

webcredible

presents

Voice

Your insight-driven guide
to designing for voice

May 2018



Voice. It's the Future.



Interacting with computers using voice used to be the preserve of science fiction films.

As you're reading this, hundreds of people around the world are asking their phones or voice-enabled home devices to play music, switch on lightbulbs, or suggest recipes.

But for this to progress beyond gimmicks, brands need to make sure that voice interactions are useful, appropriate and designed around real user needs

Based on the work we've done so far with our clients and our proprietary research, we'll show you the way forward to making voice part of your digital strategy.

In this guide you can read about...

Why it's worth bringing voice to your brand

The top findings from our research

- Are people engaging with voice interactions?

- Where are people engaged?

- What do they think & feel about different use cases?

How to design a successful voice experience

Voice in a few words

Why it's worth bringing
voice to your brand

People are engaging with voice interactions

Even we were surprised at the level of engagement - only a few of the people we surveyed weren't aware of voice assistants like Alexa or Apple Siri.

Out of those aware $\frac{3}{4}$ are actively using at least one voice assistant, often multiple times a day.

Voice assistants are taking over the home

Most people said they're engaged with voice interactions in the comfort of their own home.

Voice assistants are often found in living rooms, kitchens and bedrooms and many people have more than one, opening the door to many interesting use cases.

People are open to new use cases for voice interactions

Obvious & simple use cases such as controlling music playback or checking the weather have already achieved a lot of traction.

Whilst mindful of privacy & security concerns, people are still open to future use cases around more complex domains, including learning, health and finance.

How do I start?

To succeed in this exciting space, it's important to go back to user-centred principles.

People will be interacting with your brand for a reason – they'll have a goal they need to achieve. This could be booking or buying something, entertaining themselves or finding information.

Voice will likely be just one of a number of ways in which users can complete their goal - competing with using your website or app, making a call or visiting you in person.

They'll only choose voice if it's either easier for them than other channels or allows them to do something they couldn't do before.

Informed by our work with clients, and further supported by our research, we've created:

1. Guidelines to help you scope out which use cases might be suitable for voice
2. A set of voice Design Principles

These will help guide the design of voice interfaces but, as always, the way to succeed is to design the product around real user needs and test and iterate with them throughout.

If an app doesn't help them achieve a goal, solve a problem, or provide a moment of delight, it may quickly become an unused gimmick.

How do I put voice to good use?

Regardless of the importance to your business, not all use cases will be equally suited to voice.

Use the following checklist to help you decide:

- Can a voice interaction be faster than taking out your phone or laptop?
- Is it easier than tapping, typing or going through multiple steps?
- Is there a potential for fun, delight or expressing your brand's personality?
- Is it conducive to multi-tasking, where people might not give the task 100% of their attention?
- Is it a use case that will be initiated by customers, instead of you reaching out to them?
- Is it appropriate for voice and for a shared home device? Will people feel comfortable talking aloud about it?
- Does it have a name that people can remember (and you can promote)?
- Is interaction frequent enough to warrant people installing something on their voice device?
- Is your content structured and accessible through an API?

People are trying out voice interactions

Webcredible research findings

The majority has interacted with voice technologies

The majority of UK consumers are using their voice to interact with their smartphone and home devices.

Regular interaction is much higher for home devices like Amazon Echo and Google Home than mobile voice assistants such as Apple Siri and Google Now.

99%

are aware of voice Assistants like Alexa or Apple Siri

73%

have used voice assistants on their mobile phones or at home

64%

of Amazon Alexa or Google Home owners, interact with them more than 3 times per day

Voice is a growing channel, providing more opportunities for brands to interact, engage and deliver wow moments to their customers

