

SoundHound Inc.

# How to Launch a Better Voice Assistant

A guide to overcoming the top challenges of voice AI adoption



# Why is Voice AI Mission Critical?

Brands that haven't already put a voice-first strategy in motion risk being left behind.

# 46%

of U.S. adults say they use some type of voice technology to interact with their devices.

- Pew Research

# 100M

number of smartphone users expected to be using voice assistants in 2020.

- eMarketer



# 25%

of all customer service and support operations will use some version of voice-recognition technology by 2020.

- Gartner

# \$31B

Expected value of global voice recognition market by 2025.

- MarketWatch

# Chapter 1: The Mission

## Finding Your Brand's Voice



# The first obstacle to making voice a reality: Creating a unique and compelling brand voice



- Document your brand imperatives
- Understand your audience and context
- Conceive voice as an extension of your brand
- Control the voice experience
- Personalize experiences
- Get marketing on board

- Design voice interfaces in isolation
- Outsource your customer relationships
- Neglect cultural norms
- Skip research and focus groups
- Include every query and every function
- Forget to educate your users

Do

Don't

# Exploring the challenges of extending your brand through voice

Knowing your audience and context is critical to conceptualizing your voice assistant.

Beyond simple translations, companies must design voice assistants that respond to users in their native tongues and in ways appropriate for their cultural norms, word usage, terminologies, and accents.

“Sound has a profound effect on the human brain. It can conjure up memories, stimulate feelings, and identify people, things, and places—the sound environment you create should be designed carefully and purposefully.”


**Kane Simms**  
Co-founder & CEO  
[VUX World](#)



# Prepare to make first contact

Use data to further refine responses based on actual behavior and continue to iterate.

When discussing the customer experience through voice, be sure to include details about how your voice interface will address the following:



The environment in which the product is likely to be used

The most common use cases



Adaptation to individual users

Impact on customer experiences

Likely user flows

## Get marketing on board

If your marketing department isn't already part of your voice AI team, here are some compelling statistics from [Salesforce](#) to help get them on board:

High-performing companies are three times more likely to be using voice technology than underperformers.

32% of marketing organizations are already using voice-activated personal assistants to support their customer experience. This is an increase of 126% in a single year.

54% of high-performing marketers lead customer experience.

# Advice from the experts



"Think of voice as a new opportunity to extend everything that defines the brand...in a medium that is audio-oriented. In a way, brands can think of voice as the manifestation of the brand coming to life."

**Dave Kemp,**  
Creator & Publisher,  
[FuturEar](#)



"When you're first starting out, don't forget to tap into your existing sources for training data. Customer service chat logs or IVR transcripts are great places to look for utterances."

**Dennis Yang,**  
CEO & CPO,  
[Dashbot](#)



"Voice is the fastest growing platform since the smartphone, but more important than that, voice will be the most disruptive UI over the next few years."

**Michael Hoesten,**  
Director of Client Engagement,  
[Skilled Creative](#)



"Voice should not live on an island. Any sophisticated voice program should sync with your existing omni-channel marketing efforts."

