

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- ✓ Tips for using AI with unified communications
- ✓ How to automate voice and text interactions
- ✓ Use cases for applying AI to business interactions

Adding AI to UC: Extending Masergy UCaaS with AI-powered automation

Think Intelligent Virtual Agents are just for the contact center? Think again. Enhance your Masergy Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) solution with artificial intelligence-powered IVAs to streamline operations and improve customer care.

How to automate voice and text interactions with Intelligent Virtual Agents

More businesses than ever before are using AI-powered self-service automation to optimize customer engagement. You have likely heard or read about how chatbots and Intelligent Virtual Agents (IVAs) can automate routine service conversations and tasks in the contact center to increase productivity, reduce costs, and improve customer satisfaction. Nearly [four out of five](#) businesses are saving more than 20% in customer service costs and four staff hours a day as a result of adding an IVA to interact with customers, and organizations that implement virtual agents “report an increase in customer satisfaction and save 33% per voice engagement,” according to [Gartner, Inc.](#)

IVA customer service savings



But did you know that you can achieve these same benefits, as well as additional gains like driving more business to your store and booking more appointments, by putting IVAs to work within a Unified Communications environment like Masergy UCaaS?

Your Masergy UCaaS solution already does a great job of enabling cloud calling, virtual meetings and team collaboration, but there's so much more that it can do with the addition of virtual agents. Extending your solution with Masergy Intelligent Virtual Agents can streamline business operations and enhance the service experience for your customers. Masergy IVAs, powered by award-winning technology from Inference Solutions, directly integrate into the Masergy UCaaS solution, which is built on industry-leading communication and collaboration software from Cisco.

This whitepaper will explore how these solutions work together to drive innovative and efficient customer care—and how you can maximize your UC and Contact Center investments with virtual agents.

Centralized or delegated management of self-service automation

With Masergy IVAs, you can integrate and centralize the legacy customer service systems on your business phone numbers into a cloud-based solution that is easier to manage. An integrated system enables you to

- deploy more advanced self-service solutions and receive more detailed reporting and analytics
- manage a single set of virtual agents to support your entire network of business outlets.
- update IVR services centrally or delegate that authority to individual business locations—for example, you could change the greeting or self-service options for all stores centrally or allow a regional manager to make updates for one or more stores in a specific region.

Your network of stores becomes a series of phone extensions that allows your IVA to transfer calls from one location to another. This eliminates the need for



additional calls—and additional per-minute charges—reducing your overall telephony costs. Plus, integrated call reporting enables you to understand the volume of incoming calls, how long customers spend speaking to live and virtual agents, and their most common requests. This reporting can help you discover new tasks that can be automated to increase the percentage of calls that can be handled by IVAs. You can also dynamically add virtual agents to your workforce to handle spikes in demand during peak service times.

Natural language call steering

Customers calling a business are often forced to use antiquated and complex “dial-by-name” systems to spell the name of the person they are trying to reach. These systems cause frustration and can result in routing errors if a customer misdials.

Natural Language Call Steering is a simpler call routing solution that allows your customers to speak the name of the person, department or store they are trying to reach. The virtual agent listens, understands and then transfers your caller to the right person or place.

In addition, because the virtual agent is integrated with Masergy UCaaS, calls can be transferred to any extension. It doesn't matter if the extension is located at your corporate headquarters, at a retail outlet or in your call center. The IVA can route calls anywhere your business operates as if the end points were all within a single physical location.



Frequently asked questions

Easily routing calls to the right person or place offers enormous value, and you can increase the likelihood that a customer or prospect will do business with you with intelligent self-service.

Customers take purchasing decisions seriously, and they want quick and accurate answers to any questions that come up as they are researching the products and services they want to buy and the businesses they want to visit. Masergy IVAs can use speech recognition, text-to-speech and natural language understanding (NLU) to answer routine questions like “Are you open on Sunday?” or “What is your refund policy?” Many businesses even allow callers to check inventory via an IVA, which can then automatically provide alternative recommendations if a product is not in stock.

Masergy IVAs can also tap into web services like Amazon Kendra, which delivers powerful natural language search capabilities that can retrieve information from anywhere in your organization’s data, including knowledge bases, FAQ documents, product manuals, and supporting web links.

Appointment scheduling & reminders

Why make customers wait for a person to book their appointments? Masergy IVAs easily integrate with calendaring systems and offer a 24/7 hotline for appointment scheduling—or rescheduling. You can also deploy the IVAs to automate outbound appointment reminders over voice and text channels with customized messages and reservation details to minimize no shows.

Purchases and payments

Empower your customers to make secure payments in real time, any time, via voice, chat, and SMS. Masergy IVAs are PCI compliant and help businesses avoid compliance violations because they can collect sensitive credit card information without revealing it to a human being. This not only saves time for your customers and live service agents; it can save you thousands of dollars in potential violation penalties.