More people have tried out voice interactions on their mobile devices

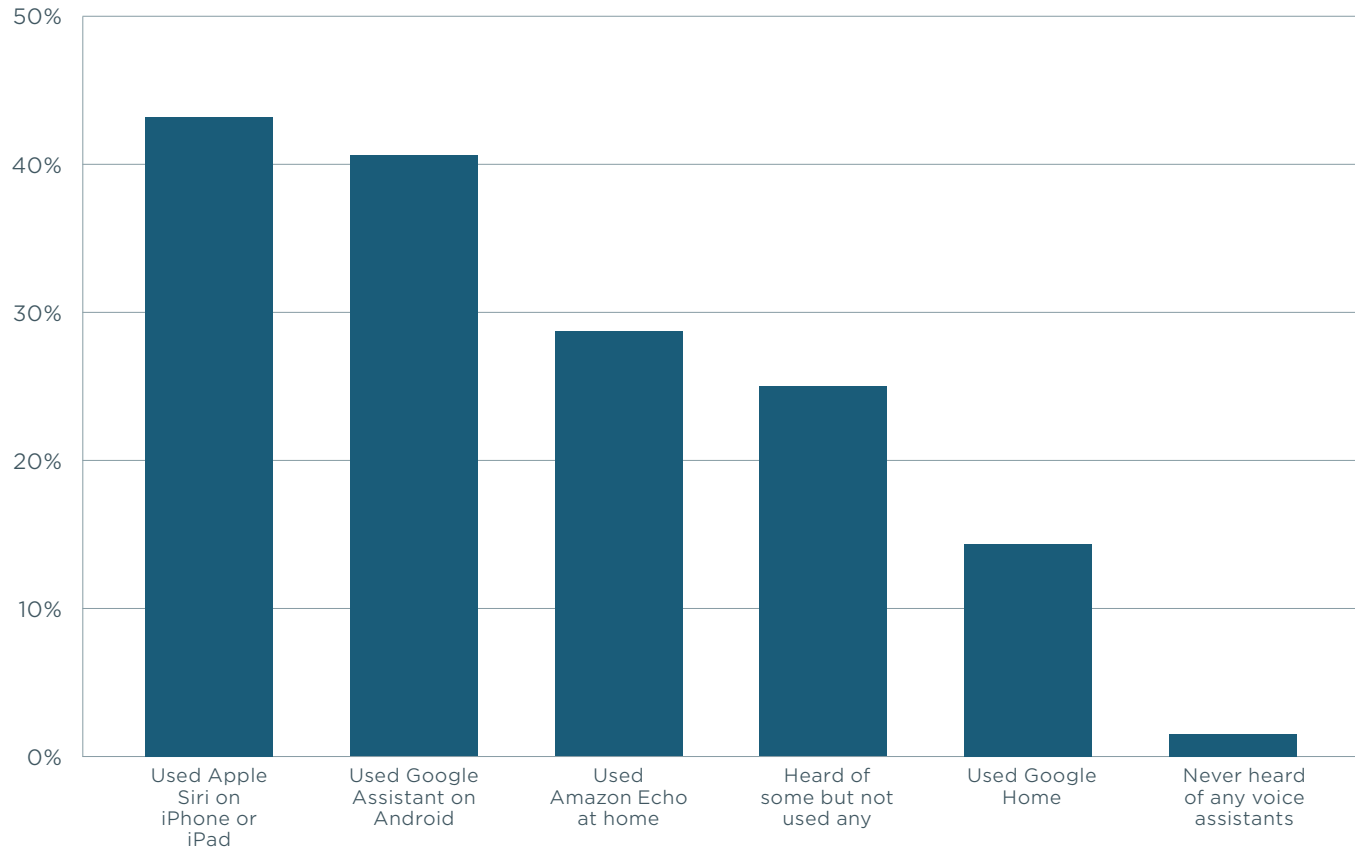
More people have used mobile voice assistants (such as Apple Siri or Google Assistant) than home voice assistant devices such as Amazon Alexa and Google Home, albeit less frequently.

This isn't unexpected given that most smartphones and tablets come with a voice assistant built in. Voice-enabled devices for the home are still moving from early adopters into mainstream.

However, familiarity with mobile voice assistants means that people won't be starting from scratch when it comes to interacting with voice-enabled devices for the home.

We also found that Alexa-enabled devices are more popular than Google Home. Again, this is to be expected given Amazon released Alexa a couple of years ahead of Google Home and has executed extensive advertising campaigns to support its continued growth of market share.

Awareness and usage of voice assistants



Regular voice-enabled interactions at home

Although many people own a mobile device with a voice assistant, voice is more frequently used at home.

This seems to be because:

- there are plenty of apps for early adopters to experiment with on home devices, whereas assistants like Apple Siri still have a limited repertoire
- people are less concerned about using voice in a private space

It seems that mobile voice assistants are struggling to gain traction even though most users have more widespread access and have tried them. This isn't to say there isn't opportunity for growth in that area, but a lot of this depends on manufacturers like Apple opening up more possibilities for voice "apps".

31%

of home voice assistant owners interact with them 5+ times per day. This compares to 7% with mobile voice assistants

“I would like Apple Siri to be able to book tickets for events for me, sport, cinema”

Overall we see that the biggest opportunity for brands is to develop Alexa Skills and Google Actions for use in the home.

