

**Interactive Voice Response(IVR)Systems  
SHHH Online Survey  
for users of Hearing Aids and Cochlear Implants  
Conducted October 2002 on the SHHH web site at  
<http://www.shhh.org>)**

**Selected Comments from Survey Respondents**

*The names of the respondents have been removed to protect their privacy. Spelling errors were corrected. SHHH does not endorse any products or services. Mention of specific services or products were provided by individuals, do not represent the opinion of SHHH, and may not apply to other individuals with hearing loss.*

(Optional) Please describe the negative and/or positive effects of voice menu systems on you as a person who is hard of hearing. Specific examples will be very helpful.

Systems are so different. Sometimes, it's not the message, but the fact that it is a foreign voice (trying to speak English) that makes it even more difficult. The message needs to be clear, words pronounced well and not too fast. Sometimes when names are given with ext numbers, often the lists are read too quickly. The numbers 5 & 9 are difficult to distinguish, as are 2 & 3 sometimes.

Without the options to either repeat the menu and/or press "0" to communicate with a live operator, the IVR system is basically inaccessible to me as a hard of hearing person. Nine times out of ten, I press "0" to speak with a live person because it's simply a waste of my time and energy to wait through the voice options.

Unable to follow the choices because I cannot hear them. VERY frustrating! Need a live person to talk to.

Most times I am frustrated because I miss a key word, such as a number and am never certain what the directions really are telling me.

It can be highly exasperating and time consuming. Sometimes the different options are not numbered logically or sequentially. For example, the first option may be 1 but the next option may be 3. Also, with my hearing loss, I easily confuse "2" and "3", so I like to be able to rely on logic, but I can't assume that "2" will always be the next option. Even if I can hear the number, then I cannot hear the message at times, due to tone or loudness etc. I wrote "50%" because sometimes it is very easy to understand. But even with about 50%, a lot of time and energy are wasted. Also, the information that one is given while waiting such as "please use our website at ....." is not necessarily clear with regards to the website address.

I often cannot distinguish the difference between "nine" and "five" on voice menu systems, so keeping choices numerically in order helps tremendously, but some do jump around.

I think the voice menus are good. But sometimes when you call the system does not give you the option of talking to a live person. When that happens I usually do not call again and I then have to write them or email if they have an address but it is additional time that I could be doing something else. It also makes me angry that I have to email or write because the company does not have live operators.

My main objection is the speed at which they talk-I have to go back and listen again or even three times to be sure.

Not clear and slow enough. To complete business, I find it necessary to talk to a "live" operator.

Hearing loss means that sounds are ambiguous to me and I struggle to understand what the options are. One time I contacted my 401K to update my address. I kept making the best guess at choices frustrated that I couldn't get to a live person that I could ask to repeat what I missed. Finally the voice said that I was being transferred to a live person. I was thrilled until the person answered with "fraud unit." I had made so many mistakes trying to navigate the IVR system that they locked out my account.

The biggest problem I have also is when they play music during the time I am waiting for an operator if I manage to get one. My ears are ringing by the time I reach a real person, and I have trouble right off figuring out that someone is actually talking to me! The Information from Voice Mail seems to be given quickly, and the voice is not one that I can understand well. If they spoke slower, it might help.

It helps a great deal if the company or organization mails/sends me a print copy of the questions I'd be expected to hear - that way I can follow exactly what they want me to do in such systems w/o problems.

Listening on the phone is very stressful to me as a person with hearing loss (moderate to borderline severe; I wear 2 hearing aids). I often punch the wrong number and cannot get back to the previous menu. When the menu doesn't have an operator option I won't deal with that company or I have to write them or go on the internet to them (which I hate even worse, because the internet is so time-consuming). I also find my mind blanking out while listening to the menu waiting for the options I need and therefore missing the number I needed, and I cannot go back, so I punch that number which is not the one I wanted but this way I get a real person who can possibly direct me to the right department - but often what happens is that that person puts me back into the menu again! Arrrgh! I also happen to know that this is not because I am hearing-impaired, this happens to people with hearing.

