

## EchoStar Dishes Out Speech Self-Service

**LOCATION:**  
Englewood, Colorado

**URL:**  
[www.dishnetwork.com](http://www.dishnetwork.com)

**INDUSTRY:**  
Media

**PRODUCTS:**  
Voice Interaction Platform

- BUSINESS OBJECTIVES:**
- Deliver world-class customer service
  - Increase automation and reduce agent talk time
  - Use speech self-service to reinforce company brand
  - Reduce operational costs

- SOLUTION:**
- Intervice (VIP) platform selected for its flexible, scalable solution
  - Provide speech technology and services to significantly enhance customer self-service

- RESULTS:**
- \$18 million annual cost savings due to new speech-enabled and customer self-service applications
  - 1.3 million calls automated due to enhanced main menu, remote control programming, and new technical support FAQ application
  - 9.8 million calls automated due to main menu Statistical Language Model (SLM) deployment and new billing, technical support, programming and field service applications
  - Redeployment of agents throughout 1-1/2 call centers

DISH Network's voice automation initiative to save \$18 million annually.

"Providing top-quality customer service is integral to our long-term success and most importantly, toward strengthening relationships with our rapidly growing customer base. We continue to rely on our partner Intervice for their deep knowledge and professional services expertise in enhancing the customer service experience with speech technology."

Rob Strickland  
Chief Information Officer  
EchoStar Communications

### Company Overview

EchoStar Communications Corporation, also known as DISH Network, is the fastest-growing U.S. provider of advanced digital television services over the past five years. Founded in 1980, EchoStar today delivers Direct Broadcast Satellite (DBS) television products and services to households, businesses and schools throughout the country. EchoStar's DISH Network, established in 1995, reaches more than 12 million subscribers. A fleet of nine EchoStar satellites bring digital video, audio and data services to customers around the country. DISH Network provides a wide range of programming with more than 2,300 digital video and audio channels. The company has strong alliances with Internet Service Providers and voice communications providers, such as EarthLink, Qwest and Sprint Nextel to offer combined services. Subsidiary EchoStar Technologies develops hardware such as dishes, set-top boxes and other digital equipment.

Intervoice identified 22 applications where speech recognition and other enhancements would improve the EchoStar customer experience and save the company millions of dollars.

Throughout the company's history, EchoStar has demonstrated an entrepreneurial spirit by achieving significant industry firsts, including: the first nationwide network dedicated solely to satellite TV systems, the first to offer a satellite receiver with built-in digital video recording, and the first satellite TV provider to deliver local channels to local markets in all 50 states.

### **Business Objectives**

A customer since 1998, EchoStar initially selected Intervoice for its stable, flexible voice automation platform to deliver touch-tone, self-service applications to its customers. With Intervoice, EchoStar deployed over 50 touch-tone applications to automate processes and reduce the number of calls handled by call center agents. It was a successful venture. As the company's DISH Network service grew, the Intervoice call center platform scaled to handle over 400,000 calls per day.

In 2005, EchoStar entered discussions with Intervoice about taking its voice automation system to the next level

using Intervoice speech recognition to deliver industry-leading customer service to 12 million subscribers. DISH Network scored within a percentage point of the highest spot in the most recent J.D. Power and Associates customer satisfaction study.

"We want to be ranked number one in our industry on the J.D. Power customer satisfaction survey," says Rob Strickland, chief information officer at EchoStar. "Through our partnership with Intervoice, we took specific steps this year to deploy state-of-the-art speech and voice automation applications in an effort to further increase customer satisfaction." The company believed Intervoice could deliver speech-recognition technology and services that would dramatically increase call automation, leading to major operational cost reductions. "We saw a significant opportunity to leverage Intervoice speech technology to reduce the number of calls routed to our call center agents," says Strickland. The company also believed Intervoice design services would reinforce, promote and extend the EchoStar brand via new and improved customer-facing applications.

### **Solution**

In 2005, Intervoice worked with EchoStar to develop a strategy for deploying speech applications. The Intervoice services team conducted a thorough review of the existing voice automation infrastructure, conducted 20 on-site interviews with key employees, reviewed existing call-flow designs, participated in live agent call listening and brainstormed new applications to ultimately present a comprehensive roadmap and business case to EchoStar executives. Intervoice identified 22 applications where speech recognition and other enhancements would improve the EchoStar customer experience and save the company millions of dollars.

