

# customer care solutions

from Nuance



case study ::

## Retail Company Improves Customer Service Experience with Natural Language Call Steering

Call Abandon Rate Decreases 19% from Improved Call Flow

### About the Company

The company is a leading integrated technology solutions provider in the IT industry. Although founded on the concept of selling computer systems directly to consumers, they have expanded their business model, selling a broader portfolio of products and services through additional distribution channels. Now, the company also offers mobility products, software and peripherals, servers and networking, and storage. Their services include a broad range of configurable IT and business-related services, including infrastructure technology, consulting and applications, and business process services.

They connect with more than 5.4 million customers every day and have service team members in approximately 90 countries.

### Nuance Solutions

Nuance Professional Services provided Full Application Services to migrate applications to new platforms, deploy consistent code worldwide and deploy a new natural-language routing application. The company uses Nuance Call Steering, Nuance Recognizer, and Nuance Vocalizer.

### Results

In addition to moving towards global parity for customer service applications, the company has also had the following results with the Call Steering application:

- Call abandon rate has decreased 19%
- Total time in the IVR reduced 5%
- Default transfers to agents decreased 40%
- Call containment in the IVR has increased 80%.

## Business Challenges & Opportunities

With operations around the globe, the company was seeking opportunities to standardize their technology and solutions for providing customer service over the telephone. Although similar automated applications existed worldwide, they were often deployed on different platforms and written in different code. Also, some were touchtone applications, while others were speech-enabled. By implementing global standards, the company could achieve greater operating efficiency to reduce costs, as well as ensure that proven, high-quality service methods are consistently employed.

In addition to moving towards global parity, the company also was looking to identify ways to improve performance of their automated applications. By increasing the applications' effectiveness in handling and routing calls appropriately, the company could reduce agent-related costs.



## The Solution

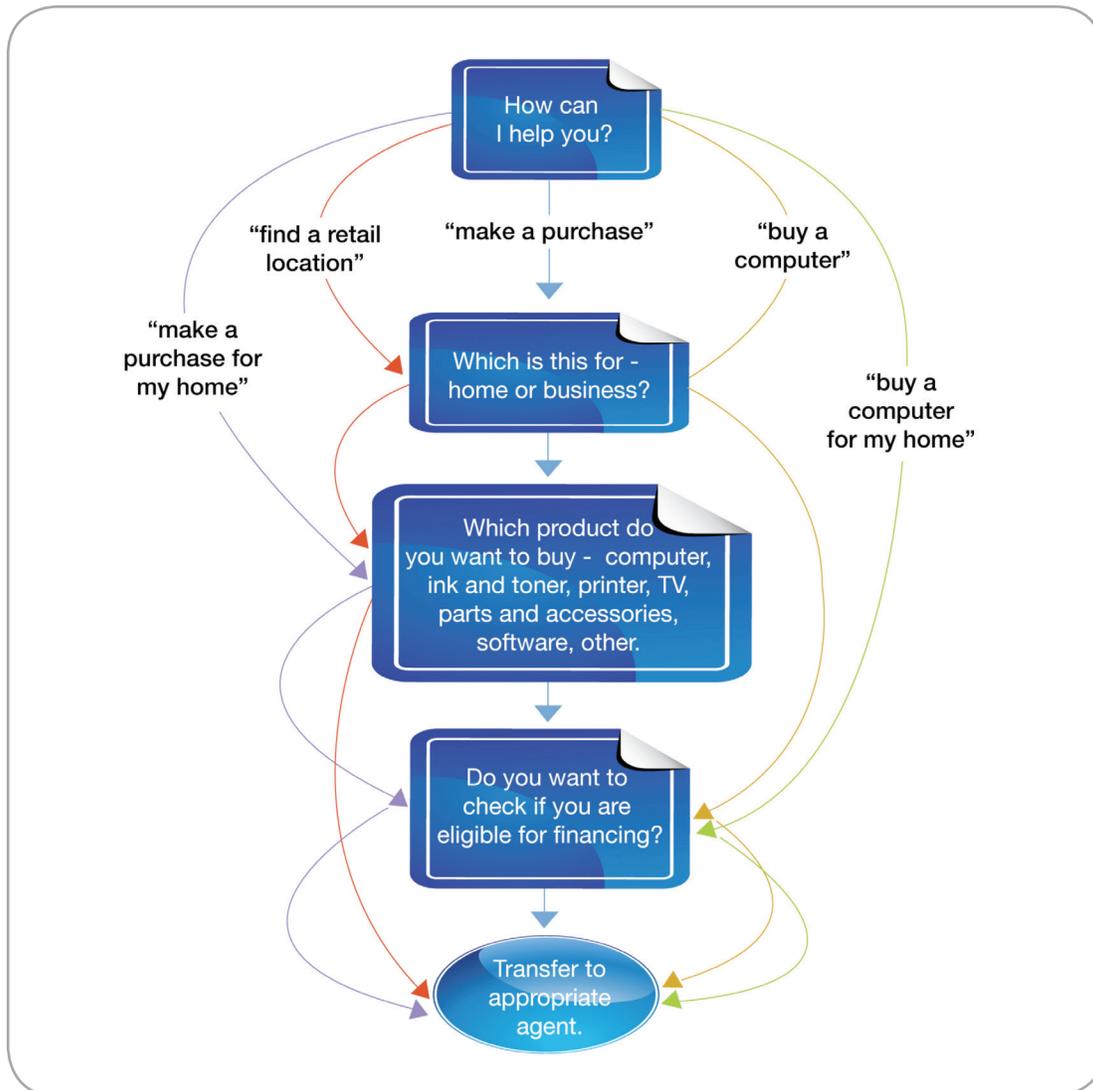
The company began working with Nuance Professional Services in 2008 on multiple concurrent initiatives.

