

# Caller Authentication: Likes, Dislikes and Preferences

*In May 2012 Opus Research, in conjunction with Nuance Communications, commissioned Coleman-Parkes Associates to survey 1,000 individuals who had recently used their telephone for customer care. They described the shortcomings of present systems for caller authentication and provided clues that should be used in designing secure and convenient customer care in the future.*

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## Key Findings

While they find the common practices for caller authentication to be “easy enough,” survey respondents find that most firms could improve their quality of service by improving their approach to caller authentication:

- **Authentication is “easy” but a nuisance when it fails** – The majority of callers find authentication to be “easy enough,” but they have preferences that should shape plans for future ‘best practices, especially when they must compensate for false rejection.
- **Too many companies rely on “something you know”** – PINs, passwords or personal information are the industry norm for caller authentication. This single factor approach presents real problems because they have little security value (in this day of social engineering and rapid knowledge sharing) and many callers find them to be a nuisance.
- **Failure to authenticate (i.e. remember) is a source of frustration** – Whether it’s the inability to enter the proper PIN or to provide personal information, knowledge-based authentication is a source of bad will with customers.
- **Reaching a live agent remains the prime directive** – “Operator!!!!” has been the rallying cry of the “Get to Human” movement, when thinking of the preferred method of completing a customer care task. Likewise, callers prefer to interact with a live agent, rather than an automated voice response unit, when authenticating as well – even if it involves entering a PIN.
- **Financial Services, Government, Telecom are seen as the biggest culprits** – Because they are entities that people call with a specific goal in mind.
- **Callers want frictionless, speedy service** – At best, authentication is a speed-bump on their road to successful task completion. At worst it is a major roadblock.
- **Next Stop Virtual Agents with voice biometrics** – Voice biometric authentication can take place in the background while callers interact with natural sounding, virtual agents in the automated contact center.

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