

## Quality Spectrum – DA Service Personality

### Introduction – DA Services, like People have their own Personalities

The Paisley Group's core competence is in auditing service quality by observing demonstrated and actual outcomes and behaviors to provide statistically significant quality measurements about Operator/Agent Services. There is typically no place for opinions or anecdotes.

However, with the last issue of the Index, we were asked why we did not include some of our auditors' anecdotal perceptions/opinions about the personality (including user friendliness) of the different DA services measured for this issue. Certainly, Customer Fulfillment<sup>SM</sup> and Customer Care<sup>SM</sup> are the definitive measures of DA quality, productivity and customer satisfaction but sometimes there are other service characteristics that are pleasing or bothersome enough to give the auditors certain "impressions".

One of our largest audit clients in the UK, where DA is fully liberalized and where there are more than 40 viable retail options for callers to use (118 XXX), requires our auditors to answer the following question after every test call they make:

"Based on this call experience would the auditor use <this DA service> again?"

Where DA is liberalized and users may select their service the way they select their shampoo ("there's something about it I like"), there is a certain value to having DA quality auditors answer this question because they are high users and our satisfaction surveys show that as such, they are more difficult to please (than light users) and their expectations of the service are higher. Also, PGL's auditors have a huge amount of exposure to all the services measured as well as the different types of services being provided by the same wholesalers to their different clients. They are also located across the US and use different providers for their own wire-line and wireless service so there is no regionalized "favoritism". During our Index calibration and debriefing meetings the auditors have always been eager to offer their opinions of which services they "like to call". Because the conditions are different in the US than they are in the UK, we took a bit of a different approach about getting the auditors' perceptions about the "feel" of the different services. Rather than ask them to rate every call, we asked them for their opinions on which *automated* service they liked using most (and why) and which service they liked best *overall* after the Index testing was complete.

To set the stage for the automated service, we will start with a "user" versus "technical" feel for the interactive dialogs used by the three speech recognition systems measured for this issue.

### Speech Recognition Systems - Interactive Dialogs

#### 1. verizon LiveSource

Test calls were placed via verizon's in-region 411 service in the old verizon north, south and GTE territories.

"verizon Nationwide 411"

City & state please? (confirmation and/or re-prompt if required – "sorry I didn't get that, what city & state" or "Checking <state name>, what city was that?")<sup>1</sup>

What listing? (confirmation and/or re-prompt if required – "sorry I didn't get that, what listing" or system repeats request and asks if it is correct)<sup>2</sup>

If caller confirms - Okay, (repeats the listing name) – the number is...

If no confirmation - One moment I'll get an operator to assist you

**Automation with multiple locations (caller has street name)**

City & state please? (confirmation and/or re-prompt)

What listing? (confirmation and/or re-prompt)

Okay <plays listing name> – What street is it on or say tell me my choices?

Caller provides street name - The number is .....To request another listing press 2 or say 2 after the tone

**Automation with multiple locations (caller does not have the street name)**

City & state please? (confirmation and/or re-prompt)

What listing? (confirmation and/or re-prompt)

Okay <plays listing name> What street is it on or say tell me my choices?<sup>3</sup>

Caller says Tell me my choices – I found # locations. When you hear the one you want just say it. <Choices listed>. That's all the choices I have. To hear the list again say repeat or for an operator press 0.

Caller identifies desired location - The number is.....

<sup>1.</sup> If nothing is said at city & state prompt the system will re-prompt; if nothing is said again then the system asks if anyone is there, says thanks for calling and goodbye.

<sup>2.</sup> If nothing is said at listing prompt, the system will re-prompt; if nothing is said again then the caller is transferred to the operator.

<sup>3.</sup> Barge-in available at this prompt.

verizon Notes:

1. Zero out is an option as soon as the branding announcement has finished.
2. If the system announces what it thinks is the listing requested it will play the number. There is no "yes or no" response required from the caller.

**2. SBC - Southern New England Telephone (SNET)**

The test calls for this automated service were placed via SNET's in-region 411 service.

"SBC Directory Assistance"

[For Connecticut Listings Press 1](#)

[For National Listings Press 2](#)

For Spanish Assistance Press 3 – in Spanish<sup>1</sup>

For Spanish Assistance Press 3 – in English

If you're calling from a rotary dial please stay on the line for operator assistance.

### Caller Presses 1

Portions of this call may be recorded

What city please? (re-prompt if required– “sorry what city”)<sup>2</sup>

What listings? (re-prompt if required - “sorry what’s that listing again”)<sup>2</sup>

Bristol Hospital – is that right?

Caller confirms requested listing - Thank you for using SBC Directory Assistance the number is.....

Caller does not confirm - Bristol Hospital – is that right?

Caller does not confirm again - Please wait for a specialist.

#### **Automation with multiple locations (caller knows address)**

On what street?