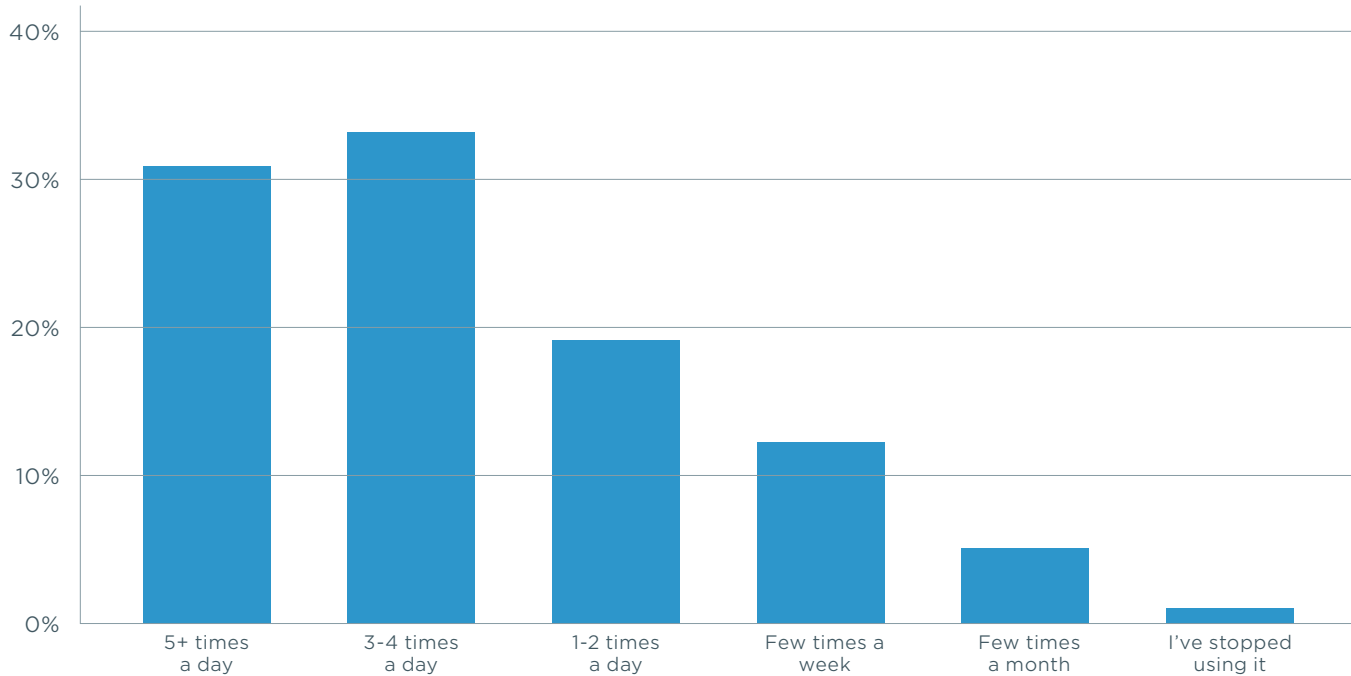
Users have actively chosen to buy their device, they're engaged and being in the comfort (and privacy) of their own home is an important motivation in interacting with voice assistants.

