Would you like to track a package?

How can I help you?

1-800-ASK-USPS

Is there anything else you need?

Hold mail?

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

The Postal Service's customer care phone number, 1-800-ASK-USPS, is one of the primary channels for customers to connect with the Postal Service. When customers call 1-800-ASK-USPS, their call is initially handled by an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system that attempts to resolve their inquiry without transferring the call to a customer care agent. The IVR system can assist customers with tasks such as package tracking, finding post office locations and hours, and submitting hold mail requests. After selecting the reason for their call, the IVR system guides customers through a call flow, eventually either resolving the call or transferring it to an agent. The IVR system was designed to enable self-service and provide rapid access to information while avoiding lengthy hold times for customers.

In fiscal year (FY) 2020, the Postal Service's IVR system received more than 90 million customer calls. It resolved some of these calls, while other calls required agent assistance. To determine the IVR system's effectiveness at handling customer inquiries, the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed the Postal Service's IVR call data, the metrics used to measure IVR's success, and IVR's relevance to customer experience metrics.

The Postal Service measures the IVR system's effectiveness through the containment rate — the rate of calls that are not transferred to an agent — and overall customer satisfaction with the IVR system. Increasing call containment results in reduced customer care costs because an agent does not handle those calls. The Postal Service's containment rate has increased steadily since FY 2018, peaking at 78 percent in the first eight months of FY 2021. The Postal Service aims to contain 80 percent of calls. The IVR system was most effective at containing calls that only relay information to customers (for example, post office lookup), and least effective at calls requiring specialized expertise (for example, claims).

Customer satisfaction with the IVR system is measured through a survey given to callers after they complete an IVR call flow. The survey results measuring customers' overall satisfaction contribute to two customer experience metrics: the Customer Care Center performance indicator and the Customer Experience Composite Index. Survey results from FYs 2019 and 2020 indicate an increase in customer satisfaction with the IVR system.

Although call containment and customer satisfaction with the IVR system increased in recent years, there are opportunities for the Postal Service to continue improving the system. In FY 2020, roughly one-quarter of IVR survey respondents were very dissatisfied with their IVR experience, suggesting a need to address customer discontent. Further, the agency does not include the rate of callers who abandon their call before reaching the end of the call flow among its performance metrics. The rate of abandoned calls is a common metric in the call center industry that helps measure if a system is effectively resolving customer inquiries. Callers who hang up before being transferred to an agent, even if their issue is not resolved, are counted as contained calls by the Postal Service. As a result, the Postal Service's containment rate is overstated. Tracking and analyzing data on calls abandoned in the IVR system – including establishing a performance metric for abandoned calls – can help measure containment more accurately and identify parts of the IVR system's call flow that negatively impact customer satisfaction and experience.

What the OIG Recommends

We recommend management enhance current Interactive Voice Response system performance metrics by including metrics for the rate of complete, contained calls and the rate of incomplete, abandoned calls.

Observations

Introduction

When customers call the Postal Service's customer care phone line, 1-800-ASK-USPS, the call is routed through a series of automated menus that respond to their voice or entries on their phone's keypad. Known as Interactive Voice Response (IVR), the system attempts to address customer inquiries without passing the call to an operator. In fiscal year (FY) 2020, the Postal Service's IVR system handled more than 90 million customer calls. In comparison, the Internal Revenue Service received about 100 million calls across the agency in FY 2020.[1]

IVR systems are used in call centers across a wide range of industries. Organizations use these systems because they provide 24-hour service and can reduce costs by decreasing the number of calls that require a live agent. When performing effectively, IVR systems can help improve a brand's image and save time for both customers and employees. Conversely, if IVR systems are poorly designed, they can frustrate customers and lead to negative perceptions of a business.

The Postal Service's IVR system is designed to enable self-service and provide rapid access to information while avoiding the potential delays and hold times often associated with live customer support. It can provide information, help accomplish tasks, route callers to other call flows within the IVR system, or route callers to an agent when the inquiry requires additional assistance.

> The IVR system is designed to enable customer self-service and rapid access to information, while reducing wait times on hold.

To determine the IVR system's effectiveness at handling customer inquiries, the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed the Postal Service's IVR call data, the metrics used to measure the system's success, and its relevance to customer experience metrics.

The Postal Service's IVR System

The Postal Service first implemented an IVR system in 1996. Since its introduction, the IVR system at the Postal Service has continually evolved. The system was most recently overhauled in 2015, in response to increasing call volume and declining customer satisfaction with the IVR system at the time. The new system specifically aimed to improve the customer experience, increase call containment, and decrease the number of callers who hung up while waiting to speak to an agent. By increasing call containment, the Postal Service wanted to reduce the amount of call volume handled by agents, leading to decreased wait times and fewer hang ups from customers waiting in the agent queue. Additionally, the Postal Service expected increased call containment to reduce costs associated with Customer Care Centers (CCCs), where agents work.

