



From the RX pad of the **IVR Doctors**

Specializing in
Automated Phone System
Diagnostics & Optimization



Is your IVR brand image 'Joe the Stalker' or 'Valley Girl'? "Oops, how did that happen?"

For those who don't think that your IVR's automated system voice matters very much, you may not have checked with your callers to see what image *they* perceive when they hear the voice - and not just the Main Menu. If you ever did - as we do in our **IVR Focus Groups** and **IVR Usability Tests** - you might just be surprised at the image your automated system conjures up in their minds!

Aesthetics, the third, but seemingly "least important" of the IVR best-in-class building block characteristics we teach in our IVR Workshops - Functionality and Usability being the "more important" ones, can sometimes break any positive sense of momentum a caller may have developed.

Here are some examples of negative aesthetics that can affect your callers' experience:

- Inconsistent pace, tone, or volume - especially between menu levels or even within a menu,
- Two or more different voices in the same system. (Okay only if some purpose is served.)
- Clicks, transfer tones, long silences, scratchiness, or disruptive background noise.
- Multiple welcomes - by the same company (to perhaps interconnected parts of your systems).

Additionally, if you have a **speech recognition system with a 'persona'** - think Amtrak's "Julie" - such a pleasant and personable, approachable persona can backfire fast, if the automated interaction turns sour for the caller. Think about it: an IVR system that can't react properly to the caller - lots of **"I'm sorry, I didn't hear that"** messages, or repeated prompts that give instructions, even sometimes degenerating into the persona of a kindergarten teacher - can become grating and quickly irritating.

One system's persona - "Mary" - grew increasingly annoying over repeated calls, so much that one caller ended up screaming, **"Die, Mary, die!"** Surely, not the image that the company wanted.

We have an amusing, but important, module in our **IVR Workshop** that compares your system - in real time - to other IVRs in your industry. (While other industry personas may be amusing, they're not as relevant). Your IVR Workshop team will rate each system on several criteria and attach a word, phrase or visual image to the system's persona. That's where the images in our headline came from, as people said they heard **"Joe the Stalker"** or a **"Valley Girl,"** and worse, as system personas!

The first lesson of this exercise is that even your own IVR team may not agree on what's too fast, too slow, just right, or the right "image." The second is how to match your internal perceptions with those of your callers, who probably don't mirror the demographics of your IVR team. Next, it's your job to match your company's desired brand image to the voice: Approachable? Competent? Hip? Helpful?

The keys to developing positive, consistent system aesthetics:

1. Bring your callers into the loop and ask them to describe the pace, tone, and system persona.
2. Test more than one voice, remembering that an IVR is an inanimate thing, not a person.
3. Have your voice talent match your desired brand image - and be careful not to be too cute.
4. Call your own system to see how the aesthetics hold up throughout call flows, especially ones that go down default or likely "frustrating" paths.

You need robust Functionality and Usability on a solid Aesthetics base. We can help with that!

Functionality



Usability

Aesthetics

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