One problem is when the operator starts to talk before I can get the phone to my ear and I miss the first option. Voice menu depends on the quality of the voice and sometimes the length of the menu and the options.

They make me angry most of the time, and most hearing people that I know share the same opinion.

I find the menu system has a negative effect on me and I become frustrated, and many times I give up on getting the information I need.

Prefer voice to speak more distinctly, otherwise words run together and difficult to understand. Personally, found clear male voices more suitable for voice menu than sweet female voices.

All systems (due to volume mostly are not the same. Some I can hear and navigate fairly well, others with difficulty or not at all.

When done in a clear voice and with a live person option they are handy. When they automatically hang up after giving the menu it is very frustrating. I feel very isolated and angry when there is no alternative number or way to reach a company whose services I would like to use. If it is a medical service or other situation where I really need to make contact, it is demeaning to have to ask someone else to call for me.

Those voice menu systems do not allow enough time or repetition for hard of hearing people to grasp the meaning of the available menu choices. The use of a real human operator is GREATLY PREFERRED to any automated recording system. Those who set up these things are losing sight of a large audience of deaf and hard of hearing people in using those services. They are sometimes totally abominable!

There have been occasions when the voice menu system has been circular and I have been unable to complete a call. An example is what occurred on Thursday, October fourth. A friend called me from a convalescent home. She needed help and had been trying to get it for 1/2 hour, but had had no response. I called the facility and tried every option but could not get an answer. Every option ended with "Press --- for the operator." There was no way I could get help for her

people with foreign accented English.

Most IVR systems speak entirely too rapidly we need the option of being able to slow it down and yet maintain clarity of what is being said - perhaps a choice of male or female voice would be helpful

I don't make calls where I know that voice menu systems are in use. For example, activating a credit card is impossible. I have my next door neighbor do it for me. Availability of a script would be wonderful for this kind of thing.

Very frustrating when there is no other way to contact the person you need to communicate with

Find it very difficult to place orders even after asking person to repeat what was said.

Female voices are virtually impossible to understand. They almost never enunciate clearly, and speak too fast. The IRS does it very well--clear to understand. If this worked better, it would be a godsend, to avoid having to speak to a person--i.e. if there were options to repeat choices and some of the other things you've suggested.

I often just hang up when I get a voice menu system - I only persevere for the most important matters. Some of the above options are quite interesting. I think the most important thing is that they be universal - I don't understand numbers well enough to be able to decipher which one to press with if it is different each time. Most people are very considerate on the telephone and helpful when I tell them my needs. The voice menu system has succeeded in taking the humanness out of the telephone experience. One other consideration: I can't be the only hard of hearing person who has hung on to the old rotary dial phones because they are easier to hear on. I wish all voice response systems could respond to MY voice (I did finally find a push-button phone that meets my needs, so I place calls from that one - I usually answer calls on the old phones).

Most of the time the speaker's volume is too low and fast. I have strong amplifiers on my handset but so many times just not enough for success. If there is no way to get to a live operator I give up.

It is stressful to begin the call. Before starting, I'm already stressed and work very hard to hear it all the first time around.

Like the majority of HOH persons, I have difficulty with women's voices (high freq). Using a man's voice spoken slowly and clearly would work for me. Most important would be able to activate a live person at a mandated number for ALL telephone response systems. AND to require the people either be male or women with deep voices (no discrimination intended!).

Beginning and/or ending too quickly or too softly...The person needs time to "get ready" to hear(get hearing aid in the optimum position). Often the 1st option is over before the hearing aid user is ready to hear. Often the last part of the message is rushed and understanding is difficult. Don't jump around with #'s to be pressed, start with 1 then 2 then 3 etc. not 5 then 9 then 2 etc., on lengthy communications. It is VERY helpful to repeat after say 5 options like bank transactions.

I occasionally handle this is another way you have not mentioned. If I am not able to understand which number to press to reach my objective, I will often press ANY number offered and explain to the person who comes on the line that I am not able to distinguish the message so can they either help me or transfer me to the correct extension/person. I certainly appreciate an IVR system in which the person speaks clearly, slowly and with a projected voice. I have a terrible time if the voice has an accent.