**Brandon Kaplan,**  
Founder & CEO,  
[Skilled Creative](#)



Chapter 2: The Launch

# Making Your Voice Assistant Discoverable



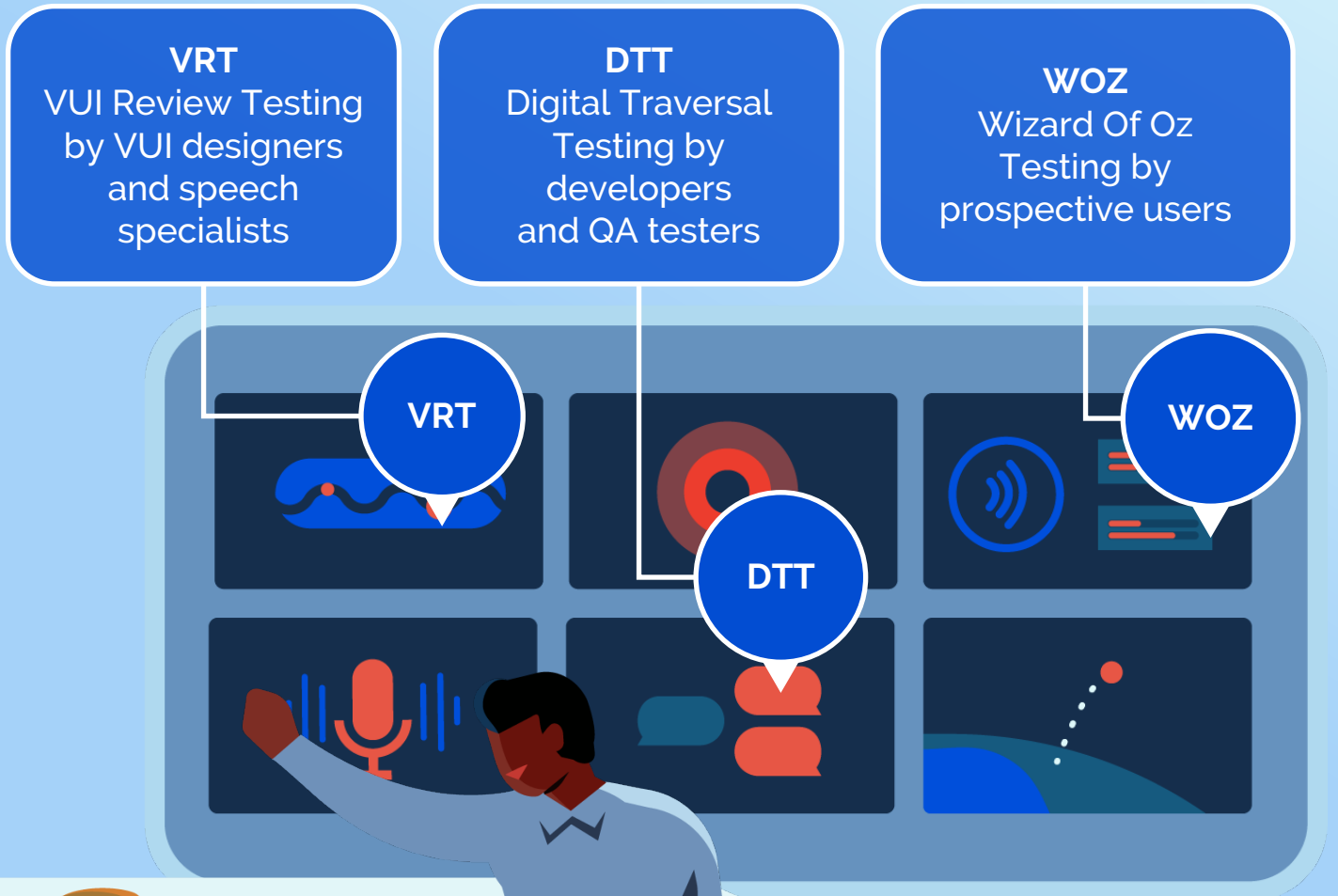
## Pre-launch data

Before the countdown begins, conduct well-designed tests internally with developers, designers, and speech specialists.

Focus groups, usability studies, user surveys, and interviews are viable avenues for understanding your users, use cases, and user intents.

Don't miss the opportunity to put your voice prototype in front of real people in the user's environment.

A robust variety of testing methods will include:



## Keep to a well-defined flight plan

Your mission is to delight your customers with a product that delivers on its promise to improve their experiences.

Begin by answering their most likely queries in the most responsive and accurate way possible.

Then, iterate, iterate, iterate based on consumer use cases and data.

“Remember that users have chosen voice to get to the point, not be dragged through menus, drop downs, and filters of a website. Design with a conversation in mind, not a menu system. Make it easy for a user to get to what they want quickly through structuring suggestions for them rather than asking them to question every detail.”

