

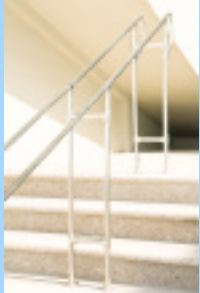


From the RX pad of the IVR Doctors

Specializing in
Automated Phone System
Diagnostics & Optimization



The IVR Menu Design Myth: “Less is More”



We see a trend - well, maybe a sub-trend, not a macro trend - that some companies have adopted a rigid, “less is more” menu design structure. This approach is ill advised and actually works against callers. Let’s see why.

First, some “less is more” examples:

- Only three options on any menu
- Very few high-level, or extremely generic words
- Dropping words like “To,” “For,” and “press” (after using them once or twice)
- Few or no navigational commands, such as repeat a menu, or return to a previous menu or Main Menu

Example - A

For power problems, press 1.
For account services, press 2.
All others, press 3.

Example - B

For service requests, press 1.
Billing and payment information, 2.
Payment arrangement options, 3.

Such menus may sound “clean, crisp;” yet neither is optimum.

These menus and options are *too* short, *too* simple, and, ultimately, fraught with potential routing failures and system bypass, and may drive callers to press zero or to do *nothing!*

There are other problems, too: In Example A, what does the vague “*account services*” really mean? It could mean anything; so could “*power problems.*” (A “problem” paying a power bill?)

In Example B, dropping the word “*press*” after “*press 1*” serves no real purpose, either. Callers tell us that as they encounter more and more “press or say” systems, so having no modality command word leaves them wondering whether to press or say the number tied to the option. (Note the other vague wording: “*service requests.*” It could mean almost anything!) Also, Example B’s dropping of the context prepositions “*To*” and “*For*” serves no useful purpose. Some callers need context and the menu cadence helps.

For either example, think how confidently a real caller would react to common calls such as: 1) discuss or question a bill; 2) order new service, 3) get their current balance, or 4) make a payment agreement (Company A has no mention of billing or payment matters; Company B has two options that cover payments).

The bottom line and cardinal design rule: Use 4-5 options on every menu -- keeping the **total menu word count** under approximately 50 words, and ensure the options are **clear, concise** and **mutually exclusive options** ... our design mantra backed by years of customer usability testing.



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