I find voice menu systems to be frequently difficult. I do depend, however, on the clarity of the person speaking. A male voice, in my case, would be better than a female voice. I have a severe loss of high frequency response.

Most speak too fast and I have no clue what they are after. I prefer an operator and even they often don't slow down.

Well-designed VM systems can save time, and if recorded clearly, may be easier than trying to understand an operator with an accent. Poorly designed systems, e.g. those that don't list the option one is listening for AND don't actually connect one with a live operator, will frustrate anyone. The problem with the fax number idea is that I often can't hear numbers clearly. If they are in sequence 1-2-3-4 I can figure them out, but telephone or fax numbers are hard to hear.

The frustration I experience with these systems causes a high degree of stress and significantly impacts my independence.

For me the effects of VMS depend greatly on the clarity of the sound and the speed and voice frequency of the speaker. With optimum sound, speed, and voice frequency VMS can be somewhat positive in that I can take care of my needs with speed and accuracy. Calls to bank credit cards are generally positive. Other calls, however, can be frustrating and highly unproductive.

Voice Menu Systems are very stressful to me when making my phone calls. Besides having to replay the menu again and again, which is very time consuming, I also get frustrated when I have to listen to the voice menu for than twice - which is often - but there are many times when I have no choice, since I am trying to take care of my own affairs.

I frequently select the incorrect number because I cannot distinguish the words. The recording usually lacks clarity and volume.

They make me break out in a cold sweat and give me a great sense of discomfort when I use them as I know they make my weakness all the worse

Voice menu systems are horrible for a hard of hearing person. They are very impersonal and most of the time, I give up and then use VCO and let the relay operator tell me what it is saying. My biggest problem is "five and nine". All I hear is the sound of the long "i". Another example is the "eight and A." All I hear is the sound of the long "a".

I'm forwarding a copy of an email sent to a major software marketing company that did not respond to my detailed advice showing how their automated voice answering system is losing customers. They did not respond. Subject of e-mail is: "Something overlooked in your strategy!" look for it. Let's hope it helps!.

I find it very difficult or impossible to do business with companies that don't make it easy to get to a live person.

I can usually understand it better than the live operator

It would be best if they used lower pitched male voices instead of high-pitched female voices.

I am shut out from doing business over the phone because of these systems. I lose my independence.

Only pressing 0 would be of much help to me. "Press (a designated number)": I've got to understand what that number is and what it's for. Fax Number: It is to laugh. Example: If I need help with my cable internet connection, I've got to get in my car and go down to the local office and hope there's somebody there that can help. Oh, yes: Kudos to the United States Post Office for restoring local telephone numbers to my directory. (At least they've done this where I live.)

Most of those voice menus speak too fast and too long and by the time I hear the last few words I forgot what the first ones were

I most often hang up when I get a voice menu system.

Hearing loss notwithstanding I do not like the inability to speak directly with a human being. It is so impersonal and so time consuming and many issues are not addressed and it is necessary to speak with a service assistant anyway - we should have more opportunity to speak directly

Most systems speak too rapidly very difficult to follow

My wife hears but she and I both avoid this type of system like the plague.

High pitched voices, often female, far, far more difficult for me to understand. Love to have deep, radio broadcaster's voice. I have stopped seeing some physicians because of poor quality voice mail menu systems. Often, my call is terminated to dial tone, evidence of system overload? Have tried some Dr's numbers dozen plus times without getting through or leaving voice message. Unacceptable. Worst case was physician specializing in pain management, control. How terrible for people in serious pain to encounter hostile voice menu systems.

Up until now the voice menu system has been mostly negative for me. Most times I ask my hearing husband to take over. Occasionally I can understand the menu but that is the exception. Slowing down is my definite priority. Most are so fast that I get lost. I do understand most personal calls, not all.

