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NUANCE

Driving ROI out of your Employee Directory

Five Steps to Improving Organizational Communications
and Business Processes

A SPEECH-DRIVEN APPROACH

This solution paper presents the Nuance Employee
Productivity Suite, and outlines five ways to leverage a
speech-enabled employee directory to drive measurable
business benefits—enhanced organizational communications,
streamlined information exchange, increased employee
productivity, improved business processes, and reduced IT
and telecommunications costs—that quickly add up to
significant bottom line results.

introduction

In today's dynamic business world, organizations are facing some formidable challenges. Industry consolidation and its associated mergers and acquisitions are forcing many organizations to continually assimilate new employees and business processes into their existing operations. Growing competition is driving many businesses to expand worldwide in order to provide global reach with local access.

Rapid technological advances are giving rise to an increasingly mobile workforce capable of conducting business from anywhere, at anytime. What's more, the uncertainty and heightened caution brought about by recent world events has highlighted the need for disaster preparedness and business continuity strategies to ensure ongoing enterprise-wide communications and core activity execution—even in the event of an emergency.

Given these challenging conditions, what's the best way for organizations like yours to assure consistent business processes and employee communications—whether it's business as usual or a crisis situation? You can start by speech-enabling your employee directory. A speech-enabled employee directory lays the foundation for a number of applications—automated call routing, information retrieval, broadcast messaging, emergency notification, and more—that enhance organizational communications and support your disaster recovery and business continuity plans. At the same time, a speech-enabled directory can serve as a secure front-end to productivity-boosting employee applications and as a repository for business rules that control individual access.

Over the past several years, more and more organizations have started leveraging the power of speech, especially in the customer service area. However, as many companies are discovering, a speech-enabled employee directory can be the launching pad for solutions that extend far beyond increased convenience for customers calling into your organization.

Deploying speech applications is gaining significant momentum among buyers in North America and Europe. While companies with legacy IVR (Integrated Voice Response) systems still dominate, 65% of North American companies and 60% of European companies indicated that they are planning for or acquiring some speech-enabled solutions... Companies' speech adoption plans will continue to see strong growth during the next four years.[1]

nuance employee productivity suite

Driving ROI out of your Corporate Employee Directory
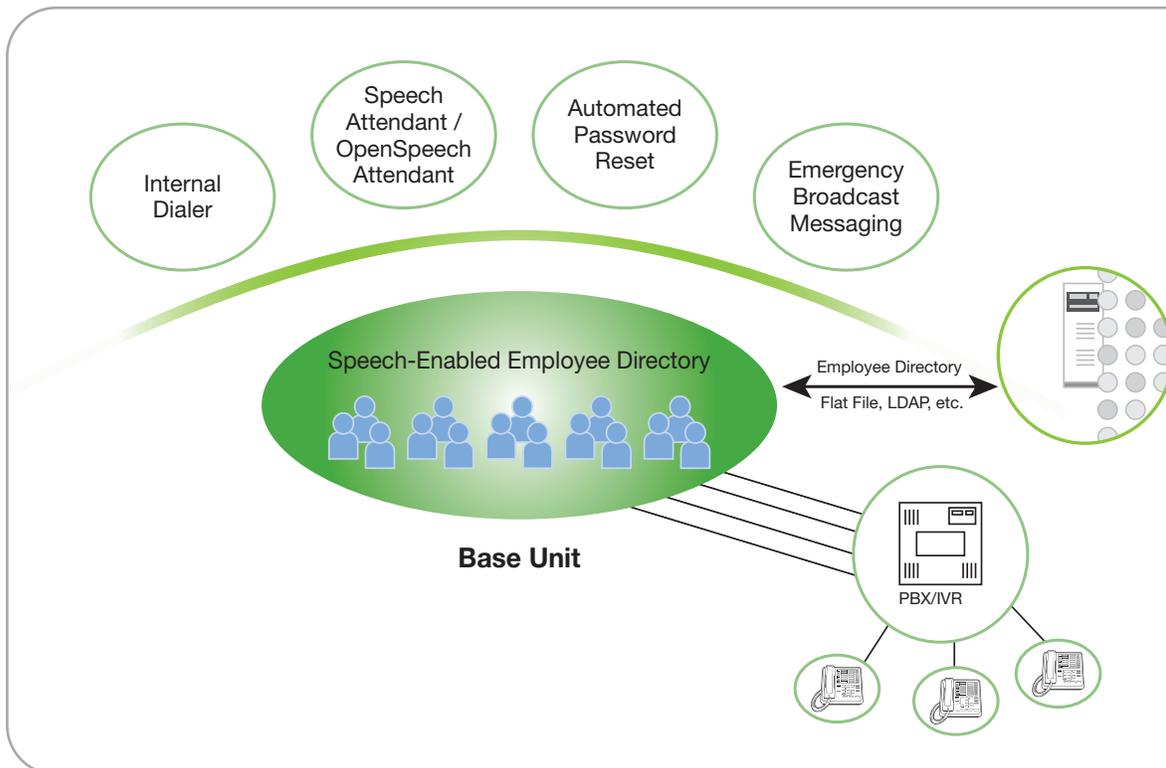
The Nuance Employee Productivity Suite (EPS) is an integrated suite of applications that combines proven auto attendant and directory services with powerful, flexible solutions for enhancing organizational communications, improving businesses processes, and increasing employee productivity.

