

## The Invomo Survey



# Finding the perfect mix

Summary report on the views of 3000 customers on self service and agent based service through the web and call centres

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## About the research and Invomo

This summary report presents the highlights of findings of Invomo's research from September 2009. Conducted on behalf of invomo by OnePoll, the views of 3000 consumers are represented across all age groups over 18 years of age in the UK.

The full report was launched at Call Centre EXPO at the NEC Birmingham in September. If you are a call centre manager or marketing manager who would like to have a fuller appreciation from the ten page research, please email [fmcperson@invomo.com](mailto:fmcperson@invomo.com).

We have conducted the research as it's important for us to keep pace with the changing needs of our customers' customers. Invomo specialise in helping clients communicate more effectively with call centre customers and meet the demands of their inbound and outbound campaigns. We've built up a host of practical experience helping call centre managers so we also know how you have to balance the operational, financial and legal demands with those of the customer.

Clients such as AdTrader, O2 and Insureandgo have found our practical approach and hosted applications have given them the ideal combination of services that are affordable and easy to manage. We can work with you to improve your call centre performance by: boosting sales by capturing more calls and converting them to business, extending website usage, improving the processing of customer enquiries, cutting queuing, increasing agent efficiency and retention by automating repetitive and secure tasks.

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When it comes to judging a company, today consumers put customer service above all other factors. They expect to be provided with the service that has been promised to them and in a way that is convenient, straight forward and fast\*.

Companies are trying to meet these deceptively simple needs in different ways using self-help services on the web and automated services and applications to improve the efficiency of agents in the call centre.

Invomo's latest research findings of 3000 consumers looks into how well organizations are getting the service mix right. This research summary will help call centre managers appreciate when the human touch is preferable to self-service, attitudes to automation, concerns over security and what a good and bad experience looks like today.

Regardless of the technology a starting point for a good experience is making sure customers can easily find out how to reach the supplier of their choice, followed by a simple means to get to the right 'service point'. Finally to make a purchase securely or get the relevant information with the minimum of fuss and waiting time.

Self-service is on the rise to speed up the process and reduce overheads. Investment in the web is prevalent as an instant shop window and purchasing point – the appeal to the supplier is the web is relatively straight forward to implement and control, can handle changes and meet levels of demand, plus usage can be tracked and measured. The same flexibility cannot always be claimed for call centres and automated services with issues of the capabilities of legacy equipment, managing changing call volumes and personnel challenges.

Growth of self service through automated services on the phone also continues, with speech recognition technology spending set to rise 8% this year\*\*. When done well there are many positive attributes of automated services – when the

service is made intuitive the customer's experience can be enhanced and even increase loyalty.

Technology is improving and flexible service models, such as hosted applications, mean services can now be much more adaptable and accessible to a wide base of call centres.

We are continually reminded that many consumers would still like to speak to people. The Ipsos Mori report on customer loyalty tells us 71% of customers agreed that *'Most companies are lacking the human touch when it comes to dealing with their customers'*. Meeting the demands of the customer can be hard to get right and maintain as acceptance of technology and needs change.

To start to address this challenge our survey is designed to help understand what combinations of service are acceptable in different circumstances as it is not simple case of self-service versus live service.

*Invomo believe it's important to offer appropriate choices and integrate options for a consistent service and brand, not to give the customer any reason to abandon an order or hang-up on a call.*

#### Find out

- What's the real demand and reasons to purchase via a call centre rather than the web?
- Which type of 'secure payment system' are customers most concerned about?
- What are the automated services that are seen as most convenient by customers?
- What are the most regularly encountered call centre problems
- What have companies done to most impress the customer with their service?

## Purchasing

Placing online orders on the web is now commonplace, but there is still a high proportion of customers who have genuine reasons for wanting to make contact with a company to make a purchase.

**39% of consumers choose to make purchases using the supplier's call centre rather than buying online.**

To drill down to get more detail we asked the reasons for why they choose to purchase via the call centre.

- 68% wanted specific information before buying
- 34% difficulties with online ordering processes
- 27% more confident of order via the call centre
- 20% more convenient to call than using the web

*Companies that only have a web strategy for servicing orders could be missing out on a significant proportion of business. Improvement to online processes is easier to solve than a lack of confidence of using the web. Offering a clear choice to contact a call centre when needed on the website could reduce lost orders.*

The full report provides more illuminating detail on the types of information and interaction that customers are looking for before they make their purchases.