9%

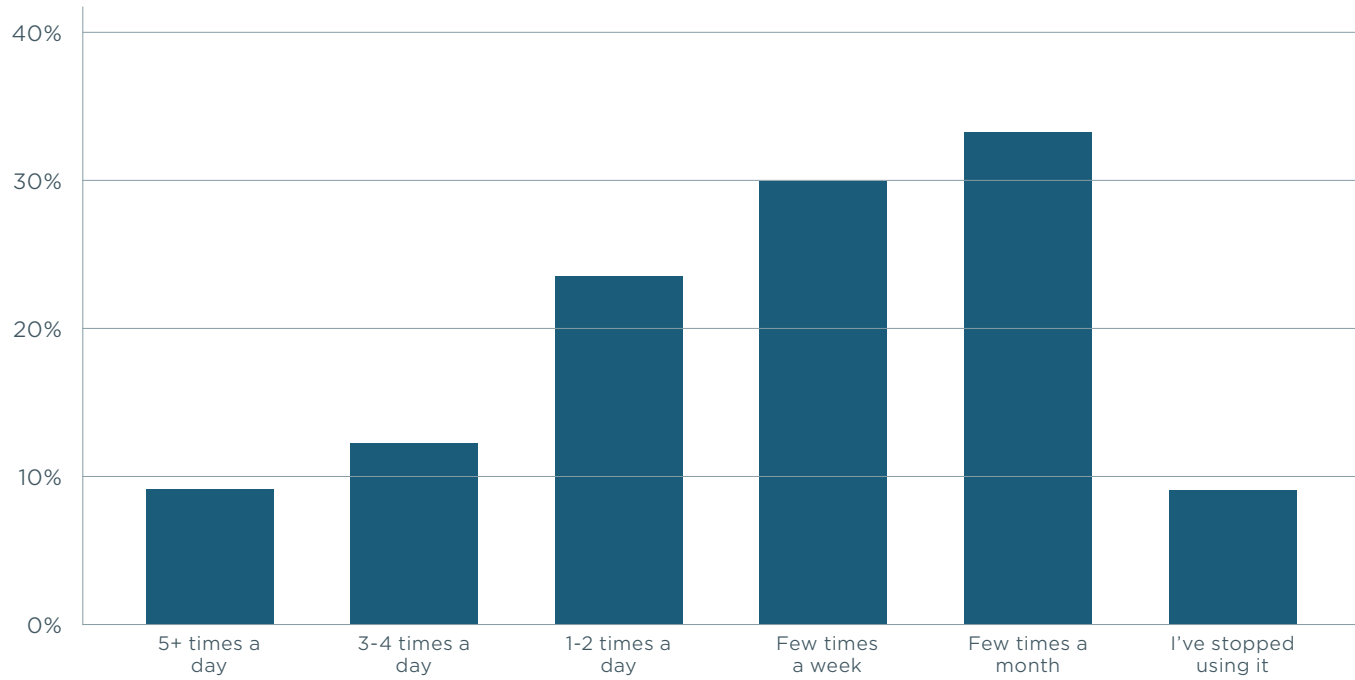
of people who've tried mobile voice assistants have stopped using them compared to 1% of home voice assistant users

We're interacting with our home voice assistants more frequently than with the mobile ones

How often do you speak to Alexa or Google Home?



How often do you use Apple Siri or Google Assistant on your phone?



Who is interacting with voice and where?

Webcredible research findings

Families are leading the charge with voice at home

People are much more likely to interact with devices using voice at home than in public environments, such as when at work or travelling.

Users of all ages are embracing voice interactions and there's higher than average ownership of home voice assistants amongst families.

70%

use their home voice device in the living room

5%

use their home voice device in the bathroom

52%

of those with home voice devices are families

Think about apps that lend themselves to the home environment and be sensitive to privacy if used in more public spaces.

Even mobile voice assistants are used more often at home than out and about

People prefer to use mobile voice assistants in more private environments, most commonly at home on their own (88%) or at home with others (44%).

Interaction in environments like the workplace were much less likely (9%), meaning it may be more of a challenge to convince people to use voice apps in the B2B space.

It's particularly interesting that in situations where hands-free interaction would be a benefit, such as walking, cycling, driving or exercising, the use of mobile voice assistants was less common despite the obvious benefit!

Consider people's needs and goals when on the move – is there a way of better supporting these through voice?

In which of the following situations do you use Apple Siri or Google Assistant?

88%

When I'm at home on my own

44%

When I'm at home with others

27%

While walking

17%

While cycling or driving

9%

While I'm at work

6%

While exercising

3%

Elsewhere

Home voice assistants are used throughout the house

The living room is the most common place in the home for people to have their home voice devices. This is expected given most of these devices double up as smart speakers.

However, it is interesting to see that users have their devices all over the house, from the kitchen to the bedroom and even the bathroom.

This opens up more opportunity to think about how users could interact with your brand in different rooms, in different situations. Don't just assume the device is confined to the obvious places!

**Think of the context of use!
For example, consider ideas for use in different rooms such as setting reminders before sleep.**

Where in your home have you installed your voice assistant device?

If you have multiple devices, select all rooms that apply.



70%

Living room



38%

Kitchen



36%

Bedroom

12%

Hallway

10%

Study

7%

Spare room

4%

Bathroom

2%

Elsewhere

Families are leading adopters of home voice assistants

Those ‘living with partners and kids’ are more likely to own and use home voice assistants than those living alone or with a partner.

This makes a lot of sense when you consider some of the more common contexts of use, such as playing music and asking questions.

Voice also lends itself to busy lifestyles providing information quickly, keeping you on track, and allowing you to add olive oil to that shopping list without having to stop cooking!