When a customer calls the customer care line, they first receive a welcome message from the IVR system and an option to proceed with the call in English or Spanish. If the customer is calling for the first time that day, they next encounter a "flash menu" asking if they are calling about issues related to recent service alerts.[2] Service alert options in FY 2021 include the Postal Service's response to COVID-19, delivery issues, severe weather or natural disasters, and economic stimulus payments. If the customer does not select any of these options, the IVR system moves the call to the main menu; Figure 1 shows the main menu choices.
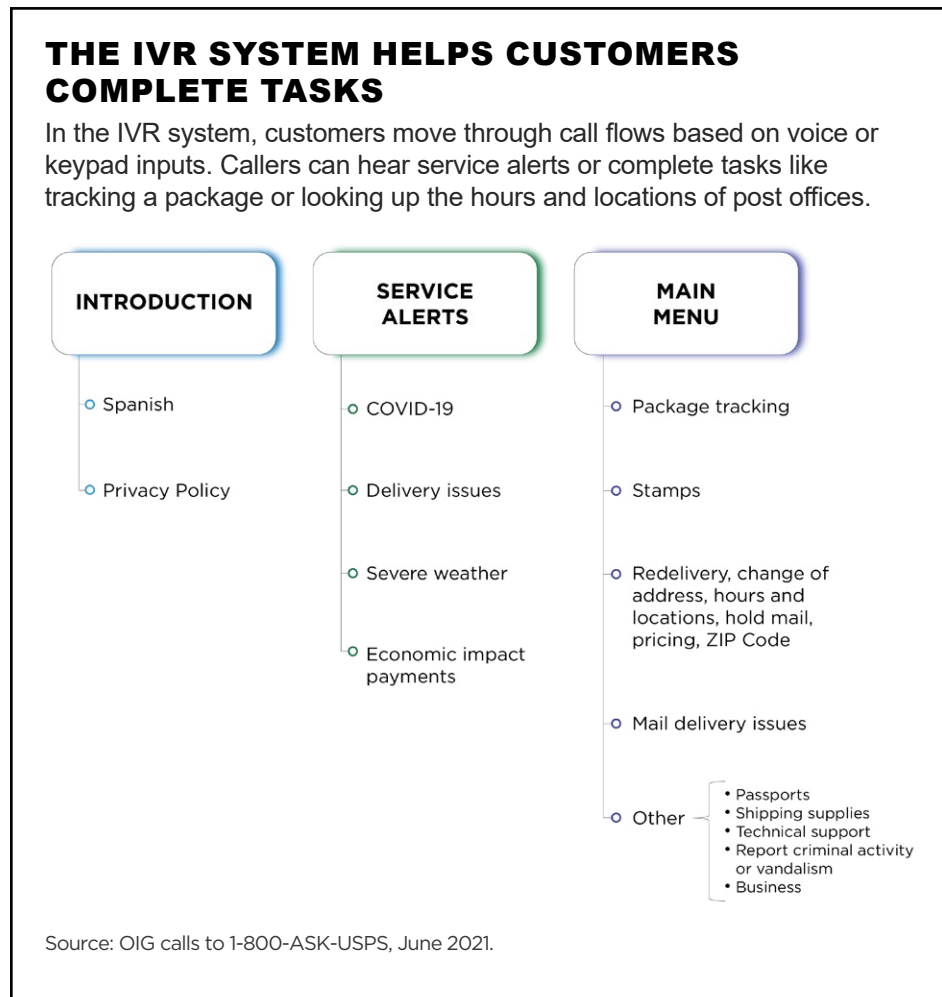
After the customer selects an option in the main menu, the IVR system moves them through a call flow based on their responses. It can convey information to customers, such as the tracking status of a package, or help them accomplish tasks, such as ordering stamps or shipping supplies. Other services available within the IVR system include submitting mail hold requests, reporting mail delivery issues, and requesting package redelivery, among other options. Customers can complete some tasks entirely within the system and do not require transfer to an agent. However, other tasks may require additional assistance, in which case the system redirects the call to a CCC agent or to a

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1   National Taxpayer Advocate, *2020 Annual Report to Congress*, January 2021, https://www.taxpayeradvocate.irs.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ARC20_FullReport.pdf, p. 31.
2   The flash menu is not offered on subsequent calls on the same day.

more specialized Postal Service call center, such as the Accounting Help Desk or a center that can assist with claims forms.

Figure 1: The Postal Service's IVR Call Flow

THE IVR SYSTEM HELPS CUSTOMERS COMPLETE TASKS

In the IVR system, customers move through call flows based on voice or keypad inputs. Callers can hear service alerts or complete tasks like tracking a package or looking up the hours and locations of post offices.