First, they took important steps towards global parity by embarking on projects with the following goals:

- Migrate existing touchtone and speech-enabled applications in the United States from an end-of-life Edify platform to the Avaya Voice Portal Platform, while also implementing application improvements.
- Deploy consistent code for two specific touchtone applications operating on various platforms worldwide. The applications reside in nine countries and are in nine different languages (English, French, Dutch, German, Korean, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Japanese).

Second, the company decided to deploy a new call routing approach for their US operations. The US operations were using a menu-based, or "directed-dialog" speech-enabled call routing application. Callers were presented with a series of menus and provided with optional response. With over 150 different call types, however, the menus could be complex. In addition, it wasn't always clear, from a customer's perspective, which options to choose. As a result, callers sometimes abandoned the call and hung up, or they ended up in the wrong agent queue and had to be transferred. This resulted in lost revenue opportunity for the company, as well as higher-than-necessary operating costs.

To help resolve these issues, they worked closely with Nuance Professional Services to design, develop and deploy Nuance's natural language Call Steering solution for US callers. The new Call Steering solution lets callers say the reason for the call in their own words, such as "find a retail location" or "buy a computer for my home." The caller is then prompted only for the remaining information needed to properly route their call. The diagram on the following page shows how, based on the caller's response, the call flow will skip through unnecessary prompts. This approach avoids asking the caller for information that they already provided.



“We partnered with Nuance to take us through this global journey to fix our IVRs, because Nuance has some of the best experts when it comes to IVR project management and deployment, UI design, and especially the speech science around the application. The support we got from Nuance was incredible throughout this journey,” said the company’s global IVR implementation manager.

### The Results of Call Steering

The company has achieved significant results through the deployment of the natural language Call Steering solution, including:

- Callers’ total time in the IVR was reduced 5%
- Number of interactions the caller has before being routed was reduced 25%.

The reduction of time callers spend in the IVR provides significant operational savings to the business, but it also improves the customer experience.

As a result of the improved experience, customers are more actively engaging with the automated IVR applications, as demonstrated by the following results:

- Call abandon rate has reduced 19%
- Percentage of callers successfully providing an order number increased 43%
- Percentage of callers entering their Express Service Code improved 14%.
- Default transfers to agents decreased 40%
- Call containment in the IVR has increased 80%.

By successfully capturing information from the caller through the automated system, the company has also increased the number of calls that can be routed to the appropriate agent queue. The number of calls that have to be transferred to a generic agent queue due to not having enough information has reduced a dramatic 47%.

### Making the Service Experience Even Better

After the company deployed natural language Call Steering in the United States, the senior leadership team challenged the IVR managers to find more ways to make the service experience even better.

*“We’re very happy with what we’ve seen. I’m looking more at automation now that we don’t have to play the 20 questions game with the customers to try to figure out where they belong. We’ve streamlined that quite a bit through natural language, and now we can focus more on automation after we’re done getting the intent. We’re also looking at expanding this capability globally.”*

– Senior Consultant,  
Global Business Infrastructure

One area of opportunity was helping the caller select the product about which they were calling. “If we found one product type matched to that person’s incoming phone number, we assumed that was the product that they were calling about and routed it to an agent,” said the global IVR implementation manager. The challenge, however, was that many callers owned multiple products from the company. To identify which product about which they were calling, the IVR would prompt the caller to enter the product 13-digit service code. This could be cumbersome.

To resolve this challenge, the company chose to prompt certain callers with the names of their products and let them say the name about which they were calling. Nuance Professional Services provided support in implementing this design change.

“Now, if we see up to three product types associated with a phone number, we’ll give the customer a choice. For example: Are you calling about your desktop, your notebook or your printer? They choose one of those options, and they are routed to an agent.”

By implementing this change, the company saw up to a 13% improvement in the number of customers correctly identifying the product about which they were calling. This translated into an impressive savings in operations costs worth ten times their investment.

## Customer Satisfaction Improves

While operational metrics indicated the company's investments were yielding positive changes, third-party surveys revealed that customer satisfaction had also increased. In a January 2011 report, the third-party researcher revealed that in 2010, the company "made dramatic improvements across several metrics that drive customer satisfaction with a tech support call" including:

- A fifteen percentage point reduction in IVR complaints
- A thirteen percentage point improvement in ease of reaching an agent
- An eight percentage point drop in irrelevant or repetitive steps

With research indicating a clear link between a customer's satisfaction with a tech support call and the likelihood to repurchase, this data provided further proof of the value of the company's investments the service experience.

## About Nuance Communications, Inc.

Nuance is the leading provider of speech and imaging solutions for businesses and consumers around the world. Its technologies, applications, and services make the user experience more compelling by transforming the way people interact with information and how they create, share, and use documents. Every day, millions of users and thousands of businesses experience Nuance's proven applications and professional services. For more information, please visit [www.nuance.com](http://www.nuance.com).

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