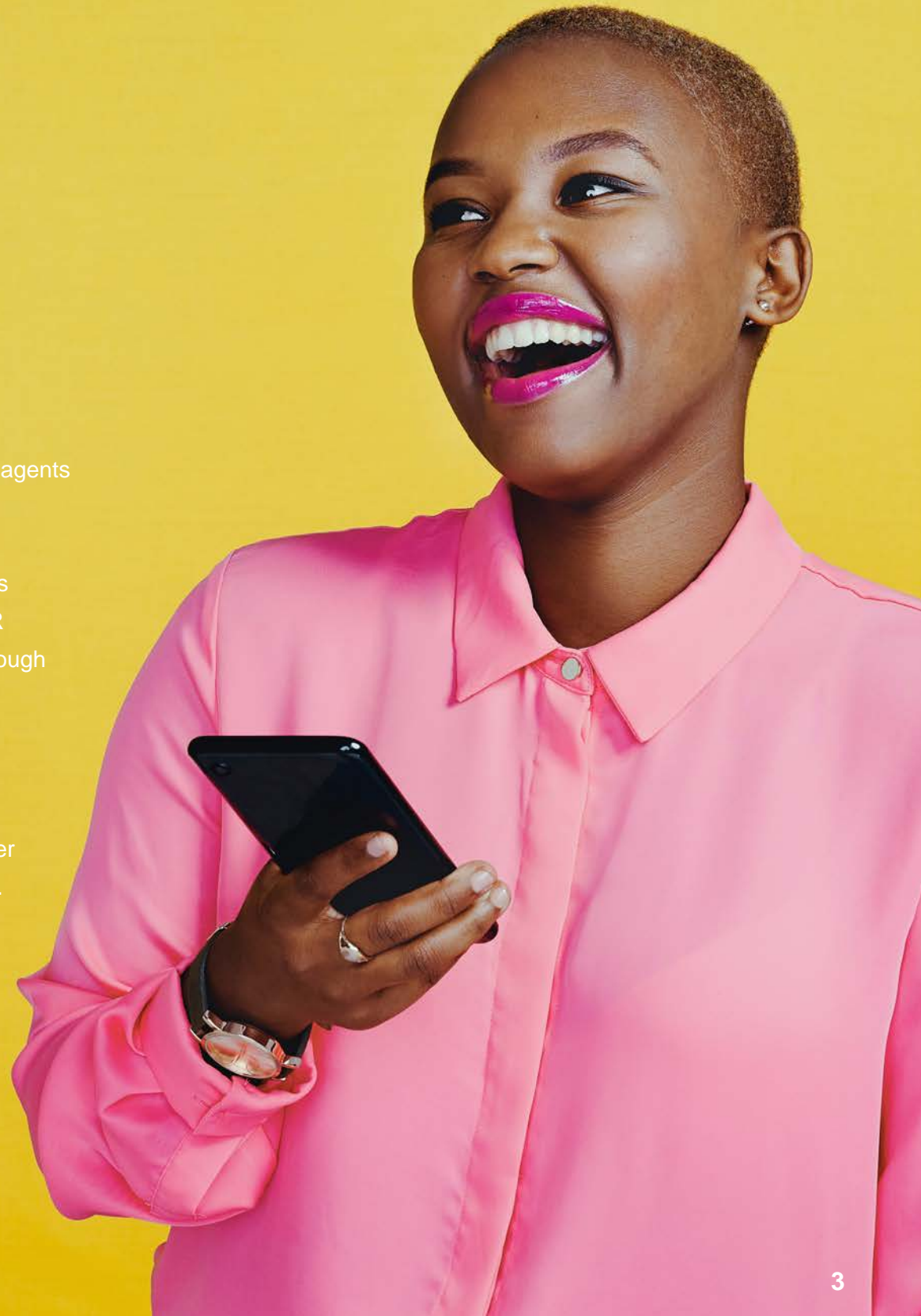
A METHODICAL APPROACH TO IVR TRANSFORMATION

How to simplify your IVR modernization project

1

Perform an assessment.

While there are many ways to conduct an assessment, here are a few of the most important areas that will provide the best output for the time you spent to create your business case for IVR modernization.

To strengthen your business case, you can also analyze the number of issues your contact center handled over the last year to gauge the stability of your contact center systems and how these issues affected your customer satisfaction, sales, and revenue.
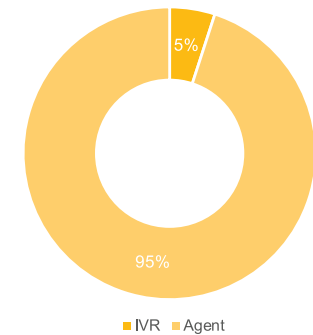
1 From your voice call history, identify which type of customer inquiries and issues are taking the longest time to resolve.
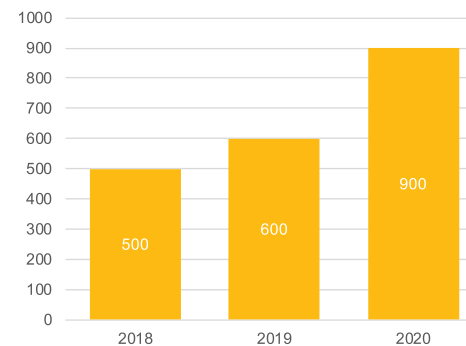
IVR - Time to Resolve (in seconds)