Source: OIG calls to 1-800-ASK-USPS, June 2021.

Four Call Types Comprise the Majority of IVR Calls

In FY 2021, the Postal Service grouped IVR calls into 26 different categories, ranging from hold mail requests to calls referred to the Postal Inspection Service. However, between October and May of FY 2021, 86 percent of calls fell into one of just four categories, as shown in Figure 2.[3] The most frequent IVR call types were:

- **General Inquiry:** Any call that does not fall into another category.

- **Package Tracking:** Mail and package tracking and delivery confirmation.[4]

- **Enterprise Customer Care (eCC) Cases:** Customer inquiries that require follow-up by a group outside the call center.

- **Redelivery:** Requests for a second delivery attempt for packages that could not be delivered.

General inquiries comprised nearly half of IVR calls. Per Postal Service policy, the IVR system initially categorizes all calls to 1-800-ASK-USPS as general inquiries. Calls may then be recategorized as another call type depending on the customer's further menu selections. Among options that customers can select from the IVR system's menu, package tracking is the most often chosen category, making up about one-quarter of total calls.

Measuring the IVR System's Performance

Across industries, call centers and customer service desks commonly use three main measures to track the performance of their IVR systems:

1.) **Containment rate:** the rate of calls that are not transferred to an agent.

2.) **Transfer rate:** the rate of calls transferred to an agent.

3.) **Abandonment rate:** the rate of callers who hung up before completing the call flow.

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3 Among the 26 call categories, some directly reflect the available menu options in the IVR call flow (for example, hold mail request or ordering shipping supplies). Other call types do not reflect options that a customer can select. These call types are assigned based on other factors, such as the initial number the customer dialed or a specialized area of the Postal Service to which a customer was transferred.

4 When a customer calls to track a mailpiece, the IVR system relays information from the Product Tracking and Reporting database. This database provides status information on barcoded packages and extra services products. For purposes of this paper, we refer to this call category as 'package tracking'.

Figure 2: IVR Calls in FY 2021

GENERAL INQUIRIES MADE UP ABOUT HALF OF IVR CALLS

In October through May of FY 2021, four call types comprised 86 percent of all IVR calls. General inquiries were the most common call type, followed by package tracking.

All Other Calls 14%
Redelivery 3%
eCC Cases 9%
General Inquiry 48%
Package Tracking 26%
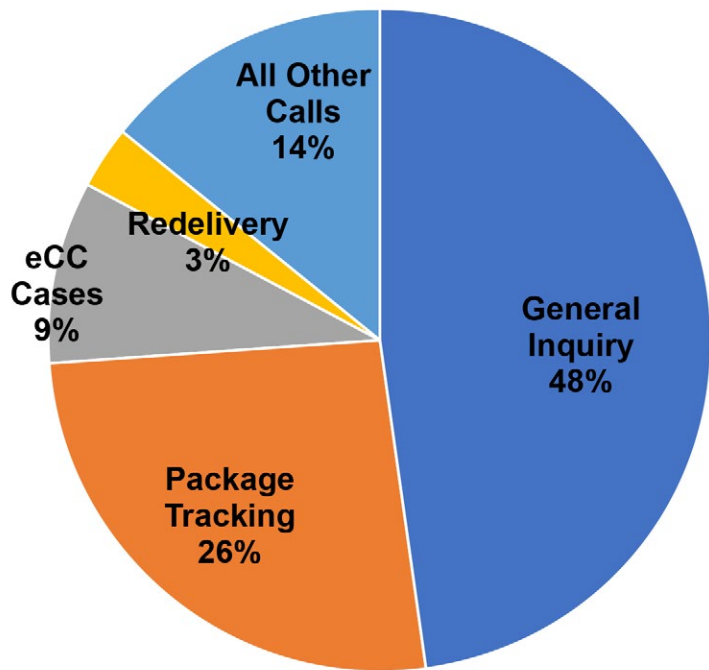
Source: OIG analysis of USPS IVR call volume by category.

Typically, call centers seek to maximize their containment rate while minimizing their transfer and abandonment rates. High transfer rates can lead to increased customer care costs, and high abandonment rates can be an indicator that the IVR system is not effectively resolving customer inquiries. However, because each IVR system is different and because IVR systems are used across many industries, there are no universal benchmarks for containment, transfer, or abandonment rates.

Containment and Transfer Rates

The Postal Service's target is to contain 80 percent of customer calls in the IVR system. While the agency has not yet achieved this target on an annual basis, the IVR system contained an increasing rate of calls in recent years. In FY 2018, the Postal Service's IVR system contained 62 percent of the more than 72 million calls it received and transferred 38 percent. Since then, the rate of containment generally increased (Figure 3). Between October and May of FY 2021, the IVR system contained 78 percent of calls and transferred 22 percent of calls.