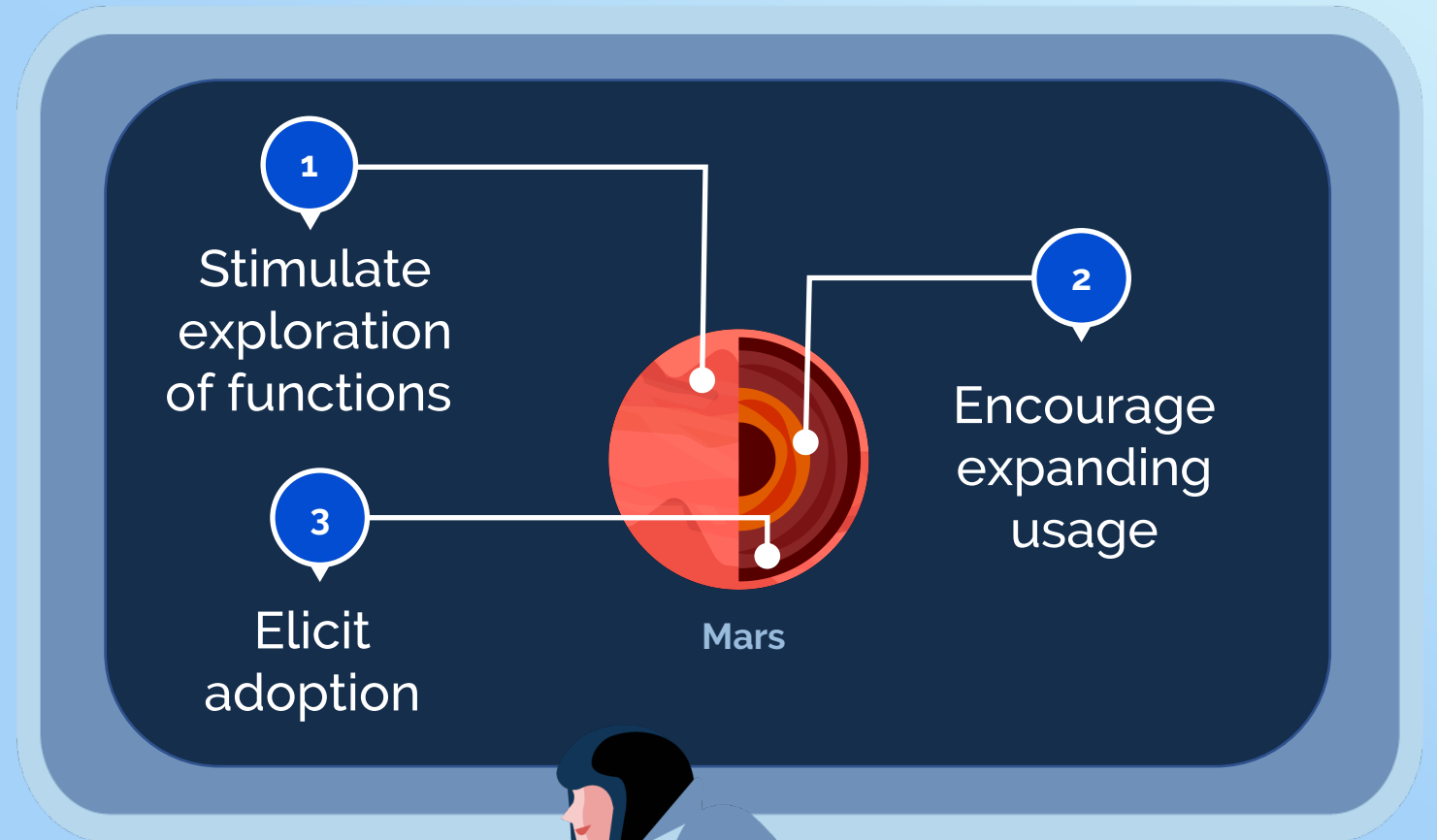
**James Poulter,**  
CEO of Vixen Labs



## First encounters of the user kind

Simply integrating a voice interface into your product doesn't ensure better user experiences, and it shouldn't be assumed that your audiences are aware of its existence.