Masergy IVAs can even go one step further by using sentiment analysis to detect a caller’s emotion. For example, if the virtual agent detects anger, it can bypass the typical call flow and transfer them directly to a designated extension—perhaps to your customer retention department.

Natural Language Call Steering will delight your customers with the simplicity of using their voice to connect to the right place during their first call.

Store locator

A store locator offers enhanced functionality to your call steering application by allowing a caller to ask for “the closest store,” or “the office located in Yountville, CA.” The IVA can ask follow-up questions if necessary (“What’s your zip code?”), confirm the address of the nearest store, and then route the caller to the correct location. The next time that customer calls in, the IVA can recognize the phone number and automatically match it with their preferred location.

The store locator can also tap into Google’s mapping data so that a customer can geo-locate based on landmarks (“I need the store closest to Penn Station.”). It can also provide directions to the customer’s nearest location over the phone or via SMS.

BOPIS (buy online, pick up in store)

Amazon's next-day and same-day delivery options have challenged all businesses to get orders in customers' hands faster. Buy online, pick up in store (BOPIS) allows you to match the convenience of a fast delivery (with even faster returns) while eliminating shipping costs for you and your customers.

According to research by the [National Retail Federation](#) (NRF), 71 percent of customers that have heard of BOPIS have tried it, and 63 percent are satisfied with their experience. In fact, half of U.S. shoppers [surveyed](#) by return service provider Doddle have decided where to shop online based on whether or not they could pick up in-store. Shoppers identify saving on shipping costs, greater speed, and more convenience as their top BOPIS benefits.

To deliver on those benefits, Masergy IVAs can help you make the in-store pick up experience as seamless as possible. For example, rather than entering a store and waiting in line to pick up an order, a customer can call from the parking lot and speak to a virtual agent. The IVA can inform the customer of their place in line, notify them when it's their turn to enter the store, or alert an associate to deliver the items to the customer's car.

Bringing it all together: Virtual agents in the contact center

Now that you've seen how IVAs can enhance the self-service experience within your Masergy UCaaS environment, let's look at the additional benefits they can provide to support your contact center.

Intelligent queue callbacks

No one likes to wait in line. If your contact center agents are unavailable to answer an incoming call, Masergy IVAs allow your customers to request an intelligent callback. The IVA will queue on hold for the customer and, when a live agent becomes available, place an automated callback. This means no time spent on hold for customers, less network costs for you, and an improved customer experience for all.

The virtual agent can also ask the customer for details about why they are calling, capture an audio recording of that information, and pass it to the live agent before the callback. This allows live agents to engage with the customer proactively and resolve the call more quickly.



71%

of customers that have heard of BOPIS have tried it, and **63 percent are satisfied with their experience.**

Award-winning IVA technology from Inference Solutions is directly integrated into Masergy UCaaS solutions.

Screen pops

Masergy IVAs can also pass on relevant customer information to a live agent via a screen pop during the call transfer. Following custom-built rules, a virtual agent can perform functions such as a CRM lookup based on the caller's phone number to retrieve and pass on useful customer data, like the caller's name and location, loyalty status, and special needs. This helps you create a personalized customer experience, identify VIP callers, and reduce call-handling time.

Omnichannel efficiency

Some customers will need to change channels during an interaction. Masergy IVAs provide omnichannel escalation for customers who contact you over webchat and then request to speak to a live agent over the phone. An IVA reaches out to the next available live agent and delivers the chat transcript to them, so they are prepared to take the call. Maintaining this context between interactions is key to providing customers a seamless experience on every channel.

Setting up your Masergy IVAs

Launching virtual agents in both your UC and contact center environment is easy because Masergy IVAs are built on top of Inference Solutions' Studio platform. Studio is a code-free, user-friendly interface that you can access in your Web browser to build and manage your IVA applications.

It includes a Task Library of nearly 50 pre-built IVA applications, including tasks for FAQ, Natural Language Call Steering, store locator, etc., that can be customized by non-technical business users without the help of professional software developers. You can also create your own applications from scratch by dragging and dropping call flow components onto a blank canvas and deploy your IVAs within a few days or weeks.

Once deployed, you can continuously update your applications—with new prompts or additional self-service options, for example—without engaging a professional services team. This enables you to adapt to business changes in real time.

To learn more about Masergy IVAs and how to extend your UC and Contact Center operations, visit <https://www.masergy.com/contact-center/virtual-agent>.



inference



MASERGY

Inference Solutions & Masergy

AI-powered Intelligent Virtual Agents from Inference Solutions automate routine customer interactions to optimize agent resources and deliver a superior customer experience. Partners since 2010, Inference and Masergy offer unified communications and cloud contact center solutions combining the best-of-breed network and applications along with conversational AI technologies.