Figure 3: Historical IVR Call Containment Rates, FY 2018 - May 2021

THE POSTAL SERVICE IS APPROACHING ITS CONTAINMENT RATE GOAL

The rate of contained IVR calls increased from 62 percent of calls to 78 percent of calls between FY 2018 and May 2021. The Postal Service is close to its goal of containing 80 percent of customer calls.
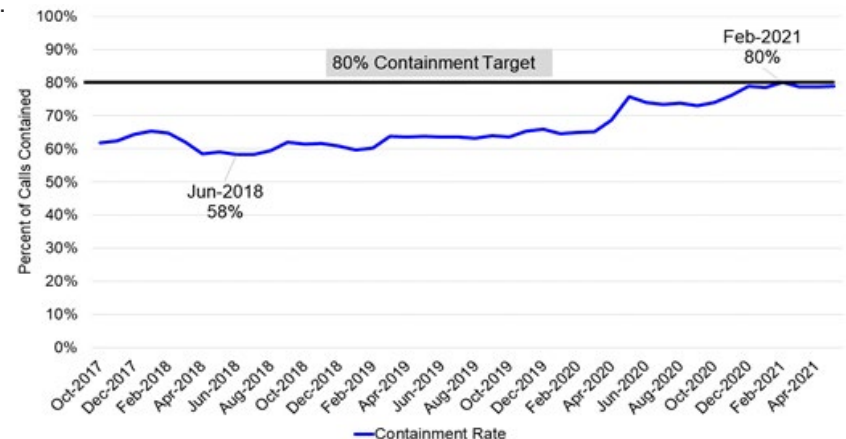
Source: OIG analysis of IVR call containment rates.

The Postal Service works to continually improve self-help options in the IVR system to increase call containment. These improvements have included refinements to the IVR call flow and enhancements to the IVR system's customer experience. For example, in FY 2019 the Postal Service focused on improving the customer experience for package tracking calls to the IVR system; at the time, many tracking inquiries were transferred to agents. More recently, the Postal Service implemented additional enhancements such as Visual IVR, which allows callers to select menu options from their smartphone while remaining on the call, and IVR Case Creation, which allows customers to create their own service requests with USPS without agent assistance. The Postal Service is also piloting virtual agent technology to assist with passport inquiries.[5]

Improvements to the IVR system's tracking experience proved critical during COVID-19. During the pandemic, package volume and delays spiked, resulting in more customers calling to inquire about the status of their package. The IVR system handled many of these calls, and containment increased by 10 percentage points from March to May 2020.

Containment Rates Varied Among Different Types of Calls

In general, the IVR system contained the most calls in categories that solely provide the customer with information rather than assist the customer with completing a task. In the first eight months of FY 2021 (October 2020 through May 2021), the IVR system was most effective at containing calls regarding general inquiries (93 percent), passports (91 percent), and post office lookup (90 percent).[6]

The IVR system's efficacy at containing calls was lower among calls involving task completion or requiring input of specific information (such as a tracking number). Containment rates for these types of calls were below the overall FY 2021 average containment rate, including package tracking (72 percent), international tracking (63 percent), redelivery (62 percent), hold mail requests (60 percent), and change of address (56 percent).

The lowest containment rates tended to occur in call categories requiring specialized expertise to resolve. Depending on customer selections, the IVR system can transfer certain calls to other areas of the Postal Service that may be better equipped to assist a caller, such as the Inspection Service or the Accounting Help Desk. Although these calls lower the overall containment rate, their high transfer rates are positive attributes because they indicate that a customer is being directed to a specialized part of the agency that is more likely to resolve an inquiry. Containment rates among these call types were often below five percent.

> The IVR system was most successful at containing calls that relay information to customers, and somewhat less effective at containing calls requiring information from the caller.

Since FY 2018, the containment rate increased for some of the more common call types. The greatest increase occurred among package tracking calls; the IVR system contained 48 percent of these calls in FY 2018, compared to 72 percent in the first eight months of FY 2021. The containment rate also increased for calls related to redelivery (19-point increase), change of address (12-point increase), and hold mail requests (12-point increase). Tracking the volume and containment rate of various call types processed by IVR gives the Postal Service insights into how customers successfully use IVR and helps to identify opportunities to enhance the system and improve customer experiences.

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5   U.S. Postal Service, *FY 2020 Annual Compliance Report*, December 29, 2020, https://www.prc.gov/docs/115/115612/USPS%20FY20%20Annual%20Compliance%20Report.pdf, p. 53.
6   According to USPS.com, the IVR system can help callers locate post offices that accept passport applications. However, the IVR system alone cannot assist customers with other passport-related inquiries. U.S. Postal Service, "How do I Navigate the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) System?," https://faq.usps.com/s/article/How-do-I-Navigate-the-Interactive-Voice-Response-IVR-System.