Games are some of the most popular Skills for Alexa devices. Consider if your brand can use voice as a playful element for family users.

I'd like to...
“dictate emails to be written and sent. [And for it to] manage my diary”

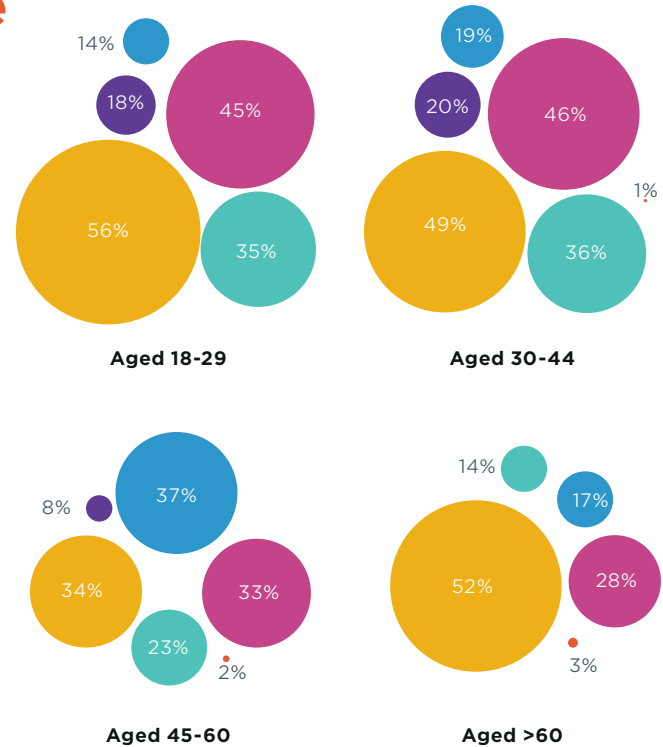
52%

with an Alexa or Google Home device live with their partner and children

From young to old, we are embracing Voice

There's take-up across most ages of one or more voice devices. In fact, we've seen that voice interactions can be less intimidating for people in older age groups who haven't yet got fully familiar with screen-based interfaces, or where age-related disabilities hinder the use of a screen and pointing device.

- I have an Amazon Alexa-enabled device (e.g. Amazon Echo or Echo Dot) and use it at home
- I have an Android phone or tablet and have used Google Assistant
- I heard of some of the above technologies but have never used them
- I've never heard of any of the above
- I have a Google Home device and use it at home
- I have an iPhone or iPad and have used Apple Siri



Spotlight: Amazon Alexa & Ageing

Since Amazon launched Alexa in late 2014, it has amassed a surprisingly high following amongst aged people and their carers.

Throughout 2017, the Front Porch Center for Innovation and Wellbeing in the US ran a pilot programme distributing Amazon Echo devices to residents of a retirement community.

75% of residents used their devices at least once a day, and 60% said they felt more connected to family, friends and their community since starting the pilot. All agreed that it “made their life easier” and “would recommend it to a friend”.

“To look at it from a human standpoint, what do we use to get messages across, to communicate?—it’s your voice!”

Gary, 95 years old

“It has afforded me something that I have lost. Memory. I can ask Alexa anything and I get the answer instantly”

**Rick, 65 years old
diagnosed with
Early Onset
Alzheimer’s**



Age UK, a leading charity helping people love later life, have already made their popular radio station available to stream through Alexa, and we’re helping them explore further use cases around voice interactions.

Voice interactions are used for a diverse set of use cases

Webcredible research findings

What are people using voice for?

Core use cases such as controlling music playback, checking the weather and asking questions enjoy high adoption across both home and mobile voice assistants.

Alongside that, there's a diversity of up-and-coming use cases, including smart home and e-commerce.

64%

use mobile voice assistants to ask ad-hoc general questions

82%

use their home voice assistant to request their favourite music tracks

35%

are using voice to control their Smart Home setup

With core use cases already enjoying such high adoption, consider what other untapped scenarios there are to inspire your voice interactions. Don't just build another way to ask for the weather!

A variety of popular tasks across all voice assistants

Alexa / Google Home



Playing music	82%
Checking the weather	62%
Asking about general facts/trivia	54%
Adding things to a shopping list	37%
Getting the latest news	35%
Smart home commands	35%
Communicating with others	30%
Checking transport information	25%
Ordering takeaway food	25%
Buying things	23%
Playing a game	21%
Other	2%

Apple Siri / Google Assistant



Asking about general facts/trivia	64%
Checking the weather	48%
Playing music	39%
Getting directions	35%
Communicating with others	30%
Adding things to a list	12%
Smart home commands	7%
Making payments/sending money	7%
Other	5%

Although more complex tasks such as those involving purchasing were much less common, this will likely change as both brands and technology providers iterate and offer new solutions.