## Security

Fraud is on the rise and the fears of consumers continue to be very high.

**Almost three quarters of consumers (73%) say they have been worried about giving their credit card/security details to an agent over the phone.**

Despite the reassurance of online secure payment services, consumers are almost as worried about providing credit card/security details on the web – 64% said they had been worried when using the web to make purchases.

The use of automated systems has been growing to counter such concerns, whereby consumers provide details to a 'black box'. We wanted to know if they would feel more comfortable providing their details to an automated system rather than the call centre agent.

The feedback is consumers still need to be convinced about automated security systems. However they are not adverse to this method, and rated it slightly more favourably than using the agent.

**When making a purchase over the phone would you be more comfortable providing payment card details to an automated system rather than to a call centre agent?**

(1=not at all comfortable, 5 = extremely comfortable)

44%	rated 3
29%	very to extremely comfortable (4 or 5 rating)
27%	uncomfortable to extremely uncomfortable (1 or 2 rating)

## Simple transactions and automation

In theory automated systems over the phone can provide a simple way of completing quick transactions. To test this theory consumers were asked which types of services would be most convenient for them. (These services did not involve a purchase as we know there are separate issues on security.)

A rating scale of 5 very convenient and 1 not at all convenient was used. The options found to be most convenient (rating of 4 or 5) are:

- 56%** 'Using an automated service to request information or a brochure' was of greatest interest
- 55%** 'Enter a competition' was in close second
- 54%** An intelligent system which tells you 'where is your nearest store?'

A system to provide change of address proved to be of less interest with 43% rating 1 or 2 for convenience. This response might be explained as it is a passive service –i.e. there's not an immediate benefit.

## Bad experiences - a long way from being solved

Consumers were asked about 10 common call centre complaints to see how well they think supplier's have improved their service and overcome these problems. Based on their recent experiences we asked them to tell us 'how regularly they encountered the problem' by rating 1=regularly, 2 = occasionally, 3 = rarely.

For all but one of the problems 80% of consumers said they met the problems either 'occasionally' or 'regularly' so suppliers are still a long way from solving the common complaints of call centres.

When a problem is 'regularly' encountered by 50% or more of consumers we consider this to be a serious problem. Queuing, menus and agent annunciation are the top offenders.

**5 out of the 10 problems were 'regularly experienced' by more than 50% of consumers:**

	Regularly encountered
Unacceptable queue times	67%
Menus that don't address the need	58%
Kept in a queue with no updates	57%
No options to speak to an agent	50.5%
Have to ask the agent to repeat themselves	50.5%

The problem that was '**rarely encountered**' was 'Voice recognition does not accept what I say' (20.4%). But technology and experience appears to be very variable as 41% also said that they regularly encountered problems with speech recognition systems.

## Good experiences

Consumers were give free rein to say which companies provided the best experience in their view and why.

2500 people gave us their vote but...

**28% of those who answered the question said no company has impressed them at all!**

From the responses on good experiences mobile operators and telecommunications featured highly.

The preliminary count of the open responses shows the top most mentioned companies were:

Orange  
BT  
O2  
First Direct  
Tesco  
HSBC  
Halifax

Many of the examples of a good experience address the most common complaints raised in the earlier section. Consumers are impressed with short waiting times, reliable service without fuss.

The attitude of the staff also featured strongly with consumers, appreciating helpful and knowledgeable staff, but also those who are friendly and polite. Agents who have English as a first language and can be easily understood was also prevalent.

A selection of quotes covering additional aspects of good experiences

*“Boden - I love his personal IVR system”*

*“Boots - Customer service - no menus, one number, easy/ fast to reach and helped to sort out the problem immediately”*

*“BT's call back service was very convenient.”*

*“Vodafone - their automated system is really good with questions being answered by machine and knowledge of credit text service. The only problem is the time to wait to speak to someone in person.”*

*“Amazon – they listened to me and owned the problem”*

*“British Gas – there was a queue so I left a message and they called me back!”*

*“Co-op Bank – they sent me a letter to help tell me the menu options I needed to press on the phone”*

\* ‘The Imperatives for Customer Loyalty ‘ Ipsos MORI Preliminary report March 2009

\*\* ‘Help yourself – the recession spurs self-service’ Economist 2 June 2009 and Datamonitor Group research.