- Leverages the fact that every company has an employee directory but isn't harnessing the true power this directory can bring.
- Once an employee directory is speech enabled—an organization can introduce a breadth of new employee enhancing productivity applications
- Speech enable once—leverage many times.
  - Employee Internal Dialer
  - Auto Attendant
  - Automated Password Reset
  - Emergency Notification

nuance internal dialer

Speech-Enabled Employee Directory

Of the many advantages inherent in voice-enabling an organization's employee directory, the most obvious—and to date most widely leveraged—is the ability to implement a speech based internal dialer that enables employees to place intra-company calls quickly and easily. Even as email, text, and instant messaging grow increasingly prevalent, the telephone remains the cornerstone of business communications. That's why it's so important that calls placed among employees within your company are handled accurately and efficiently.

1. Make it easy for employees to stay connected

In most organizations, operators are being asked to handle high call volume along with other administrative tasks, resulting in long wait times for employees. Traditional DTMF systems frustrate employees—especially those calling in from the road—by presenting long lists of menu options and requiring multiple button presses to reach a desired destination. In addition, the process of updating printed phone directories to reflect employee changes continues to be expensive and time consuming. Given these challenges, it's not surprising that many organizations are recognizing the advantages of automating and enhancing call routing using the power of speech.

Leveraging speech recognition technology supported by phonetically-verified name dictionaries, a speech based internal dialer allows employees to speak the name of a colleague and be automatically transferred to the requested party—without the hassle of searching for phone numbers or waiting to speak to an operator—24 hours a day, seven days a week. As a result, employees across the organization save time, increase productivity, and stay better connected for more efficient and profitable business operations.

2. Support the mobile workforce

In recent years, the widespread use of cell phones, laptops, and wireless devices has redefined the way people work and communicate. The result is an increasingly mobile workforce capable of conducting business from virtually any location at any hour of the day or night. Whether an executive is calling his assistant from his home office, a salesperson is trying to reach a product manager on his way to a prospect meeting, or a production manager needs to contact the warehouse from a remote manufacturing facility, it's critical that employees reach the right people quickly and efficiently.

Speech-enabled directory-based applications make supporting the needs of the mobile workforce easier than ever before. With a speech based internal dialer, employees need to remember only one phone number and speak the name of the colleague they are trying to reach in order to be automatically connected to the appropriate destination. Speech eliminates the need to scroll through contact lists on a cell phone or PDA, leaf through potentially outdated print directories, or wait for operator assistance.

As more and more business is conducted remotely, speech self-service applications are gaining recognition as an efficient, cost-effective way to keep the mobile workforce better connected.

3. SpeechAttendant / OpenSpeechAttendant

Increase caller satisfaction

Although it is a simple, straight-forward transaction, routing an incoming call from a general company number to a specific extension takes some intelligence, whether from human or machine. And as simple a transaction as it may seem, the impression it impacts on the caller is critical. Handled professionally and efficiently leaves the caller with a good impression of your organization, but being transferred to an incorrect extension or being put on holds for too long can severely harm your company's image. A receptionist/operator puts flexible, adaptable intelligence in the loop but at a high cost—$20-$50,000 a year or more to keep the answering system adequately staffed. Switching to a conventional auto attendant saves money, but forces callers to listen to menus, make touch-tone selections, or agonize over the annoying, non-standard "spell by digit" feature. The net result: many callers (perhaps your most important, hence impatient, customers) end up "zeroing out" to a fallback human. You save nothing, and earn a reputation for bad customer service.