Your audiences' first encounters with your voice assistant should meet these stated goals:



## During flight: Keep making repairs

Launching an embedded voice assistant into your product isn't a one and done project. A voice-first strategy requires ongoing iterations based on how your customers are using your product or device.

Keep interactions low in errors and high in engagement by monitoring the following data:

**Errors and null statements:**  
Where failures occur

**Sentiment analysis:**  
Language, pitch & tone

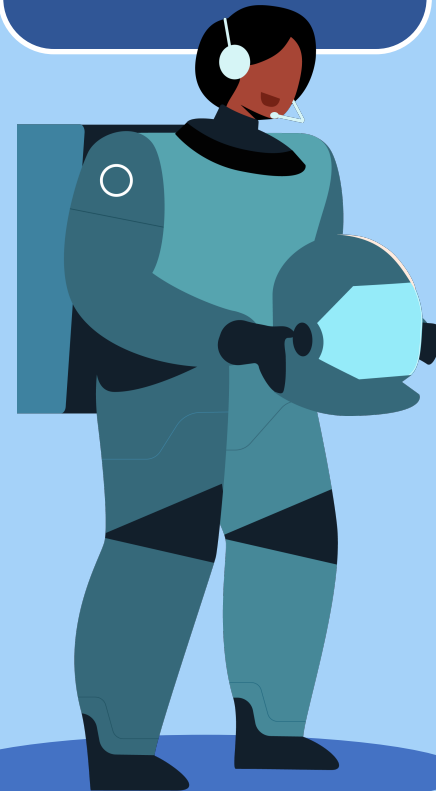
**Top intents:**  
"Find me a restaurant"

**Parameters:**  
"Within 5 miles serving Chinese"

**Frequency of use:**  
Areas of additional user education

**Length of sessions:**  
Depth of user engagement

**Pathing:**  
The steps of the conversation & actions afterward



# In-flight advice



“A good voice experience should be like the best dinner party guest you’ve ever had. It should show up on time, with a gift in hand and a polite compliment. It should know how to stay engaged, have an interesting story to tell, and know when it’s time to leave before you have to ask.”

**James Poulter,**  
CEO, Vixen Labs



“It’s important to use any data you collect from voice in tandem with other data sources to achieve a more holistic picture of engagement.”

**Hannah Paxton,**  
Strategy Analyst,  
RAIN



“High user churn is a problem for voice applications. To improve retention, design voice apps that educate users on how to get the most out of them from day one, and let them personalise the experience.”

**Carl Robinson,**  
Host, Voice of Tech Podcast

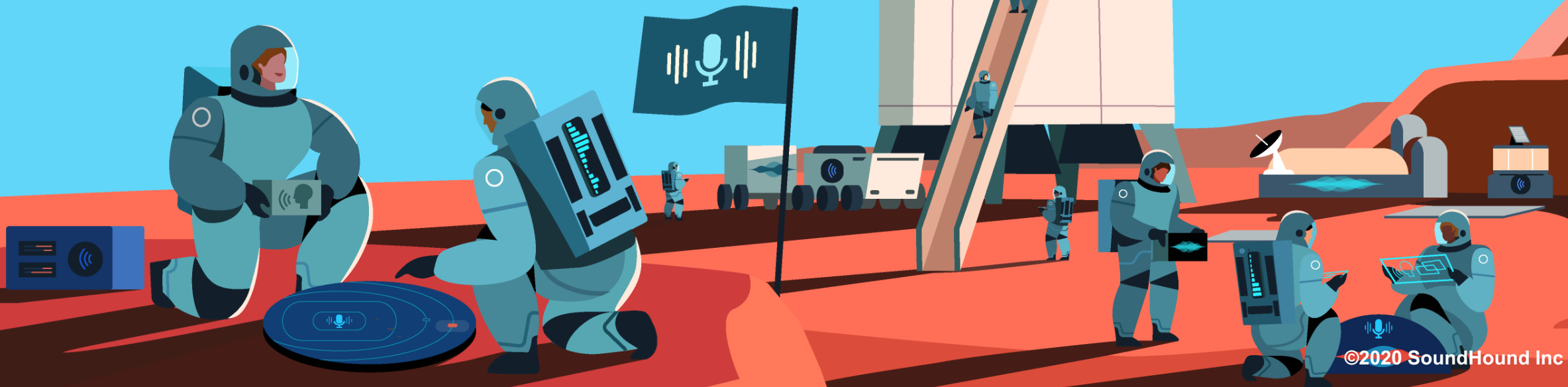


“Deploying a voice assistant in your product or device, without the ability to own your data, is akin to launching a rocket without a guidance system.”