For example, Virgin Trains has just become the first travel company in the world to sell tickets through Alexa using Amazon Pay, which uses saved payment information from the customer's Amazon account to speed up the purchasing flow.

The biggest challenge for brands is finding a use for voice that facilitates an easier journey than using other channels and therefore, serves a real need.

A second challenge is differentiating your app from what native services like Google Assistant and Alexa already offer, so that it's truly unique for the user.

A blend of emotional & functional needs

Since the adoption of voice technology has only recently accelerated, many people are still using it because “it’s fun”. The obvious danger here is that the novelty wears off and usage of voice isn’t sustained.

Voice can offer conversational and fun interactions but equally, where appropriate should be serious, supportive and empathetic.

There is opportunity to provide advice, health support and other services based on conversations and supported by Artificial Intelligence.

In our research alone, **21%** of those with home voice devices said that voice interactions stopped them feeling lonely and as the technology becomes even more advanced, these more natural conversations are likely to increase.

“I’d like my Amazon Alexa to counsel me when I am upset”

Key benefits are fun, speed and ease of use

Alexa / Google Home



It's a fun experience	65%
It's easier to speak than type	62%
I can use it hands-free	57%
It's faster than using another device	54%
I don't have to carry another device	27%
It stops me from feeling lonely	21%
I don't get any benefits	4%
Other	1%

Apple Siri / Google Assistant



It's easier to speak than type	60%
I can use it hands-free	55%
It's a fun experience	40%
I don't get any benefits	7%
It stops me from feeling lonely	5%
Other	1%

Some people still don't see the point

Almost a quarter of respondents haven't used any voice assistants, even though they're aware of them.

The top reason cited was the lack of interesting use cases that people could identify with.

Some people also mentioned the cost of additional voice-enabled devices, as well as disliking speaking to a device, but these reasons were far behind the top one.

50%

of non-users can't see how voice assistants would be useful in their lives

“It's no faster than typing into Google”

Your app should have a tangible user benefit, one that will help overcome any barriers to adoption

Privacy is a key concern

Even though many people have tried voice interactions at home, privacy still is a big concern. Interestingly, these worries are higher for home devices like Amazon Alexa or Google Home, than for Apple Siri or Google Assistant on mobile. Some people are worried their conversations are being recorded or that 'Alexa is always listening'.

You should always look at these concerns through the lens of your own use case.

31%

of home voice assistant users are worried their conversations are constantly being recorded

Will your voice app ask for confidential information, or things that people don't want to say out aloud?

Other frustrations and barriers to use centre around the accuracy of speech recognition, and a few people simply thinking that "it feels stupid talking to a device".

"I would like to check my financial balances but do not trust it enough at the moment."

Exploring new areas for voice

Webcredible research findings

Learning, health & finance

As part of our research, we chose to explore use cases in 3 areas currently under-served by voice interactions, both on mobile and home devices. These were:

- **Learning**
- **Health**
- **Finance**

We were curious to understand how users felt about using voice interactions in complex domains that go beyond getting answers, playing music and simple appliance commands.

Each of these involves exchanging more personal data, and an increasingly higher level of risk in case something goes wrong.

However, people's responses demonstrated that few areas are off-limits for voice, and that there is a willingness to try novel experiences in a variety of domains.

Learning

Out of all the use cases we explored, people were most open to using voice interactions to learn and test their knowledge.

This doesn't have to just be about learning general skills, it can also be about educating users around your sector, your products or any subject where there may be a gap in their knowledge.

For younger generations (under 21), voice interactions are the norm. It doesn't feel strange or alien, and they have no reason not to trust it as a channel. It is worth exploring further how your brand could engage with this audience, and therefore their parents, through voice.

“I would like for it to tutor my children on certain subjects and record their progress and areas of improvement”

70%

of home voice assistant users were open to learning a new skill through voice

84%

of mobile voice assistant users were open to learning a new skill through voice

Health

Given the potential privacy concerns, people were more open than we expected to using voice interactions for general health advice, as well as accessing more personalised health services.