Speech-enabled auto attendants offer your callers fast and efficient voice-command access to other people, places, and information resources from any telephone device at anytime. It's such a simple idea. Using natural-language, speaker-independent speech recognition to handle call routing. Your customers gain ready access to the resources they need using simple, natural voice commands.

Speech recognition, both the core technology and the cleverness with which speech-based "user interfaces" can be engineered, provides a far better solution. Speech recognition has bridged the gap between the naturalness of speaking a name to a human receptionist and the cost savings and reliability of an auto attendant. Additionally, speech-enabled auto attendants can be on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year handling one or a dozen incoming lines efficiently and professionally—for a fraction of the cost of human staffing. It offers easy-to-use service to callers who might be unable to carefully spell out a name on the touch-tone keys, such as cell phone callers sitting at the wheel of a car, children, or physically-, visually- or simply keypad-challenged people. Even unimpaired adult users sitting at a desk appreciate the ease and speed of simply speaking a name.

4. Automated Password Reset (APR)

Foster employee productivity and self-sufficiency

Rapidly increasing IT costs and overburdened IT teams rank high on the list of challenges facing today's organizations. With automation driving virtually every aspect of business operations, enterprise-wide reliance on IT help desks has reached critical levels, resulting in long wait times, frustrated employees, and stalled productivity. While reducing IT workload is a complex undertaking, significant progress can be made by empowering employees to be more self-sufficient when it comes to routine tasks typically handled by IT help desk agents.

Speech self-service continues to be a dynamic market due to its ability to provide quality solutions for automating voice services and by reducing costs of human assistances across multiple business applications.[4]

Consider, for example, the impact that password-related service requests alone have on the average IT organization.

> *According to the Gartner Group, approximately 30% of calls to the IT help-desk are password related, and manual password resets cost an average of $10 to $13 each.[5]*

What if an organization could enable employees to reset their own passwords over the telephone in far less time than it would take to involve a live IT help desk agent? A speech-driven directory-based application can provide a fully automated process by which employees can change their passwords—24 x 7—entirely on their own. By empowering employees to be self-sufficient, such applications free IT help desk agents to focus on more complex issues, thereby saving organizations tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars each year.

Security is always a key concern when implementing self-service solutions. Thanks to recent advances in biometric voice verification technology—patented by Nuance—employee voiceprints can be used to confirm caller identity before authorizing password changes. How does this work? When an employee dials into an organization's designated password reset number, he or she is prompted to say an identifying phrase, such as a name, phone number, or job title. The password reset application then compares the voice sample against the voiceprint on file for that employee. If it's a match, the employee is issued a new password. If a match is not found, the caller is redirected to an alternate business process to safeguard employee privacy.

By providing a secure front-end to self-service applications like employee password reset, speech-enabled, directory-based applications can boost employee productivity, reduce IT workload, and yield significant time and cost savings.

5. Business Continuity Processes (BCP)
Ensure business continuity in any situation
In the wake of catastrophic events like Hurricane Katrina and the 9/11 terrorist attacks, organizations worldwide have made disaster preparedness and response a major focus of their business continuity planning initiatives. Whether striving for continuous improvement of day-to-day business communications and processes or prompt, effective response to emergency situations, organizations need the ability to account for employees' whereabouts, disseminate critical information quickly and efficiently, and ensure the availability of redundant employee applications and data.

> *Forrester's Business Technographics® data indicates that disaster recovery and business continuity (DRBC) is a high-profile topic for IT executives in European and North American companies. More than half of these execs consider significant upgrades to their company's disaster recovery capabilities a priority for 2007—usually ranking it as the third or fourth priority for their IT infrastructure.[3]*

In a crisis situation, the safety of the workforce must be a business' top priority. In order to put an appropriate response plan into action, it's necessary to accurately determine the status of every employee

in the organization. Speech can be used to augment disaster recovery and crisis management plans by helping to standardize and simplify emergency communication procedures. For example, with the right technology in place, an organization could establish an emergency roll call policy whereby employees call into a speech-driven, directory-based system, say their name, and confirm their status. Depending on the company's business continuity best practices, the application could also support additional actions, such as sending an email or changing the contact phone number, to ensure employees stay connected with response team members, organization leaders, and co-workers.