EchoStar introduced speech-enabled, self-service to its customers in a phased approach starting in November 2005. The first phase of the project focused on a redesign of the main menu, a speech-enabled application to help customers program their remote control, and a new technical support FAQ application addressing the most common reasons callers contact EchoStar customer support. "Our goals were to achieve a 40 percent

automation increase from the remote control application, and 10 percent automation for the new FAQ support application,” says Strickland. “I am pleased to say that we have met—and even surpassed—these goals.” The automated FAQ support application is the first of its kind in the satellite television industry. Customers can now access a speech-enabled application via a toll-free number to get quick answers to questions, such as: how to use the DISH Network channel guide, how to record a show on a digital video recorder, how to order pay-per-view programs, or how to use the DISH Interactive feature to get weather, sports and customer support information displayed on their TV screen.

The second phase of the project includes additions to the main menu, billing system, technical support, modification of channel-lineups, as well as field service applications for DISH Network installers. A Statistical Language Model (SLM) grammar will be added, which will greet the customer with an open-ended question (e.g., “Welcome to EchoStar.

How may I help you?”) for quicker, more accurate call routing, which leverages technology that understands the millions of words or phrases callers may use when speaking about their Dish Network service questions or issues. With new speech applications, customers will be able to report signal loss or blackouts, purchase movies, access billing information, and upgrade or downgrade their program package. In addition, field service personnel will be able to setup outbound dialing to remind customers of appointments, reschedule appointments, or check on status of work orders.

### Results

With the completion of phase one, EchoStar will realize a total of \$4.5 million in savings per year, a result of 1.3 million calls automated via Interservice. The main menu redesign will deliver \$2.6 million in savings; the remote control application \$1.9 million in savings; and the FAQ application \$150,000 in savings.

Phase two will add another \$13.5 million in annual savings from 9.8 million automated calls. The main menu SLM enhancement will drive \$2.6 million in cost savings per year

(three percent automation increase). A speech-enabled billing application will result in \$3.3 million in savings (13 percent automation increase), additional technical support applications will drive \$1.2 million in savings (nine percent automation increase), customer programming applications will result in \$1.4 million in savings (25 percent automation increase), and field service applications for installers will drive \$5 million in savings (13 percent automation increase). “The Interservice speech initiative is dramatically impacting our company. We expect to save \$18 million per year as a result of speech automation, and a huge decrease in calls routed to call center agents,” says Strickland. “Our call centers will be handling approximately 11 million fewer calls per year—about 900,000 per month. We will eventually be able to redeploy call center agents in one and a half call centers as a result of increased automation.”

EchoStar is receiving accolades for its leadership in IT. A recipient of IDG’s prestigious CIO 100 Award, the company’s IT department is widely recognized for delivering high-value

projects that drive operational excellence. The company also received a prestigious World Billing Award with MetraTech—a leading provider of web services-based billing—for an innovative prepaid TV solution that seamlessly integrates with the Intervoice Voice Interaction Platform.

Intervoice is helping EchoStar achieve its business goals. The company is tapping into the power of speech technology to deliver world-class customer service, increase automation, extend the company's brand and

reduce costs. "Providing top-quality customer service is integral to our long-term success and most importantly, toward strengthening relationships with our rapidly growing customer base," says Strickland.

"We continue to rely on our partner Intervoice for their deep knowledge and professional services expertise in enhancing the customer service experience with speech technology."

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#### **About Intervoice**

Intervoice is a world leader in unified communications, powering millions of customer interactions every day. Since 1983, our standards-based IVR/voice portal and IP Contact Center solutions have ignited customer loyalty for the world's leading banks, communications companies, healthcare institutions, utilities and government entities. Our proven IMS-ready multimedia messaging, call completion and payment solutions fuel revenue growth for the world's leading service providers.

With more than 5,000 customers in 75 countries and an extensive channel partner ecosystem, we have a proven track record of helping organizations meet or exceed their business and customer service goals. How can Intervoice help you? Visit [www.intervoice.com](http://www.intervoice.com) for information.