Using the T-coil on my hearing aid for telephone use is not all that helpful. Voice still muddled, particularly voice menu systems. However, if I take my hearing aid out, and the speaker talks slowly and clearly, I do much better. I have a severe to profound hearing loss. 85-90 decibels and my speech discrimination is (unfortunately) only 30-33% max with both ears. I stay away from the telephone whenever possible. Use email instead and the web to surf for info that I might need. Hope my input helps.

One thing I need to add is that companies need to be made aware the when the menu is being set up that the message voice needs to pronounce the words slowly, and clearly.

I have talked to many normal hearing persons who almost 100% say they also have difficulty so if the management in charge of the buying and installing of IVRs are objective they will want to make it as user friendly as possible. This means if no human is available that they use good speaking masculine voices and make the messages about one and a half or twice as slow. In such cases they can also offer a second set of identical messages in the slower etc fashion. Of course the zero option should be available if the time of day is when they have humans working. I can perhaps recall a few hundred calls that were quite difficult but anyone who is objective should know if normal hearers have trouble think of how much more trouble it is for us HOHers. I also offer in this regard the fact that the IVR FORUM has spent a lot of time and money in attempts to find ways to improve the systems so it must be and is a serious problem! Lastly now but not necessarily finally for the future, I strongly urge Mr. Powell and the FCC to issue a statement to the general public with emphasis on entities employing IVRs and voice mails that points out our difficulties and the need to make them as user friendly as possible.

Some of the enhanced options that you suggest would not work for me because I often cannot differentiate between "two" and "three" and other spoken voice prompts -- so I would not know what button they want me to press. Most have no way to repeat the menu or way to reach a live person.

As soon as I hear the voice for a voice menu, I automatically become STRESS. I wouldn't be making the call if I didn't have a reason for calling.

Many times when I end up speaking to an operator or other "live" customer service representative, I have found that 7 out of 10 times they ask me if I'm on a cell phone....."Can you call back?" I respond that I am not on a cell phone, but rather an amplified phone and at times it makes MY VOICE distorted because of the power it uses to amplify THEIR voice. I have been asked TWICE in the last year after this initial and common conversation, if I am "capable of transacting business on the telephone" and/or "are you capable of making informed decisions about your account on the telephone". This is very frustrating. I have found that

unless it is urgent, (i.e., doctor appointments for children, etc.) that I must ask my husband to make the phone calls later.

I do not like using this system as there are too many times where I cannot follow through with all of the commands. I would much prefer to talk to an operator. If an accessibility option such as rewording the same question may be more helpful for me. Thanks for your research into this area.

Most speak too fast for me to understand. Need slower, louder and more distinct pronunciation of words.

I frequently call my HMO to refill prescriptions. It's fortunate that the IVR menu hasn't changed in several years, as I've been able to keep the menu sequence written down in my phone book and just press the numbers I need. In most cases though, using an IVR system is so frustrating and stressful that I prefer to use the TTY to make most calls. This has its own drawbacks, as the operator must constantly hang up and call back. (Sorry, I haven't seen any surveys about TTYs and IVR).

Adds much stress to my business day, but no rudeness from them

The options of pressing a number at the beginning of an interactive voice message is unimpressive...ex. press 1 for previous menu, for louder and slower message, clearer....it is most likely to be asked in a regular voice tone that is the problem to begin with. Most helpful is choice of live person to speak with and then to explain the difficulty because of hearing loss. Most are helpful and understanding. Some voice menus do not have a choice of that ....or may be I did not hear it? I believe Oprah Winfrey said once to just stay on the line and an operator comes on!! No numbers at all to sweat over.

I could not activate a credit card that replaced an expired card. I went without a credit card for several years before I tried again and could understand the questions.

I find nothing positive about them except with those I can repeat an indefinite number of times.

I do not understand foreign accents or southern accents

It takes too long to figure out what I'm supposed to do. They talk too fast. It takes too long to get an operator. Sales have been lost because it is too frustrating to order things with this system. I can't think of anything positive except sometimes I get an operator with a voice who is easier to understand and talks slowly.