Abandonment Rate

The rate of abandoned calls is a common metric used in call centers to ensure IVR systems are effectively resolving customer inquiries. The metric reflects the number of callers who hung up before reaching the end of a call flow. A large number of abandoned calls is a potential indicator that an IVR system's menus are too long or need refinement.

The Postal Service does not have established performance metrics differentiating contained calls that are complete and those that are abandoned before the end of the call flow. Instead, the agency counts all calls not transferred to an agent as successfully contained, even if the customer ended the call before reaching a resolution. In contrast, the Postal Service tracks the abandonment rate for callers who hang up in the CCC agent queue rather than in the IVR system. As a result of counting all calls not transferred to an agent as contained, the Postal Service is overstating its containment rate.

The Postal Service already tracks two types of customer disconnected calls, though the data are not used in formal metrics. The first type of disconnected call, graceful disconnects, are those calls where customers stay on the line after the end of the call flow for a thank you message from the IVR system. The second type of disconnected call, customer-ended calls, are those where the caller hung up before the thank you message. Both graceful disconnects and customer-ended calls are counted as contained calls, and customer-ended calls make up the majority of contained calls. Customer-ended calls occur for many reasons, including when customers are satisfied with the information received or when customers abandon calls out of frustration with the IVR system's menus.

Currently, the Postal Service does not distinguish between successful calls and calls ended by potentially dissatisfied customers — it only tracks whether these abandoned calls happened before or after the prerecorded thank you message. To determine which callers hang up after hearing the requested information and which abandon their call without getting the information they sought, it is important that USPS further track and analyze data on call disconnects. One step in this process is to establish a metric for abandoned calls, which would help the Postal Service calculate a more accurate containment rate and could help identify parts of the IVR call flow that negatively impact customer satisfaction and experience.

OIG Recommendation

Recommendation 1

We recommend the **Vice President, Customer Experience** enhance current Interactive Voice Response system performance metrics by including metrics for the rate of complete, contained calls and the rate of incomplete, abandoned calls.

The IVR System Reduces Costs for the Postal Service

When CCC agents help customers, these agents are paid for their time. Alternatively, when the call is contained in the IVR system, there is no incremental cost associated with the customer's inquiry. Increasing the number of contained calls controls costs for the Postal Service, as CCC call volume directly impacts the agency's bottom line.

Customer calls about package tracking — one of the most common types of calls to reach CCC agents — illustrate the potential savings of the IVR system. When a customer calls to track a package, the IVR system relays information from the Product Tracking and Reporting database, such as the delivery status of a package. A call transferred from the IVR system to an agent costs about $0.79 per minute in agent pay.[7] According to data from the Postal Service, agents spend an average of seven minutes and 27 seconds handling package tracking calls, resulting in a cost of about $5.91 in agent costs per inquiry. In FY 2020, the IVR system contained nearly 12 million package tracking calls, which saved the Postal Service close to $69 million in CCC costs.[8] The IVR system transferred about 10 million package tracking calls to agents, costing the Postal Service nearly $58 million. Given the high cost of transferred calls, it is essential that the Postal Service maximize its containment rate.

The IVR Survey is a Component of the Postal Service's Overall Customer Experience Metrics

Each year, the Postal Service works towards four overarching performance goals: Excellent Customer Experiences, High-Quality Service, Safe Workplace and Engaged Workforce, and Financial Health. Annual performance towards each of the four goals is reported in each year's Annual Compliance Report, issued to the Postal Regulatory Commission.

To assess performance on the Excellent Customer Experiences goal, the Postal Service administers eight customer experience surveys, including an IVR post-call survey.[9] The surveys assess customer experience in different areas of the business, such as residential delivery or the Business Service Network. Selected results from the IVR post-call survey contribute to the calculation of two significant customer experience metrics — the CCC performance indicator and the Customer Experience (CX) Composite Index.

Customer Care Center Performance Indicator

Each of the eight customer experience surveys includes a question measuring overall customer satisfaction with the business area covered by the survey.[10] The question is known as OSAT, or overall satisfaction. The Postal Service combines the results from the IVR system's OSAT question with the OSAT result from the Live Agent survey, another of the eight surveys.[11] The question, which is similar on both surveys, asks customers to rate their overall satisfaction with their experience on a scale of one (very dissatisfied) to six (very satisfied). Together, the two survey items comprise the CCC performance indicator.