A company's success at handling an emergency situation hinges in large part on its ability to notify key personnel quickly and efficiently. Whether an organization is trying to assemble first responders, evacuate local employees, or notify business continuity team members, broadcast messaging capabilities can mean the difference between "too late" and "just in time."

A speech-enabled directory can be leveraged to implement broadcast message delivery for rapid group communication—either immediately at a scheduled delivery time. An authorized employee can send a broadcast message simply by speaking the name of an individual or department—or a combination of both—without having to remember cumbersome ID numbers, extension numbers, or group codes. Some directory-based notification applications even broadcast the information via multiple modes of communication—office phone, mobile phone, pager, email, etc.—until each and every recipient has been notified. The same capabilities could also be used on an ongoing basis to communicate corporate news to all employees or to relate important information by site, division, department, and more.

Another key element of disaster recovery and contingency planning is ensuring redundant enterprise-wide data and applications. By implementing speech-enabled directory applications as a clustered system— even across geographically dispersed locations—organizations can count on data redundancy and failback in virtually any situation. Furthermore, the ability to perform automatic updates across clusters ensures that all directory-based data and applications remain current and fully synchronized.

Conclusion

Invest in the right technology

In today's dynamic and competitive business climate, organizations are looking for ways to enhance communications and improve business processes, while increasing employee productivity and reducing costs. At the same time, recent catastrophic events have prompted organizations to seek out tools and processes that support rigorous disaster recovery and business continuity initiatives. More and more organizations are recognizing the valuable role that speech technology can play in meeting these challenges. Speech-enabled, directory-based applications present exciting opportunities for simplifying communication to and among employees, streamlining business processes related to crisis management and emergency response, and decreasing IT and telecommunications-related expenses.

However, because the implementation of speech-driven, directory-based applications presents some significant challenges, only those players with a specific focus on enterprise call routing and directory services will be able to deliver high-performance solutions in a cost-effective manner.

This paper has outlined clear, measurable advantages that can be gained by speech-enabling employee directories at organizations of any size. However, it's important to note that not all speech recognition solutions are designed to deliver the same breadth of functionality or equivalent levels of accuracy and performance.

When evaluating enterprise speech technology, it's important that you look for a solution designed specifically for enterprises. To ensure application stability and optimal performance, organizations need a highly scalable solution capable of handling dynamic directories containing tens of thousands of listings. By eliminating the need to subdivide large databases, a robust, scalable solution will simplify system management and maintenance, while enhancing application integrity and performance. At the same time, you should verify that the application architecture allows multiple administrators across geographically dispersed locations to seamlessly manage the centralized system. This is especially important for large global enterprises with offices and other facilities located around the world.

We recommend confirming that any speech-enabled directory-based application offers enterprise-level tools for automated system administration, monitoring, tuning, and reporting in order to realize the benefits of a managed service—ongoing system reliability, consistency, and peak performance—without the added expense. Investigate whether the solution interfaces to your existing corporate directory to support automatic updates. In addition, global organizations should ensure that the solution supports multiple languages to meet the communication needs of employees around the world.

Most important, consider the advantages of purchasing a solution from a company that specializes in speech recognition technology. Such applications are more likely to provide call flows, application tasks, and functionality that are tightly integrated with and optimized for the underlying speech recognition engine, resulting in superior performance and accuracy. In addition, you should test the ability of the voice user interface to handle natural, conversational call flows and speech patterns. Solutions using natural language processing are likely to deliver a superior caller experience without compromising call completion rates or the accuracy of information retrieval.

> *Nuance, the speech recognition leader, offers a suite of applications uniquely capable of handling the dynamic and frequently changing directories of today's organizations for superior performance, caller satisfaction, and bottom-line results.*

For more information:

Call us at 1-866-968-2623 and say "Sales Department" or by email at eps.sales@nuance.com

Footnotes

[1] Forrester Research, *The Forrester Wave™: Speech Self-Service Platforms,* by Elizabeth Herrell, August 2006.

[2] Forrester Research, *The Forrester Wave™: Speech Self-Service Platforms,* by Elizabeth Herrell, August 2006.

[3] Forrester Research, *Disaster Recovery: It's Not Just an IT Problem,* by Rudiger Krojinewski and Bill Nagel, November 2006.

[4] Forrester Research, *The Forrester Wave™: Speech Self-Service Platforms,* by Elizabeth Herrell, August 2006.

[5] Gartner Group, *Automated Password Reset Can Cut IT Service Costs,* by Roberta Witty and Kris Brittain, December 2004.