The worst thing about them is that numbers are very hard to discriminate. "Two" and "three" sound the same to me, hearing aids on or not. I also feel they are a waste of time, as most of the time. My questions are much more specialized than their choices. It is also difficult for those with bad hand-eye coordination or poor memory to punch a series of numbers or to remember if they punched the right numbers. The most odious voice interactions are those used by directory assistance or financial institutions: Please say the name of your city; say your SS number ... I never respond because the machine wouldn't recognize my speech. I loathe voice menus--wait for a live operator unless the information is clear-cut, i.e., press 3 to speak to a clinical assistant. There are no positive aspects of voice menus systems.

Trying to use this system is a waste of time for me

I get very frustrated in not being able to understand, mostly caused by the recording being too fast to understand

IVR systems cause me to become very frustrated and dependent upon a hearing person to make 99% of my calls. Therefore, whenever possible, I choose businesses who do not utilize this system.

Most menu systems have options spoken in a rapid manner and I have to repeat the options offered to try to understand them. This is time consuming and frustrating to try to conduct business. A deep voice speaking in a measured manner is better.

I do not have trouble understanding voice menu systems despite my profound deafness - 90 decibels in both ears while using a t-coil on the phone. But I do have trouble understanding messages that people leave on my business voice mail. I often have to either 1) repeat the message until I understand it or 2) ask a co-worker to listen to it for me and have the co-worker verbally translate what the voice mail message says for me.

I have to replay the options many times to be able to complete a transaction. Often there is no way to get to a live person for help if you can't hear an option. It is very stressful and not very good accommodation.

At work, to get assistance with the company intranet, I must navigate the menu, there is no alternative. However, I have almost memorized it now after going through it so many times, and now can ignore the recording and just enter the number I need. Most other phone menus I have encountered, I have had to seek the assistance of someone with better hearing.

Of the systems I've used, Walgreen's drug store has the best. The message is loud and clear. I always opt to use the last instruction "stay on the line" for the drug store clerk to talk to me. The option to stay on the line to talk to a real person is the best for me.

These need to be more accessible to TTY/VCO users as well.

Inconsistency of voice speed and accents. Impersonal approach.

I have an extremely difficult time understanding them and it is so frustrating to have to wait for my husband to call for me. The positive, I don't have to speak to a real person since that is very difficult for me too. If I call often enough I can remember what option to take.

Women with high frequency voices and those who speak too fast cause problems for me.

It's a nightmare! Even some doctors offices have gone this route. Do they have any idea of the difficulty this causes their hard of hearing patients?

I have made a couple of bad mistakes paying bills online this way. Thought I had done it correctly when I had not. Ended up with a finance charge when there should not have been one. (twice.) Also, the time it takes to go through this stuff is terribly annoying. I've learned to 'just push 0' when all the babbling begins. It would be wonderful to know that you could do this with all of these kinds of calls. I need a 'live' person on the line to verify the information for me. Most of these people, once you get them, are understanding about my needs. I tell them upfront, and let them know what I need. This is also a problem for me with directory assistance. I resent paying extra money to have them put the call through for me...then I still don't have the number because I didn't hear it! So have to pay again the next time if I don't get it some other way! (thank the Lord for e-mail!) While these automated services must save tons of time and \$, they are horrid for people with hearing loss. Maybe we should all inundate them with TTY messages! I just do not like using the TTY when I'm perfectly capable of using the standard phone with a real live person on the other end.

I have great difficulty distinguishing the various commands available to me and would prefer to speak to a live person if possible!!!!!!

It's a nightmare most of the time--most systems don't want you to get to a live person and do everything they can to stop you from making that choice,

I have my husband make all calls for me as I can't decipher voices on the phone. Dr. offices are especially bad because they talk quietly and have high-pitched voices. Voice mail is total confusion for me

as I can't distinguish between various numbers so don't know what number has been directed. Even when I get a live person on the phone they are very poor about talking slowly and in a deeper tone.

Just the choices to repeat menu or get to the live operator are sometimes very difficult to understand. Different businesses use different option numbers, so when you don't understand what you need to do to repeat, you end up calling all over again. The one I have most difficulty understanding is when they say to press star fir whatever. It's always said softly it seems.