Some of the scenarios that people could imagine for their voice assistants include:

- Acting as a “life coach”
- Playing the role of a “companion”
- Prompting people to exercise and follow a healthy diet

Some are already getting health advice through voice interactions (34% of home voice assistant users) and there is clear appetite to use it more.

Because people tend to listen to health advice from other people, voice interactions feel like a natural extension to that and are definitely worth exploring.

“Make it give advice on health and prompts when to exercise, sleep whatnot”

63%

of home voice assistant users were open to getting personalised health advice through their device.

Finance is a sensitive area




Appetite for voice interactions around more personal financial matters was lower than for learning and health. But there is potential to improve this.

Almost half remain to be convinced that it would be a good idea to ask a voice-activated device to read out their bank balance.

Those living alone were more open to trying this, showing that privacy is a key concern around finance.

Security is another concern likely to crop up in such scenarios, but with major banks already trying out voice-based authentication, it's only a matter of time until such technology is built into voice assistants and people are comfortable with using it.

Imagine you had the chance to speak to a voice assistant device to achieve the following tasks...

-  I've already done this using voice
-  I don't think this is a good idea
-  I'd be open to trying this



Alexa /
Google Home



Apple Siri /
Google Assistant

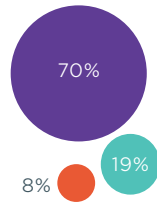
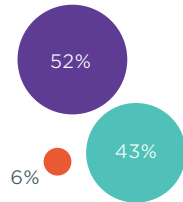


Alexa /
Google Home

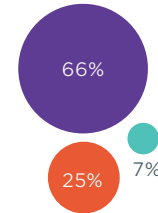
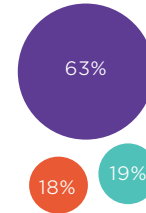


Apple Siri /
Google Assistant

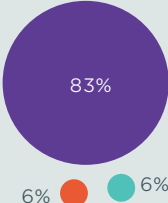
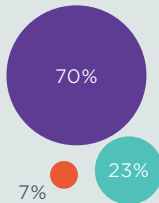
Testing my
knowledge
(e.g. answering
a quiz)



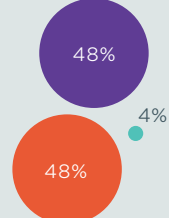
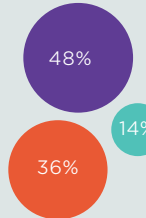
Using a
personalised
health service
(e.g. how to
sleep better)



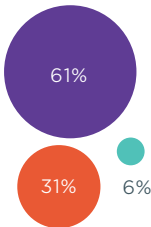
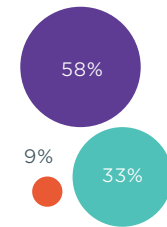
Learning a new
skill (e.g. a new
language)



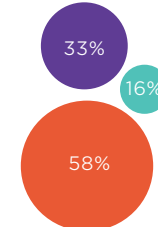
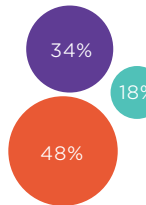
Accessing
financial advice
(e.g. where
to invest your
money)



Accessing
health
information
(e.g. is it
healthy to
eat bananas)



Accessing
financial
information
(e.g. your bank
balance)



How you can design for voice

Insight-informed guidelines

Creating your own voice enabled app

As with the design of any successful product, you should start with understanding both business and user goals and challenges, which will form the basis for your design.

Based on our research, and our ongoing work with clients to design voice apps, we've developed a set of principles for designing for voice.

Use them to guide the design of voice interactions, but always complement them with additional research with your target audiences to establish their specific attitudes and behaviours when it comes to voice.

Voice Design Principles

↓

Make it more efficient than using other channels

↓

Make it sound natural (not like a phone menu)

↓

Give it some personality and find the right tone of voice

↓

Design for the worst case

↓

Not everything has to be done through voice

Make it more efficient than using another channel

When thinking of creating a voice app, consider whether it can offer functionality that is quicker and easier to do through voice than any of your other channels.

If it isn't, your idea probably isn't that strong and people won't adapt to the use.

Think of tasks that are well-suited to voice interactions, such as retrieving information quickly or facilitating an immediate action.

Many of these tasks can also be done quickly enough on a phone or a laptop, but the process of picking up a device, finding an app or website adds a lot of time on top of executing the actual task.

On the other hand, voice assistants are always on and ready to respond.