The Postal Service's CCC performance target in FY 2020 was 55 out of a maximum score of 100. After exceeding the target with a score of 60.03 in FY 2020, the Postal Service increased the FY 2021 performance target to 60.03. The target is the goal for the combined IVR and Live Agent surveys; there are no targets specific to customer satisfaction with the IVR system.

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7   Based on the average FY 2020 cost of Customer Care Center salary and benefits of $47.59 per hour.
8   The IVR system can answer simple inquiries, but more complex concerns must be transferred to an agent. As a result, average call length may be longer than if agents were also responding to simple tracking inquiries. The potential costs may have been less if agents were handling simpler inquiries, which could require shorter average call times.
9   Postal Regulatory Commission, "USPS Market Dominant Product & Customer Experience (CX) Surveys Instruments and Results", USPS-FY20-38, https://www.prc.gov/docs/115/115706/USPS-FY20-38%20Preface.pdf.
10 There is a ninth customer experience survey, the Large Business Panel survey, that is not included in the calculation of the CCC indicator or the CX Composite Index.
11 The Live Agent survey is offered to customers who speak with a CCC agent.

Customer Experience Composite Index

The Postal Service combines the OSAT results from the eight customer experience surveys into an overall measurement, the CX Composite Index. According to the Postal Service, the CX Composite Index "provides a comprehensive view of the customer experience across the most frequently used customer contact channels."[12] The CCC performance indicator makes up 20 percent of the CX Composite Index, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Customer Experience Composite Index

Source: Postal Regulatory Commission.
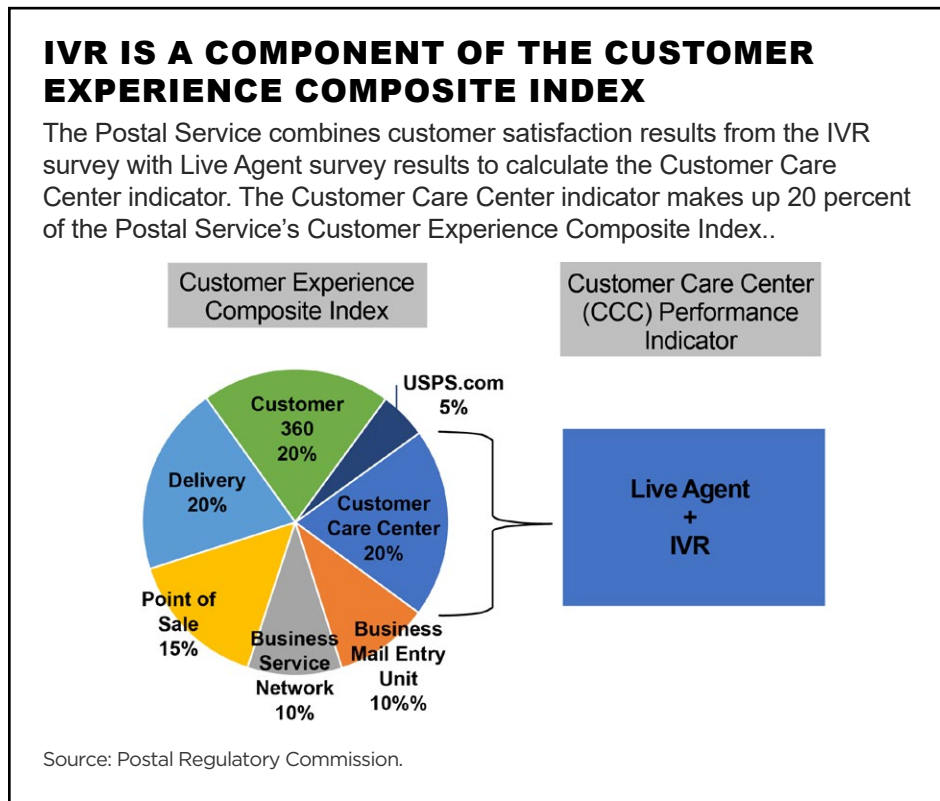
The CX Composite Index is the primary indicator for the Excellent Customer Experiences goal. In FY 2020, the Postal Service aimed to achieve a CX Composite Index of 75.73. The agency's actual result was 72.40.

Changing Methodology Hampers Measurement of CCC Trends

Frequent changes to survey methodology or score calculation present challenges to measuring trends over time. Maintaining a consistent approach would allow better analysis of trends in customer satisfaction. Between FYs 2018 and 2021, the Postal Service made two significant changes to the IVR survey and the CCC performance indicator calculation. First, in FY 2018 the Postal Service changed the scale used to measure the IVR system's OSAT, rendering the results incomparable to more recent OSAT results.