I find IVR systems to be a very negative experience. Most times I cannot understand the #'s that are given to push, and/or the voice is difficult to understand and is speaking too fast.

I despise voice menu systems. Calling Sprint from my business is virtually impossible. Takes me at least twice as long to finish business.

I try to avoid the use of the telephone

Increased anxiety level. When system works, it is much better than to be kept on hold!

Negative effects because of the time involved to sort out the response and the frustration of being unable to conduct important business in a timely manner. After finally reaching a live person I sometimes apologize for not using the automated system and explain that I am hoh because I don't want anyone to think that I am mentally challenged. It is demeaning to say the least

Not being able to understand any of the options I try to get a live person on the line anyway I can. If that doesn't work I give up.

Often, simply slowly down the pace at which they reel off the choices would be extremely helpful. I also HATE it when I cannot get a live interactive operator. Most often, I simply decide never to do business with that company again! If it's a government agency, I am even more frustrated and furious!

I tried to refill a prescription by phone, and there was no live operator. I couldn't understand when the recording asked my social security number. I kept going over and over it, hanging up and starting over again. I would get a busy signal, and finally get through, only to listen to the same words I didn't understand before. My husband wasn't home. I finally mailed in the prescription, and it took two weeks to receive it. It was very demeaning.

I find it very difficult to comprehend names. Many voice mails do NOT have access to live person and you have go round and round on the voice mail menu to figure out what to or bail out.

Speaker talks much too fast, and not clearly. Understanding "numbers" very difficult so "fax #" as alternative would not be helpful. Even operators often speak too fast and not clearly enough for the hoh. Thank you

The companies have to provide voice mail by law, but don't really want to talk to us, so they make voice mail impossible to use

Voice menu takes more time.

Sometimes, it is so difficult to get the directions that I have to have someone call for me. This is embarrassing. I'm not stupid! I just don't hear well.

Definitely negative. I can't use these systems most of the time. Exception: an excellent menu for renewing prescriptions. (loud, clear, logical, not wordy).

Negatively affects me on a personal and professional level. Severely impacts my independence and ability to function up to potential

Have things accessible by alternative formats such as internet or via a TTY line. There are some menus that I can try all my tricks and listening skills with and come up empty. It is embarrassing to get someone to help me all the time and if I cannot get to a TTY I cannot rely on the relay. Even with the relay, they cannot handle most voice menus anyway.

I get easily frustrated with automated voice menus as they often have unfamiliar voices as well as the fact that frequently they whizz by way too fast and make completion of the call difficult.

The difficulty with offered options is that they all are dependent upon my understanding the voice message to start with. Perhaps shifting the voice to lower frequencies (baritone) might improve voice comprehension.

Voice menu systems take away my independence. I sometimes have to wait for a family member to make the call.

Some voice mail numbers do not include "Stay on the line for an operator" and when that option is not available, I have a problem. Providing numbers to allow different options is really no help because I find it difficult to understand the numbers (2 and 3 sound alike) and (star and four sound alike). Also the speed with which the speaker gives information is sometimes "a mile a minute" ...not easy for a hard of hearing person. And high-pitched female voices or foreign accents do not make it easy either.

All of these are very good ideas but I think the option to "repeat the last 10 seconds" or "repeat choices more loudly" would be very much appreciated. Usually, I miss a portion of something and then I have to listen to the entire thing over again to get the one piece I missed. It can be very time consuming.

Email the instructions to me, or make the whole process accessible from a website.

I cannot identify a single benefit to "voice menus". They typically speak too fast for me to understand. This morning I was working thru a voice mail system and had been passed on to three different ones-on the fourth I made the wrong choice and had to hang up and start all over again.

#1. I have hearing loss in the high range and most systems use a woman's voice that is very hard for me to understand. They also speak very softly.

Because of the time required, I tend to avoid interactive voice mail jail. I would like to do the VCO survey as I sometimes have to use that method due to my fluctuating Hearing Loss.

I'm grateful for my cochlear implant every time I encounter a voice menu system. I can use them, though I prefer a live person.

They need to slow down!!!