“Alexa, ask Ocado to add onions to my order” is much quicker than:

1. Picking up a phone
2. Unlocking it
3. Finding and opening the Ocado app
4. Typing “Onions”
5. Tapping “Add to order”

Make it sound natural (not like a phone menu)

People have had enough bad experiences with robotic-sounding menus when they ring up contact centres, and you certainly don't want your brand to feel like that.

When you have a scenario for a voice interaction, don't just write it down. Instead, create a first "prototype" of your voice app by reading it out loud, and even acting it out in pairs (with one of you playing the role of a voice assistant).

Look out for awkward moments and things that feel strange to say aloud. If your way of saying something doesn't sound natural in a conversation between two humans, it probably isn't right for your voice app either.

Human conversation sounds natural because it contains a lot of variety - there are many ways to say the same thing.

If you program your voice app to generate a variety of responses, it will also sound more like a human and less like a robot.

Give it some personality and find the right tone of voice

At the moment many people are interacting with voice assistants because they're novel and "fun".

It's fine to consider ideas that will make your app more fun, playful and memorable. This will increase the chance of people talking about your brand with others, especially if brand awareness is an objective of your voice app.

Ultimately, however, your app must exist to serve a user need and should adapt its tone of voice as appropriate.

For example, while researching to inform the design of the Virgin Trains Skill we established two key findings relating to the tone of voice:

1. People like conversational banter when their train is on time and all is good with their travel plans
2. People want to get more empathy and support when their train is late or cancelled.

Voice apps and the associated tone of voice should mirror real life situations in order to provide the best user experience.

Design for the worst case

As you make your brand feel more ‘human’ through voice interactions, people will also have higher expectations about its capabilities. So it’s even more important to consider what happens when things go wrong, as well as when they go right.

Many of the use cases for voice look deceptively simple when considering the best case: the user makes a request, voice assistant answers any follow-up questions and gets to a successful conclusion.

But there’s a lot that can go wrong. The user’s voice may not be recognised correctly (a common frustration amongst the people who answered our survey). People may get distracted in the midst of a conversation. Back-end systems might fail and return no data.

Helping people recover from such situations gracefully will truly set your voice app apart from others.

Not everything has to be done through voice

We've heard from a few of our clients that they'd like to get started with voice interactions but their use cases are just "too complex for voice". This needn't be a blocker.

Your first voice app doesn't need to cover all stages of your customer journey. Instead, map out how voice experiences can be part of a larger journey that can start or finish on other channels or devices.

For example, a long sign up process may be tedious and confusing when done through voice, but if part of the journey is done online then a voice experience can take over where appropriate.

You should take advantage of account features like Amazon Pay, which now lets voice assistant users use their saved payment information instead of having to say it aloud. Some voice assistants also come with screens, which can be used to display additional information.



Our unique voice design sprint

Our voice design sprints aim to deliver a tested proof of concept for a voice app that achieves on business goals and is based on user needs. Our week of rapid ideation, design and testing includes:

Day 1 - Understand

We'll establish:

- What are your top customer enquiries?
- What is the business vision?
- What data, APIs and technology do we need to consider?



Day 2 - Sketch

We'll explore ideas through:

- Designing scripts for conversations
- Role-playing between team members to see what each concept feels and sounds like

Day 3 - Prioritise and storyboard

We'll work with you to:

- Prioritise the ideas through our proven framework
- Start to flesh out a specific journey in detail



Day 4 - Prototype

We'll start to create something tangible, using prototyping tools to simulate a voice app for Amazon Alexa or Google Home



Day 5 - Test

We'll test the prototype app with a few of your current or potential customers in our user research facilities, make changes and give you actionable next steps

Get in touch!

If you are embarking on the design of a voice app or even just thinking about your voice strategy, we'd love to hear from you!

We can help you to explore ideas, conduct research with your customers around their attitudes and behaviours to voice or to rapidly design a proof-of-concept.

hello@webcredible.com

0207 423 6320

webcredible.com/voice-design-sprint

Appendix

About our research

Why and how we ran this research

There's little research around the use of voice assistants in the UK, and much of it is biased towards promoting a particular brand or the industry as a whole. As an impartial, insights-based advisor to our clients we wanted to dig a bit deeper.

In February 2018, we carried out a survey of 524 UK adults across the UK, conducted online through the SurveyMonkey panel.

The survey questions reflected our interests in finding out:

1. Whether voice presents a serious market opportunity
2. The differences between the usage of voice assistants both inside and outside the home
3. What motivates people to use voice interactions vs. other channels
4. The kind of tasks that are more popular through voice
5. Where opportunities for innovation lie



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transform and succeed in a
digital world since 2003

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