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???Raika Sarkett



The more we use voice assistants and the smarter they get, the more we will see screens as frustrating. It’s a natural part of innovation and the evolution of tech. What seems novel at one point, later seems cumbersome.

Getting the news is an example of this. We’ve used a range of methods to stay up to date with the news. From the television to apps to physical papers, each method has unique benefits and downsides. Television allows you to multi-task and apps allow you to get the news when it best suits you. Voice enables both of these benefits.

Here’s the catch. While screens are foreign to us, conversation is not. And that means people have a much lower tolerance for a bad voice experience.

So how do we make voice experiences lovable?

In my opinion, the reason why most voice experiences are not lovable is that they don’t feel like good conversations yet. We’ve all experienced good and bad conversations. And those good, lovable conversations have a few things I think we need to pay more attention to when designing voice experiences.

First, a lovable conversation is dynamic and personal. It adapts to body language cues whether

that’s head nods of agreement or confused facial expressions. They aren’t rigid. And they show courtesy, making sure the respective party feels heard and the conversation is not dragging on.

We can translate all these lovable aspects to our voice experiences. This list is by no means complete but here are a couple I want to highlight:

Lovable voice experiences:

1. **Feel dynamic and personal** by using dynamic entities for customized interactions *(i.e. using someone’s name or a previous answer to a question to personalize the script)*
2. **Use sound.** Sound is a big one for lovability. Whether it’s a sound effect to cue a certain behavior or using sound to provide the experiential component in which we can add emotion with music or voice actors. We can add lovability without interfering with the functionality or utility of the experience through sound
3. **Are interactive and engaging** instead of a one-sided conversation. Allowing the user to decide when and where they want more information we can build a relationship
4. **Have built checks into the conversation**, asking for validation that the assistant is on the right track
5. **Show courtesy by avoiding circular experiences** — on the business side of things, we want the user to stay in the skill for as long as possible but there’s a point in every conversation when everyone knows it’s time to wrap it up. Voice assistants need to end things on a good note and in a succinct fashion.

Remember to go beyond the viable when designing voice experiences. Build something that people actually want and love.

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