Well, voice menus are just downright frustrating! I can't think of any positive effects. I can think of quite a number of negative ones. One example: After painfully navigating one particularly vicious voice menu (belonging to AT&T), I finally reached my party, only to be put on hold -- and then disconnected. I had to wade all the way back through the deep multi-layered menu again just to handle what should have been a simple transaction. This problem was repeated during two or three subsequent attempts to complete my transaction. At one point, I was connected to a young woman whose heavily accented speech was simply beyond my ability to decipher (I believe she was a customer service representative). When I explained that I was hard of hearing and asked to speak with someone else, she just hung up on me. Back to the voice menu. Surely this would be sufficiently frustrating to a hearing person, but to one who's hard of hearing, each menu layer was like trying to scale a cliff with no hand holds. I am firmly convinced that such menus are deliberately intended to discourage phone calls. Therefore, whenever possible, I try not to do business with companies that use such tactics. After more than 35 years of doing business with AT&T, I have switched to another long distance carrier. AT&T has been banned from my home until they rethink their customer service policies.

Several times I thought I got the right line to talk with they had to transfer me to another line, so I have to listen to the menu again. Its not worthy to deal with again. I think CapTel will help me a lot

There are several problems I encounter. Deep male voices. Too many choices. AT&T is the worst offender. I'm grateful when I only have to pick one of three, not one of eight. And it is easier to hear when the voice is a woman who speaks in the middle ranges. These problems are encountered by hearing people, too.

This interferes with being independent in my work or accessing a person to resolve home or work issues.

I hate them. Seems like a waste of time.

I try to avoid calls to voice menu phones, or wait for help from a friend.

Voice mail is negative and very frustrating. There should be a special button to push for the hard of hearing.

Some female voices are hard to hear. The voice systems need to speak slower and clearer. Male voices are easier for me to understand - After becoming familiar w/ the voice on the phone, I usually can navigate myself through the system - but I usually am sweating so hard upon hanging up due to having to strain to hear the information on the phone.

If there are more than 3 choices I try to avoid them. Use another resource or the internet. I've used the internet to try to find phone numbers that are accessible and it's difficult to locate a TTY alternate number via internet. If the business has a large internet presence then it seems they might have a page where one could actually READ the options on their voice mail. This would be very helpful when dealing with the PHONE companies!

Since my hearing loss, I have stopped making phone calls to corporations with the menu selections... When I REALLY need to find something out, I try...If I get a menu, I get a friend to call! so that means I no longer do business with many companies.

Most are very clear, but some speak too fast to understand all speech, also some drop the voice on the last syllable

Voice menu are awful, the volume decreases they use women's voice who think it is polite to talk in almost a whisper and it is difficult to hear the menu.

The most frustrating part of VMS for me is when the company does not have an Internet presence and I am forced to go through the menu system. Often I will just miss one or two key words, and this means that I must listen to the menu repeatedly in order to figure out what is being said. I have told many people that the hardest part of having a hearing loss is having to deal with the extra amount of time required to communicate. When you are hard of hearing and you do what so many other people do -- work full-time, go to school full-time, raise a family, and maintain a household, it becomes quite frustrating to realize that you have to exert a tremendous amount of time and energy on something that, while probably mildly annoying to hearing folks, is extremely challenging to people with hearing loss. (As if just speechreading weren't exhausting enough!) Recently I spent almost 3 weeks (about 20 hours) trying to access the right option in the voice menu system of QWEST in order to hook up my cell telephone. Fortunately, in this case, I was not charged for services until the hook-up was established, but in other cases, money can be an issue. Living with a hearing loss is stressful, and while I don't blame anyone for my hearing loss or want to bemoan my status in life, I sure would appreciate having more accessible VMS available. The two things that would specifically help me most are to set up a web presence that responds in 24 hours, and to have an option to speak to a live operator. I know that many hearing people would also take advantage of this, but perhaps if an option such as "if you have a hearing loss, press #7" were included, it would decrease this potential problem. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to respond to this issue.

I can't use the voice menu system at all. They talk to fast and are not clear enough.