Caller gives address - Thank you for using SBC Directory Assistance the number is.....

#### **Automation with multiple locations (caller does not know address)**

On what street?

Caller says I don't know – Please wait for a specialist

### Caller Presses 2

What city & state (re-prompt if required – “sorry what city & state are you looking for?”)

What listings? (re-prompt if required – “sorry what’s that listing again”)

Caller confirms requested listing - Thank you for using SBC Directory Assistance the number is XXX-XXX-XXXX. The number, XXX-XXX-XXXX can be automatically dialed with no additional completion charge by pressing 1 now or to your calling card by pressing 2.....

Caller does not confirm - Please wait for a specialist

#### **Automation with multiple locations (caller knows address)**

Advanced Auto Parts, is that right?<sup>3</sup>

Caller confirms – yes

Which one do you want, South Belt Highway or North Belt Highway? <2 second pause – not enough time for a response> Please wait for a specialist.

1. The caller must wait until after all 3 options are presented before being able to make their selection.
2. If the caller says nothing, they will be re-prompted, if nothing is said again they will be transferred to the operator.
3. On another occasion Advanced Auto parts was requested again (in the same location) and the system offered "That's on Clark. Is that right?" When caller said no, the system said "I have one in Ederton – would you like that one?"

### SBC Notes:

1. System is very inconsistent in the way it handles requests that require disambiguation when multiple locations are available for a business.

### **3. BellSouth**

The test calls for BellSouth were made from multiple locations via their in-region 411.

"BellSouth (tone) 411 Nationwide"

For a business or government number, press or say **1**.

For a residential number, press or say **2**.

If you already know the number and need the name and address, press or say **3**.

If caller does nothing - What city and state please? I'm sorry, what city and state please?<sup>1</sup>

#### Caller Presses 1:

What city and state please? (Re-prompt if required - "I'm sorry, what city and state please?")<sup>1</sup>

If caller does not answer or is not understood - Please hold for operator assistance.

If caller answers and is not understood - What city? (re-prompt if required- "I'm sorry what city and state please?")<sup>1</sup>

If only city is provided or understood by the SR - What city and state please? or What state?

What listing? (re-prompt if required - "I'm sorry. What listing again please?") "Thank you."

If caller is understood – Thank you. If you need an additional listing press or say 9 at anytime during this announcement. The number, area code 404 XXX-XXXX, can be automatically connected by pressing 1 or saying yes at anytime during this announcement, Repeat, the number is area code 404 XXX-XXXX."

If caller does not answer or is not understood – Please hold for operator assistance.

#### **Automation with multiple locations**

Thank you. I have two locations for <request> in Atlanta. Please choose from Ponce de Leon Ave NE or Evans Street SW."

Caller provides location - Thank you. If you need an additional listing press or say 9 at anytime during this announcement. The number, area code 404 876-2772, can be automatically connected by pressing 1 or saying yes at anytime during this announcement, Repeat, the number is area code 404 876-2772.

If no response after hearing the number announcement - We're sorry. The system did not understand your response. If you need an additional listing press or say 9 at anytime during this announcement. Press 1 to complete this call or say yes. Press or say 3 to restart the initial announcement.

Caller gives no response - We're sorry. The system did not understand your response. Goodbye.

### Caller Presses 2:

What city & state please? (re-prompt if required – "I'm sorry what city & state please?" No reply - "Thank you. Please hold for operator assistance.")<sup>1</sup>

What listing? <caller gives request> "Thank you."

Rings through to operator who releases to audio.

Audio - If you need an additional listing press 9 after the tone. The number can be automatically connected by pressing 1 now or saying yes at the tone. Repeat, the number is area code 770-XXX-XXXX. (Tone)"

### Caller presses 3:

Please enter or say the area code and number.

Thank you. The number, 770-975-9587, is listed as John Doe, 4900 Old Mill Rd NW, Acworth GA 30101. To replay the listing information press or say 3.

If Non-Published - Thank you at the customer's request the number is Non-Published and is not listed in our records. Repeat, at the customer's request the number is Non-Published and is not listed in our records.

<sup>1</sup> If the caller says nothing, they are re-prompted, if nothing is said again they are transferred to the operator.

## Auditor Perceptions

### 1. Auditors comments about their interactions with the automated systems:

"I like using the BellSouth system most because it identifies multiple locations and multiple addresses very nicely."

"I prefer calling verizon nationwide because of the simplicity of the automation process. The caller can ask for a listing that is within their region or the whole country and can get reverse search information from the operator. I don't have to take the time to make selections based upon what I think I want or interact with the keypad prior to getting what I want. The only negative comment is that the system always asks for a residential listing twice and then sends the caller directly to an operator anyway. James Earl Jones makes it easy to remember this service's personality".