**Karen Scates,**  
Senior Content Marketing Manager,  
SoundHound Inc

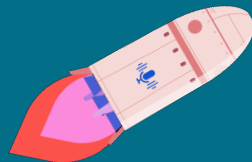
Chapter 3: The Landing

# Monetizing Your Investment in Voice

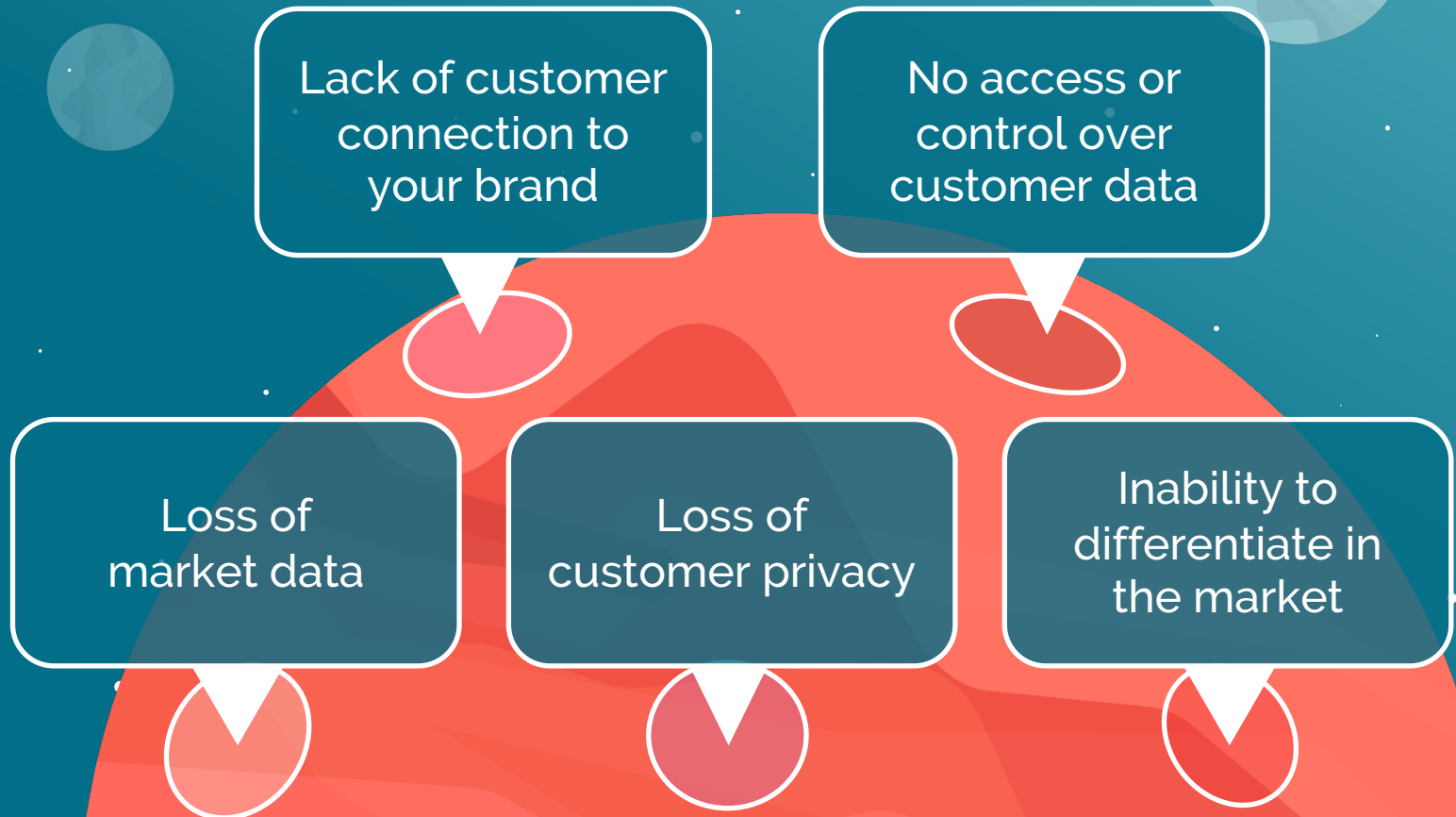


# Identify your landing spot

One of the greatest challenges of landing a voice-first strategy is deciding whether to design and implement a custom voice assistant or install a third-party application, such as Google or Alexa.



Adopting a strictly third-party solution can be costly. Unseen costs of not owning your voice assistant include:





# Be the captain of your own ship

Future-proof your products and your brand with voice experiences that offer personalization, greater convenience, better service, and opportunities for future monetization.

The shift toward relevancy has already begun:



22%

of the businesses surveyed have launched a voice app



44%

of the businesses surveyed are planning to do so in 2019



71%

strongly agree that it can improve user experiences and engagement

## Sample collection: Ongoing data collection

Once you've landed in this new world of voice AI, you'll want to study the landscape and get to know the inhabitants, understand their motivations, and record their reactions to your presence.