When a HOH person relies on speechreading primarily, listening to a menu is virtually impossible, especially if it is a unfamiliar voice and the speech is rapid.

The minute I get a voice menu I become nervous and it affects the whole transaction. When I have been able to talk to an operator it helps so much!!

Stressful and very frustrating-- A live person is absolutely necessary to communicate on the phone!!

Automated responses are probably THE most irritating phone problem.

A designated number to allow repetition of current choices again more slowly would be good (but not the WHOLE message system). In general, however, I want a live person especially in cases where I might not know which dept. is the one I will need.

I frequently use an IVR system to order my medical prescriptions over the phone, I have no choice and the most difficult thing to understand is when they try to simulate a human voice and I am asked to confirm what was said by pressing another number, very frustrating, very!

I must go to military clinics for my health and have to have someone else who can hear make my appointments for me

Overall totally frustrating

An imposition...assuming I placed the call.

I do not have access to fax but a response policy is very important. I like NYE&G emergency response. It answers your question clearly.

I find voice menu systems to be extremely frustrating. One day I spent an hour on hold after going through an IRS voice menu system, only to find out I had made the wrong menu selection.

IVR has to be one of the most frustrating things in phone usage for me. If I have the option of talking to a human, I choose that!

Very stressful. Sometimes I cannot do my job because I can't understand how to get through to the company. Offer e-mail address.

Sometimes the voice is speaking too fast. Sometimes they say press something and don't understand what number. Or don't understand the phrase they are talking about. Then need to talk slower and precise. and pause between statement would help

Why didn't you have an option at the first of this survey to ask whether we use an amplified phone? Personally, I use an amplified phone with an auxiliary amplifier. I think that is important enough to know, for the purposes of your survey. People chosen to do the narrative in the voice menu systems often have broad accents, speak too rapidly, practice "uptalk" or "downtalk" speech patterns. I cannot understand any of these people's voices. The person selected for these recordings needs to have a crystal clear voice, and be trained to speak slowly and clearly. If I have a choice of doing business with one of two companies, one with a live o operator, and one with a voice menu system, I will take the one with the operator, even if their goods or services are more expensive!

As far as I'm concerned; VMS is a disaster More often then not, I'll either hang-up in disgust, frustration or anger- OR pass the phone to the wife, with the exasperated tone: "You deal with it- I give up" Any improvement has to be better then what we have now!!!!

Speaking with a person is better. Lots of time wasted trying to figure out what menu says. Sometimes, just give up calling. Menus are so rapid I cannot understand what they want me to push. There are 15 or 16 others in our class and they all hate voice menus.

They're frustrating because often the person who records the messages speaks too fast, so I hear this: "For option blaburbilityadkjsfdo, press one, for option kaeseiemeemtykllprt, press two," etc.

If I still can't understand the choices after trying a second time and the call is important, I have someone else make the call for me, which makes me feel dependent...a feeling I dislike.

It means I don't get my business done when I want to as I have to get a hearing person to do it for me.

My ability to use the systems depends greatly on how clearly the machine voice speaks, how quickly it speaks, and how accurate the choices are. For instance, when using the State of Maryland Unemployment reporting line, applicants MUST use an interactive voice system to file their bi-weekly reports. These reports are required in order to initiate and to continue receiving unemployment benefits in the state of Maryland. There are NO provisions for filing this information in person, since all walk-in applications have been eliminated. Your only other option for filing the information is on-line. If you don't have access to the Internet, then you have to use the telephone, and the interactive voice response system to file your claims. Even though my hearing loss is moderate in my "good ear", I have to listen repeatedly to the automatic voice [i.e., push a replay option repeatedly] in order to get the "transaction number" which is generated at the end of each call. The live staff at MD Unemployment, are very untrained about dealing with phone users with hearing loss, since the person I dealt with spoke in a breathy, quiet voice at low volume, despite my repeated requests for her to speak up because of my hearing loss. This system MUST be made more accessible. Tell the human respondents to speak up, and have the IVR system slow down! Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

some times the voice is female and too loud or fast. Some times too many levels to go through.