"Using the SNET (SBC) system is very frustrating due to the lack of a barge-in capability. You can't barge through their 3 options to get the service you want right away. It also makes the call

feel longer than other automated services. Their system often has problems suggesting my options when there was more than one. My time with their automation was spent wondering why I couldn't make my selection now."

"SNET's front end is clumsy and frustrating. Sometimes when I use the keypad to respond, nothing happens and the system continues on to the next prompt. If I accidentally choose the incorrect keypad option at the beginning, the operator cannot/will not transfer me to the correct operator. I have to hang up and dial again."

"I like the ability that BellSouth offers to complete my own reverse number search. I don't like that I sometimes end up with the wrong operator at BellSouth. The system occasionally does not recognize from my city/state response that my request is regional or national and I end up with a local operator who has to transfer me. This happened several times."

"I think I like verizon. It felt like their system got more of my requests automated from only one request for the call details. I also felt that the call and work times were fairly quick. James Earl Jones at the beginning is probably costly but a familiar voice is, for whatever reason, comforting. That may seem strange but you know he is a real person and you get that before you go to automation".

## **2. Auditors comments about overall service personality:**

"In my opinion Qwest is the best DA. The operators seem to be more personable. They give their names at the beginning of the call, use voice fluctuation, are willing to look more than one way for you, seem happy when they find your number."

"I would definitely choose Qwest. My reasons are that they are extremely professional; and as a bonus, they are friendly at the same time. I also liked that they told me their names when they answered. Finally, no matter what time of the day or night I called them, across the board none of their operators ever made me feel like I was an imposition or interruption. My second choice would be Sprint PCS service as delivered by INFOnxx. Most (but not all) of their operators were very friendly and upbeat and seemed to enjoy their jobs".

"I would say that Qwest probably has the best overall operators with respect to their customer service".

"Qwest's front end system only asks for call details one time. When I get to a Qwest operator, she almost always has my listing for me already and seldom asks me to repeat what I just said to the front-end system".

"In terms of leaving me with a good feeling, I prefer services without automation (whether it be speech recognition or voice store and forward). Sometimes I wonder whether automation really pays off when you end up with an operator most of the time anyway. I really dislike the feeling that the time I invest in a DA call now is much longer than ever."

"I dislike calling MCI's long distance DA service because the operators sound like they don't care and want you off the line as soon as possible."

## **Summary**

Do the statistics bear out the auditors' perceptions?

*"When I speak to a Qwest operator she almost always has my listing for me already."* The Qwest operators only re-questioned (more than once) 0.3% of the time compared to BellSouth's 18.0%.

*"I would definitely choose Qwest. My reasons are that they are extremely professional; and as a bonus, they are friendly at the same time. Of the five ILECs measured – BellSouth, Qwest, SBC, SNET and verizon – Qwest's Customer Care<sup>SM</sup> was the highest at 95.3%. This is particularly noteworthy because the ILEC average for Care was only 81.0%.*

*"My second choice would be Sprint PCS service as delivered by INFOnxx." InfoNXX's Customer Care<sup>SM</sup> is 96.3% while the 3<sup>rd</sup> Party average is 93.0%.*

*"Using the SNET (SBC) system is very frustrating due to the lack of a barge-in capability. You can't barge through their 3 options to get the service you want right away. It also makes the call feel longer than other automated services. SNET's total call time for partially automated calls (system plus operator plus ARU time) is a full 20 seconds longer than that of verizon and over 22 seconds longer than BellSouth's.*

*"SNET's front end is clumsy and frustrating." Callers must sit through the entire set of options offered at the beginning of the call (Connecticut numbers/national numbers or Spanish DA) prior to being able to select the service desired. Sometimes the system accepts your selection after the Spanish language announcement but sometimes it makes you wait until after the system repeats the exact same announcement in English before you can select.*

*"I don't like that I sometimes end up with the wrong operator at BellSouth. The system occasionally does not recognize from my city/state response that my request is regional or national and I end up with a local operator who has to transfer me. This happened several times." By the time you give the call details to the automation, reach the wrong operator (and likely repeat them to the first operator) and then repeat them once again for the correct (national) operator, you definitely see the influence of this problem in BellSouth's Customer Care<sup>SM</sup> in the very high (18%) incidence of occurrences where the auditors had to provide their call details 3 or more times throughout the course of the call.*

*"In my opinion Qwest is the best DA. The operators seem to be more personable. They give their names at the beginning of the call, use voice fluctuation, are willing to look more than one way for you, seem happy when they find your number. The time investment Qwest makes to give their customers this feeling is 0.6 seconds. Their OWT is 21 seconds and the ILEC average OWT is 20.4 seconds.*

*"I dislike calling MCI's long distance DA service because the operators sound like they don't care and want you off the line as soon as possible." MCI's OWT is 18.8 seconds, just over a second less than Qwest's. So, what is it about their service that leaves this poor impression? It may be that on over 17% of the calls placed to MCI's long distance DA, the auditors were not acknowledged.*