

# 6 ways to grow your brand using voice

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Voice is the most natural and intuitive form of customer interaction. Bianca Best, Global Managing Director of Blink & Strategic Partnerships at MediaCom, explains how you can use it to grow your brand.

Voice isn't the future, it's now. As Natural Language Processing evolves so our dependence on a voice-activated world is growing. Speech recognition error rates are now at human parity at just 5%, [according to Microsoft](#).

Google predicts that by 2020 50% of all search queries will be made via voice. Furthermore, social barriers to entry such as 'embarrassment' (i.e. I don't want to sit in Starbucks instructing my phone to run my bath) will evaporate.

As a result, [Gartner estimates](#) that brands who redesign their websites to support visual and voice search will increase digital commerce revenue by 30% by 2021.

By the end of 2018, Google's Voice Assistant – Duplex – will support more than 30 languages (watch the [YouTube clip](#) of the unveiling in May). Microsoft's call centre solution is already able to transcribe conversations more accurately than a team of humans.

With consumers gaining confidence in interacting with these platforms – both voice-enabled digital assistants and the voice-enabled speakers – brands need to embrace the interface now.

One way they can do this is by building voice experiences accessible through voice assistants. [Dominos](#), for example, has taken advantage of this in the UK, making ordering pizza easier from Alexa.

Alternatively, brands can develop voice capabilities within their owned assets. This could be within the products themselves (e.g. voice activated white goods) or even within the packaging.

Brands can also look to build products that complement existing voice systems. Bose has done this by building [smart speakers](#) that boost the volume and the quality of the music customers listen to.

Success in the voice arena means remembering six things:

### 1. Find the right micro-moments

Identify the brief but powerful opportunities that will reduce pain points or friction in your consumers' lives. As customer journeys now undulate in ways that give us more opportunities to interact, track down all the 'I-want-to-know', 'I-want-to-go', 'I want-to-buy', and 'I want-to-do' moments where your brand can be useful. This will help you define the primary use cases you need to develop for. Never forget the 'Why'.

## 2. Remember speech is emotional

The human brain will naturally respond to voice with a stronger emotional reaction than from text, so maximise this. Conversational interaction is not just about information retrieval. Yes, users want to know your company's address or about a feature of your product, but increasingly they are also looking for help with getting things done – like scheduling an appointment, buying an item or getting customised advice, for example. Move past passive information provision and focus on enabling user actions in an intuitive, engaging way.

## 3. Develop a persona

The intimacy of voice means brands can be sublimely creative at building a fully developed brand personality. Be consistent with, but do evolve, your established brand identity, ensuring you consider the gender, age and tone sensitively. Be aware of local market nuances too. Also, think about the potential twists and turns of the conversation and craft clever reactions and interactions. Don't forget to form POVs on unrelated topics such as jokes or politics. Go beyond functional information.

## 4. Optimise your content

Use algorithm optimisation to make sure voice assistants surface their skills or actions. And don't forget that to be truly assistive you need to be everywhere your user is. User journeys may cross devices shifting from voice to keyboard, from Siri to browser, for instance, if requesting cinema listings so consider the journey flow and optimise for multiple contexts and settings.

## 5. Shout about it

Once you've invested in voice you need to promote it. The most successfully adopted skills or voice apps are those promoted through fully integrated campaigns consistently routing potential consumers to activate and engage with your brand's voice.

## 6. Be useful

If you're not using voice to be useful there's no point. Whether it's building a skill to entertain the kids with Lego competitions on a rainy day or a toothbrush timer that tells stories for two minutes so the kids do indeed brush that long, be sure you satisfy a consumer need. If you are, you'll create a spark that will hopefully lead to regular engagement and re-use. Don't be too gimmicky, however. Time-short consumers will quickly tire of novelty.

If you care about growth, being an early adopter brand on voice is vital. Now is the time to capitalise on this inevitable behavioural shift. Get it right and you'll see customer satisfaction improve, touchpoints expand and revenue increase.

As humanity and technology collide, you have the power to shape tomorrow today and deepen your customer relationships like never before.

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OPINION