



Case Study

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## Michigan Department of Treasury

Speech-enabled platform helps reduce costs and improves customer service.

“Especially during tax season, Intervoice’s technology is an absolutely essential component in effective call management. We chose the Intervoice solution to serve as a key component in helping to move traffic away from our Customer Service Center, allowing tax-paying citizens to help themselves quickly and efficiently without any human interaction. Intervoice’s technology is tackling over 1 million calls per year and we are currently looking to enhance that based upon the success we’ve experienced.”

Steve Hilker, CPA  
Director of Customer Service Center  
Michigan Department of Treasury

Providing financial, tax and administrative services to more than 1 million taxpayers, the Michigan Department of Treasury is one of the first state tax agencies to employ speech recognition technology. By implementing this technology, the agency is reducing costs and enabling its agents to better focus its service efforts.

The Treasury Department implemented a speech-enabled system from Intervoice to help meet the demand of abundant incoming calls, off-load redundant inquiries and provide customer service seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

### Situation

The Michigan Department of Treasury had been using a traditional interactive voice response (IVR) system from Intervoice that was a dependable “workhorse” for handling more than 1.3 million calls per year. The system handled many redundant calls from eager and often impatient taxpayers. A prime example is the multitude of “Where is my refund?” calls which occur during tax season, from January through May.

Still, many callers resisted waiting through the long list of options offered by the existing touch-tone solution. An increasing number of callers requested live agents. Even adding agents during those months often failed to meet the demand of high call loads. The result was long hold times and customer dissatisfaction, and it was estimated that the average call cost had escalated to \$1.65 per call.

The Michigan Department of Treasury researched its options and concluded that speech was becoming a critical component in effective call management for the high-volume call center. The decision was made to speech-enable the current system.

The goals for this speech initiative were to:

- Increase customer service capabilities of the existing automated system
- Reduce call duration
- Use customer service agents to address more complex inquiries

The Department sought a speech solution that could provide easy, natural interaction and allow quick information access and first-contact resolution for most callers.

### Solution

The Intervoice speech-enabled platform proved to be the clear choice for the Michigan Department of Treasury. Intervoice offered a history of technology leadership, plus the capability to deliver the required applications and provide a single point of contact for the total solution.

The Treasury Department implemented a speech-enabled system from Intervoice to help meet the demand of abundant incoming calls, off-load redundant inquiries and provide customer service seven days a week, 24 hours a day. The 72-port Computerized Return Information

System (CRIS) system is not only meeting these key goals, but also displays a consistent and comfortable “face” for government to Michigan citizens.

The automated system provides callers with the ability to simply speak their requests – without listening to traditional touch-tone menus or interacting with customer service representatives. Callers’ inquiries are expedited while call durations and associated costs are reduced.

### Results

*Reduced costs:* Calls handled by the speech-enabled system cost the Department about 15 cents per call—a fraction of the \$1.65 it was spending per call prior to implementation.

Overall, the state has saved more than \$2 million since it began using the speech-enabled solution to handle the influx of calls, a very significant amount for a government agency that is cautiously watching every penny and striving to eliminate waste.

*Extended service hours:* More than one million tax-paying Michigan citizens can now access financial, tax and administrative services quickly and efficiently. Service is available at their convenience, rather than between the Department's hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

*Faster service:* Incoming calls can now be answered through the speech-enabled technology as callers seek information by speaking their request and quickly receiving an automated answer. Speech-enabled, self-service is a key component in helping to move traffic away from the Customer Service Center, allowing taxpaying citizens to often help themselves quickly and efficiently, without any human interaction.

*Enhanced customer satisfaction:* The Department surveyed every 25th caller, asking for feedback regarding his or her experience. Within just four months after initial deployment, the positive response from consumers was remarkable, with over 98 percent of calls being handled by the new speech-enabled system.

In addition, customers requiring conflict resolution or individual attention from live agents are

experiencing improved service because agents are available to spend time handling their specific needs, rather than responding to routine inquiries.

### **Future Plans**

Because of the tremendous success of the Interoice solution, the Michigan Department of Treasury is considering speech-enabling additional tasks. The Department is also focused on getting a "big picture" of taxpayer needs through total IVR and computer telephony integration (CTI) leveraged across the organization as an efficiency tool.

This initiative will eventually be expanded to include customer service capabilities through the Internet, email and correspondence. With those features, taxpayers will be able to interact with Treasury Department representatives, view account data, receive consistent answers to complex tax questions, and submit email forms for additional service requests, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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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.

