

IVR: More than an Inbound Solution

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The consumer's first point of contact is critical to the overall customer service experience. Believe it or not, some consumers still like to pick up a phone and call their biller. Often the initial contact for this type of communication is the automated phone system, also known as [interactive voice response \(IVR\)](#).

FirsTech operates an IVR platform for many of our customers and we understand the intricacies related to creating the best consumer experience within that contact channel as well as maintaining compliance with relevant payment rules. Each of our billers has their own needs regarding the way they want to utilize IVR and we are able to accommodate their needs individually. We have billers who use IVR as:

- the initial point of consumer contact which redirects the caller back to the biller based on needs outside of payments;
- the payment interface after speaking with an agent; and
- an outbound call with immediate payment capability for delinquent accounts.

Through our experience working with multiple billers, and implementing various call flows, we share the following best practices for IVR setups:

- Understand what your callers are most likely to want to do and place that option early in the menu options.
- Plan your system flow so that you do not have to change it often.
- Be concise with your instructions as people generally have a very limited attention span.
- Offer the instructions in other languages, such as Spanish, if you have a diverse customer base.
- Allow a caller to opt out of the system and speak to a real person easily.

Following the best practices listed and leveraging the experience of the FirsTech team, you can create a successful customer experience that virtually runs itself.

Although it is common practice to have an inbound automated phone system, fewer organizations utilize the phone system for outbound calling. This outbound calling capability can be the difference between a bad customer experience with a 'shut off' due to non-payment or a good customer experience giving the consumer the ability to make a payment on their account immediately.

When utilizing the FirstTech outbound IVR platform, billers can provide a daily file of accounts that need to be contacted for any reason. We find that our billers utilize this service most often for past due payments to give the consumer the ability to make an immediate payment and avoid a potential shut off of services or to not incur penalties for non-payment.

Last year, we made nearly 400,000 outbound calls. Looking at the data, we can see that calls are answered most often on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. This observation coincides with the highest percentage of payments analyzed by day as well.

If you are looking at ways to reduce your past due accounts and the bad customer experience of account shutoffs, this solution along with our [mobile payments](#), could be the answer for your business.