If you've implemented your own customized voice assistant, you'll have direct access to information that will help you to improve customer experiences, inform product development, and create brand evangelists.

Before you begin systematic data collection, ask yourselves and company stakeholders these questions:

What data will you collect?

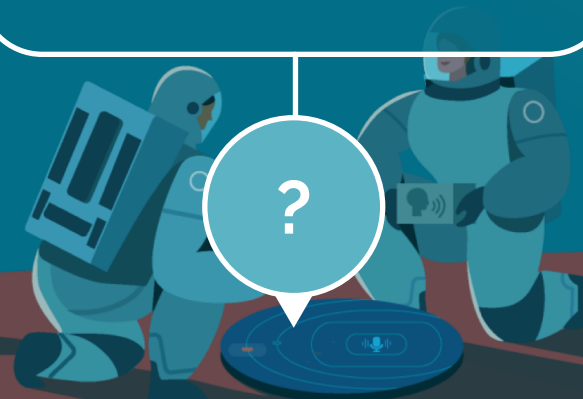
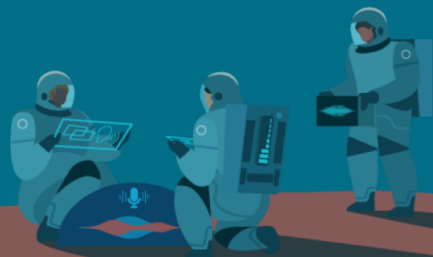
How will you translate that data into actionable insights?

What processes do you have in place to apply your learnings to internal operations and product roadmaps?

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# New ways to generate revenue via voice

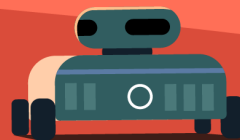
If your organization is looking beyond the monetization associated with increased market share, improved customer retention, and an enriched brand image, there are other ways to generate revenue with your voice assistant.

Partner with brands with products or services complementary to your own.

Take advantage of the growing opportunities in voice-advertising.