2 Based on your total call volume, calculate the percentage of calls that your IVR is resolving without human intervention.
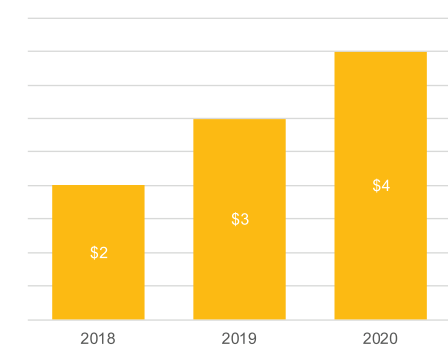
IVR vs Agent Resolution

3 Review your last three years of history on workforce allocation to handle customer interactions.

WFM

4 Review your last three years' total cost of running your contact center infrastructure, systems, and applications.

Cost (In Millions)

2

Decide which interactive voice experiences you want to create first.

Once you finish your Step 1 assessment, you will need to prioritize the IVR interactions that have the most impact to your business. The beauty of cloud contact center-based IVR apps is that they offer greater flexibility to pick and choose which business processing activity you wish to automate with NLU and AI technologies.

For example, if you want to automate sales orders with a human-like interaction experience with NLU technology to provide a full self-service capability, cloud contact center and IVR applications let you design a contact flow specific to your business needs, using API-based enterprise systems integration. Cloud-based IVR apps offer a natural, human-like experience for customers to shop, choose, and purchase products via your IVR channel without human intervention. The level of customization is unique to each business. You can design cloud IVR applications to provide your desired customer experience--using 100% NLU, a blend of NLU and live agent or 100% live agent, based on your specific business processes.

So, prioritize the categories identified in step 1, then use a phased and agile approach to address each category at a time, and see how the customer experience is improving in live production.

Measure the percentage of NLU interaction volume after your implementations. If the NLU usage trend is increasing, your chosen category and approach is working. If not, review your workflow design to adjust self-service adoption for customer interactions. Repeat this agile-based approach to streamline your business workflows with the remaining categories until you have a good balance between NLU and agent interactions. Keep in mind that IVR application modernization will not happen overnight, but with careful scoping, planning, and implementation, you can succeed--without disrupting your contact center operations.

3

Choose the right IVR and conversational AI platform.

Legacy IVR hosted applications are tightly coupled with underlying infrastructure, perpetual IVR software licensing, databases, long-term contracts, and enterprise systems integration.

When choosing a new conversational IVR platform, look for key features that will help you avoid the situations you have experienced with legacy IVR apps:

- Contact flow design – customize and change contact and routing workflows

- NLU capability – create human- like IVR and voice interactions

- Scalability – handle planned, unplanned, and unexpected call volumes

- Security – secure all confidential data and meet regulatory compliance

- Interoperability – Integrate AI/NLU and enterprise systems without restrictions

- Continuity – fail over to disaster recovery site and restore contact center to normal operations

- Multilingual – if applicable, leverage multiple NLU speech languages to support your company's multi-national presence

4

Choose the right cloud hosting and implementation partner.

Planning to modernize your IVR applications while you are running normal operations can be exhausting, so don't hesitate to ask for help. Look for a partner who can provide:

- A ready-made toolkit to build contact and routing workflows

- Hosting in a cloud platform of your choice

- Readily available interface integrations with NLU/AI for conversational interactions

- The ability to deploy business processing activity with NLU self-service capabilities in an agile manner, by the categories identified during your assessment

We recommend that you outsource the hosting and maintenance of your complex telephony infrastructure and IVR software upgrade activities. If your organization has skilled engineers and developers, they can handle your software integration in house. Otherwise, you should find a managed services provider (MSP) who can take care of cloud hosting, cloud operations, and IVR application maintenance and support functions so you can focus on day-to-day contact center business operations and providing a better customer experience.

Look for a partner who can recommend the right architecture, pick the NLU technology stack for you, design contact flow solutions, provide cloud hosting and cross-platform integration, and take over all maintenance and support. This will allow you to offload the overhead associated with the contact center and IVR software.

5

Continuously improve automation.

Don't aim for 100% NLU conversational acceptance from the outset. Start the journey to keep improving the NLU self-service adoption in increments of five and ten percent improvement. Once you achieve 50% of self-service adoption in each category of business activity, your ROI with contact center and IVR application modernization will start paying off in terms of sales, efficiencies, customer satisfaction, and reduction in staff costs--and ultimately, in overall customer experience.

READY FOR A
NEW APPROACH?

You do not have to take a "big bang" approach to IVR modernization. Implementing a cloud contact center and conversational IVR application services are the best steps you can take now to create an intelligent contact center infrastructure platform.

Looking for a partner to help you throughout your journey? Concentrix delivers the end-to-end digital customer experience and contact center capabilities organizations need in a cloud architecture, designed for all traffic, applications, and users—no matter where they are located. Today, we offer Concentrix Experience Platform powered by Amazon Connect as a managed contact center as a service.

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