Second, in FY 2021 the Postal Service eliminated survey weighting for the CCC calculation. From FY 2018 through the end of FY 2020, the IVR system's OSAT survey result comprised 75 percent of the CCC indicator, and the Live Agent OSAT result comprised the remaining 25 percent. Starting with survey data collected in FY 2021, satisfaction results from the two surveys will no longer be weighted — the raw results from both questions will comprise the CCC score. Without the weighting, the year-over-year CCC indicator will no longer be comparable. In addition, in FYs 2019 and 2020 the Live Agent survey comprised about 40 percent of all completed CCC surveys. If this trend continues, using raw survey results rather than weighted results will increase the relative impact of the Live Agent survey on the combined OSAT score.[13] Importantly, the Live Agent survey's OSAT score is higher than IVR's. As shown in Table 1, the CCC performance indicator in FY 2020 would have been nearly two points higher using the new methodology.

Table 1: Impact of Changing CCC Calculation

NEW CCC SURVEY METHODOLOGY WILL INCREASE SCORES

From FYs 2018 through 2020, the Postal Service weighted results from the IVR and Live Agent surveys to calculate the Customer Care Center (CCC) performance indicator. Beginning in FY 2021, surveys will no longer be weighted, which will likely increase CCC indicator scores. In FY 2020, the CCC score would have been nearly two points higher using the new methodology.

	FY 2020
CCC Score with 2020 Methodology	60.03
CCC Score with 2021 Methodology	61.90
Difference	**+1.87**

Source: Postal Regulatory Commission and OIG analysis.

Customer Experiences with the IVR System are Mixed

In addition to the question measuring overall customer satisfaction with the IVR system, the IVR post-call survey includes four additional questions measuring the customer experience. The additional questions ask about a customer's likeliness to recommend USPS, the IVR system's ease of use, issue resolution, and how many times a customer called regarding the same inquiry. Survey results from the past two years indicate recent improvements in customer experience yet also point to a meaningful percentage of unsatisfied customers.
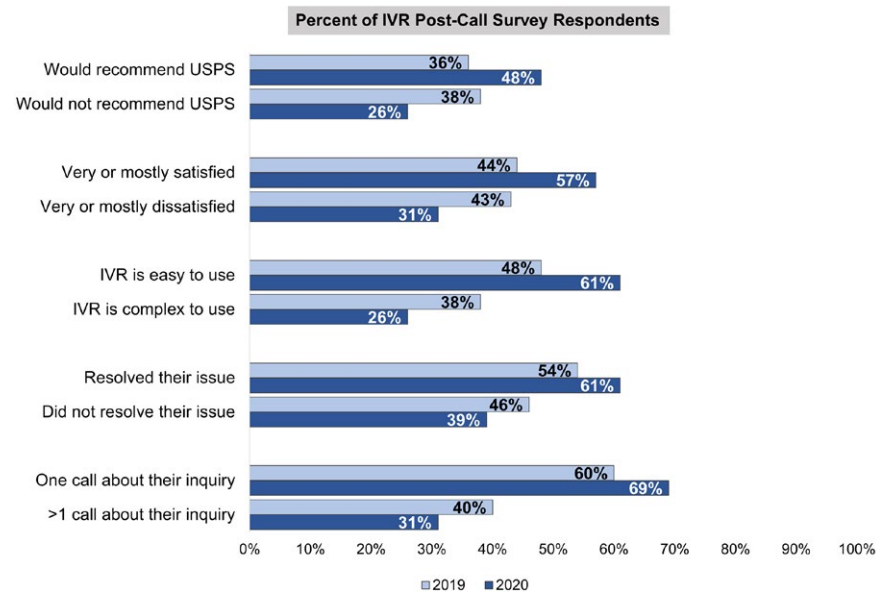
In FY 2019, 44 percent of respondents reported feeling very or mostly satisfied with their IVR experience; in FY 2020, this increased to 57 percent, as shown in Figure 5. Year-over-year results also point to increases in the number of respondents who would recommend USPS to a friend based on their experience with the IVR system and those who found it easy to use.[14]

Figure 5: IVR Survey Results FYs 2019-2020

CUSTOMERS' IVR SYSTEM EXPERIENCES ARE IMPROVING

Between FY 2019 and FY 2020, customer experience improved on all IVR post-call survey measures. Customers reported higher levels of overall satisfaction with the IVR system and were more likely to say that the IVR system was easy to use. Fewer customers made multiple calls to resolve their inquiry.

Percent of IVR Post-Call Survey Respondents

	2019	2020
Would recommend USPS	36%	48%
Would not recommend USPS	38%	26%
Very or mostly satisfied	44%	57%
Very or mostly dissatisfied	43%	31%
IVR is easy to use	48%	61%
IVR is complex to use	38%	26%
Resolved their issue	54%	61%
Did not resolve their issue	46%	39%
One call about their inquiry	60%	69%
>1 call about their inquiry	40%	31%

Source: Postal Regulatory Commission

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14   Full 2019 survey results can be found at https://www.prc.gov/docs/111/111613/USPS.FY19.38.Survey.Files.zip, and full 2020 results can be found at https://www.prc.gov/docs/115/115706/USPS-FY20-38.zip.