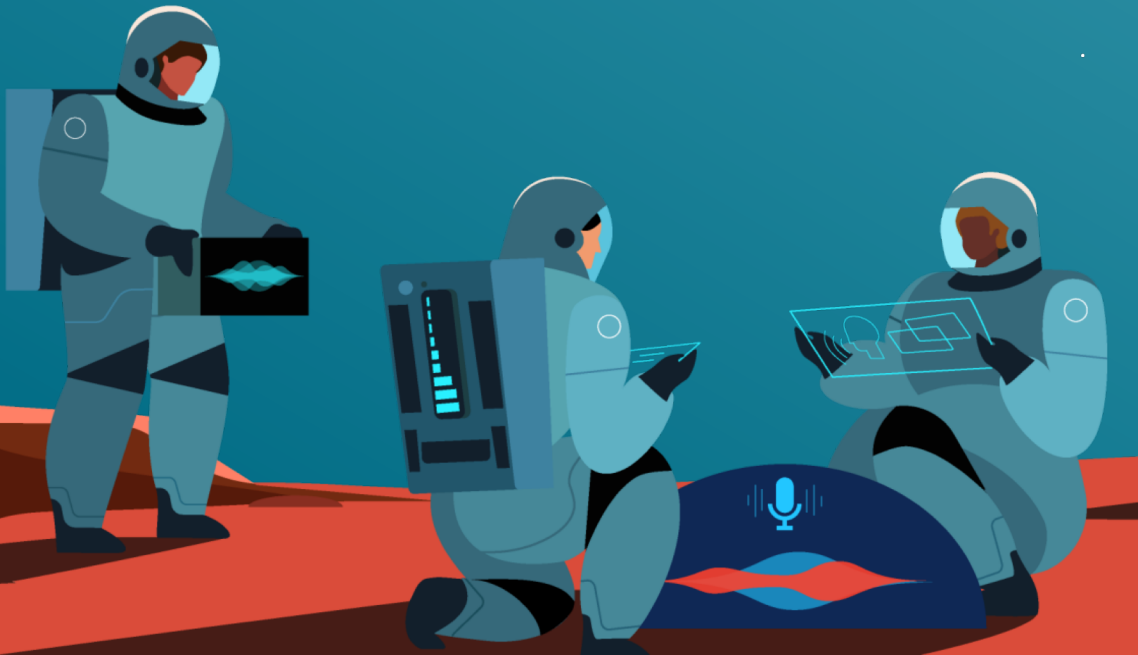
Automakers can partner with gas stations and restaurants to promote them in voice search results.

Allow users to buy and reorder products and entertainment like games through in-home devices.



# Planning for the future

As voice-enabled products begin to flood the market, the next challenges for voice-first companies will be around differentiation, personalization, ease of use, and natural language interactions. Customization will become an imperative for retaining market share and the voice of the customer will become the loudest voice in the room.



“With senior backing, voice is elevated into the organizational consciousness in a more systematic way, better positioned to tap into a wider ecosystem of digital touchpoints. In order to ensure leadership backs your initiative, make sure you can answer these voice-first strategy musts: In what way are you being assistive? What need states along your customer’s journey are you targeting? How is this driving an outcome for your brand and business? What will enable you to learn from iterating in this space?”

Dale LaRue  
Strategy Director at [RAIN](#)

# Advice from early explorers



“The notion of ‘brand voice’ takes on new meaning in the era of conversational computing. It’s no longer simply about personality, style, and tone, but the literal voice—human or synthesized—through which brands speak to their customers.”

**Eric Turkington,**  
VP of Strategic  
Partnerships, [RAIN](#)



“Every brand needs a voice AI strategy as 40% of users are already using voice for product search. Voice commerce is not just about the end transaction, the entire customer journey offers opportunity for brand engagement.”

**Heidi Culbertson,**  
CEO, [Marvee](#)



Sound has a profound effect on the human brain. It can conjure up memories, stimulate feelings and identify people, things, and places—the sound environment you create should be designed carefully and purposefully.”

**Kane Simms,**  
CEO, [VUX World](#)



“How soon will it become annoying to a customer—or more accurately a potential customer—that they can’t connect to a brand with voice?”

**Peter Stewart,**  
Author, Speaker, & Consultant,  
[The Smart Speakers Podcast](#)

# SoundHound Inc.

Get more advice from the experts in our online guide:  
**Overcoming the Top 3 Challenges of Voice AI Adoption**

[soundhound.com/brand-voice-strategy](https://soundhound.com/brand-voice-strategy)