While a growing proportion of customers responded positively about their IVR experience, FY 2020 survey results suggested a sizable segment of dissatisfied customers. In FY 2020, 26 percent of respondents were "very dissatisfied" with the experience, 20 percent said the IVR system was very complex to use, and nearly four-in-10 callers did not resolve their issue in the system.

Conclusion

The IVR system may be a customer's first and only customer care experience with the Postal Service, and enabling rapid self-service that meets customer needs is critical. In recent years, the rate of contained calls increased and customers reported more positive experiences with the IVR system. While these shifts suggest that the system is increasingly effective at offering a satisfactory resolution to customers, nearly four-in-10 IVR survey respondents reported that their issue was not resolved, indicating that there is an opportunity to further improve the IVR system's ability to effectively address customer inquiries. To identify possible areas of customer discontent, we recommend the Postal Service enhance current metrics by measuring the rate of complete, contained calls and the rate of incomplete calls abandoned in the IVR system. Measuring and analyzing calls abandoned in the IVR system can provide further insights on parts of the call flow where customers frequently disconnect and can help calculate a more accurate containment rate.

Summary of Management's Comments

Management agreed with the recommendation. The Postal Service will work with the IVR supplier to implement reporting which shows the utilization of the IVR system. The Postal Service stated the reporting will be implemented in five phases, beginning in the second quarter of FY 2022, and concluding by December 31, 2022.

See Appendix B for management's comments in their entirety.

Evaluation of Management's Comments

The OIG considers management's comments to the recommendation responsive, and the planned actions should satisfy the intent of the recommendation.

All recommendations require OIG concurrence before closure. Because the targeted implementation date is over a year away, the OIG requests interim, follow-up information as the phases of the reporting system are implemented. The OIG requests written confirmation when corrective actions are complete. The recommendation should not be closed in the Postal Service's follow-up tracking system until the OIG provides written confirmation that the recommendation can be closed.

Appendices

Click on the appendix title below to navigate to the section content.

Appendix A: Additional Information

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The objectives of this white paper were to:

1.) Determine the effectiveness of the interactive voice response (IVR) system in containing and resolving customer inquiries for fiscal year (FY) 2018 to May 2021 (including the containment rate, abandonment rate, and transfer rate);

2.) Report on the frequency and resolution rate of each type of inquiry (for example, hold mail requests, tracking, or change of address) since FY 2018; and

3.) Determine to what extent IVR is a component of customer experience metrics at the Postal Service.

The scope of this white paper is FY 2018 to May 2021. We reviewed IVR call data for the entire scope period and reviewed IVR customer survey data for FYs 2019 and 2020.

To meet our objectives, the OIG reviewed IVR call volumes and customer satisfaction survey results. In addition, we reviewed relevant documents and materials including Postal Regulatory Commission filings, internal postal newsletters, Decision Analysis Reports, and the Postal Service's IVR call flow. Finally, we interviewed Postal Service personnel with IVR system expertise.

We conducted this work in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on August 30, 2021 and included their comments where appropriate.

Prior Coverage

Title	Objective	Report Number	Final Report Date	Monetary Impact
Improving the Customer Experience with USPS Customer Care Centers	To understand the customer experience with the CCCs and suggest ways to improve it.	RARC-WP-18-012	August 20, 2018	$0

Appendix B: Management's Comments

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

September 15, 2021

JENNIFER MYKIJEWYCZ
DIRECTOR, OPERATIONS CENTRAL
RESEARCH AND INSIGHTS SOLUTION CENTER

SUBJECT: 1-800-ASK-USPS: The Postal Service's Interactive Voice Response
System – Final Review Draft (Project No. 2021RISC009)

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Office of Inspector General's (OIG's) white paper: *1-800-ASK-USPS: The Postal Service's Interactive Voice Response System.*

Recommendation [1]:
We recommend the **Vice President, Customer Experience** enhance current Interactive Voice Response system performance metrics by including metrics for the rate of complete, contained calls and the rate of incomplete, abandoned calls.

Management Response/Action Plan:
Management agrees with the recommendation and will be working with our supplier to implement reporting which will show utilization within the Interactive Voice Response System.

Target Implementation Date: Implemented over five (5) phases with Phase 1 implemented targeted during FY22, Q2 and the final phase implemented FY23, Q1.

Responsible Official:
Director, Enterprise Customer Care

Kelly Sigmon
Vice President, Customer Experience

cc: *Manager, Corporate Audit Response Management*

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