



Voice First

Marketing's New Super Power

Voice-First in marketing isn't coming...it is already here. Every major technology provider is increasing their investments in voice-enabled virtual assistants. Google has Google Assistant, Apple has Siri, Amazon has Alexa, Microsoft has Cortana, Samsung has Bixby; and the list is growing at the speed of – well; the internet.

Marketing has always owned the 'voice of the Brand' – why is this different? Because it actually is Voice. It is the new super-power enabling marketers to get closer to the consumer than ever before. Voice-First springboards a level of real-time customer interaction - influencing decisions while the customer is thinking about the product (perhaps even on the way to the store). Influencing at point of use, engaging at point of sale or even; creating a queue for later decision (with periodic reminders). Talk about leaping tall buildings in a single bound.



Smart speaker devices are the fastest growing consumer device in history. By the end of this year there will be 50M shipped and this number is expected to grow. While the smart speaker in the home is a 'gateway' to voice activity as are our mobile phone assistants; consider voice will be embedded in just about every device we purchase in the future. Refrigerators, automobiles, televisions and yes, our robots will all have this natural, human interface.

By 2019, the voice recognition market will be worth \$601 million. And by the end of 2022, voice commerce will be a \$40 billion industry, and 55 percent of American homes will include at least one smart speaker.

What are you doing about Voice- right now? Consumers are ready, but many marketers are not. Recent research from BrightEdge says: 31% of marketers see voice as the next big thing. But, 62% have no plans to empower their brands / products / offerings with Voice technology. Marketers see what's happening, they understand why it's happening, but perhaps; they don't know what to do about it. **Let's solve 'not knowing what to do about it' - right now.**

In our last [Voice-First article](#), we talked about how Voice enables the product to come alive and 'be the marketing'. With product as the marketing, the priority becomes translating content into Voice interaction, involving the end consumer and all the entities along the path to solution. Price, Promotion, Package & Place still have meaning, but now, equally as important, are the 'voice' of the brand, and about how brand communicates its' role in solving the consumer's '[job that must be done](#)'.

Before we get into the priority of translating content into Voice interaction, we need to address a real challenge.



CB Insights just released [State of Innovation – 2018](#). Quick summary:

- 84.9% of existing companies care about innovation.
- 96% feel they are at risk of disruption from innovation, but don't want to invest in preventing disruption, or; believe-it-or-not in creating disruptive Innovation themselves.

Let's poke that bit of complacency with this simple statement:
Voice is going to be a Tidal Wave of Disruption!

Voice interaction - in whatever form of delivery - will become the powerhouse medium for; marketing, sales, payment, fulfillment and service center – all rolled into one. Every element of service you can imagine – will slowly, then very suddenly become dominated by Voice interaction.

Want proof?

In Healthcare: firms like [Orbita.ai](#) – have created powerful development and management platforms in support of intelligent voice assistants to enhance care across a variety of healthcare applications.





In [Automotive](#): Hands-free voice interfaces will enhance safety and encourage expanded use. In the very near future autos, by simply leveraging Voice technology will become a primary interface for an audience held captive for hours a day during commutes. From a marketer's viewpoint this is golden time for planting seeds, reminding of errands, queueing for purchases, etc.

In [Hospitality](#): from the front-desk, to the hotel room, to forgotten (and much needed items), to out-&-about dinners with clients, shopping & events – voice interactions will smooth the weary traveler down a seamless path of needs fulfilled. Companies like [Volara](#) are using the Amazon Echo as an in-room virtual concierge, and even using the Echo as a replacement for the in-room telephone. More than just Echo-enabled solutions are tackling this space; [Roxy](#) is bringing its own proprietary voice-enabled solution into the hotel room, offering itself as a replacement to the traditional phone and clock radio. Here again, marketers can engage with the customer, shaping their path to align with offerings.



In [Retail](#): much effort has been expended around cart-based screens, special apps, and even talking shelves and displays. Putting all that aside, there is a reason why Retailers have increased their investment in Voice by over 50% from last year. It's because Voice brings down the barriers of direct engagement with the consumer.



Here's an interesting '[in Retail](#)' example; Google recently issued its first voice-activated coupon in conjunction with Target. A Target Rep said; "the promotion was popular, and we hit our goals earlier than expected."

The next step in Voice for Retail and “other areas” may well involve [queues](#). From David Norton’s book, [Digital Content 2.0](#), comes the idea of an interface between the customer’s wants and a tool; holding the want; in-queue, until the customer is ready to buy. Makers of voice-enabled assistants are working on developing this - the first to win, will dominate the field.

You can imagine a future where you walk into a store and interact with an intelligent, voice-enabled kiosk. Gone will be the days of hunting for a salesperson to help you, or having to deal with an overzealous salesperson, when you just want to browse the aisles unencumbered. While many people have been using Siri since its debut on the iPhone, a new feature coming to iOS 12, called Shortcuts, will allow the user to record a phrase and have the iPhone execute a series of tasks, like a macro. For example, saying “order a cup of coffee, will launch your Starbucks app and place your order, all triggered by a voice statement.

Let’s turn this discussion on its side

Instead of Industries, let’s look at it from a B2B / B2C perspective. Many would say that Voice, as an emerging technology, will have more impact on one than the other. Is that true? Let’s think it through.

For B2C this is very much about bringing brands & products to life. Empowering them with the ability to engage with consumers. 3X faster than texting, trumping mobility with search on larger screens, all covered with the stimulating goodness of Machine Learning. A good and powerful view for the B2C side, but, B2B may be even more exciting.

B2B Voice will focus on leveraging the internal expertise & knowledge of the organization. Think Knowledge - Management on steroids. In our last Voice-First insight article; we talked about an [Attorney firm](#) who no longer has to sit at a computer, type phrases and sort through written results. Now they ask an automated attendant to, “Please find me all materials regarding a specific case, and send the information via email and to my colleagues”. This seemingly simple shift will forever change the way attorneys and every other worker interacts with information.



Fast-Forward to a very-near time and see this voice search replicated for: ‘status of a select client, plans and presentations, impact of win/loss’ – in short; an enhanced CRM, Search & Reporting capability supporting sales, marketing, supply chain; all the internal knowledge relative to growth. With all of it available, just for the asking. Now, extend everything we just said about inside Knowledge Management for B2B and include [outreach](#), [customer service](#), and one more; [industrial safety](#) – all of which are evolving as we speak, again, at internet speed.

Looking beyond B2B & B2C – the Home, the Car, the Office Place, the Work Place, the Store are all turning into a new kind of marketing environment. There are so many more examples to share, but the playing field has already changed. It's time to accept the change, get past the reluctance, and embrace voice innovation.



This reluctance has several elements, but for this article, let's focus on 'Fear of Failure' (FoF) as a Lion we can tame. FoF appears as comments like: we have a room full of lawyers who would never approve – lots of political roadblocks here – have to gain consensus – have to wait for budget season – the list is endless and generally starts with: "first, we have to..."

We can tame the FoF Lion with a focus on:

- Structured Innovation Process – an Innovation Factory approach
- Aligning with [Voice Search](#) as a foundation
- Designing the context & content around [Voice Interaction](#)
- And perhaps the most vital element in the taming process: the strategic plan that accelerates the brand/product roadmap across:
 - o Horizon 1 – the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) – developed and launched with a continuous improvement process.
 - o Horizon 2 – the creation of a new ecosystem (or re-shaping of the current ecosystem) to change the playing field. Aligning partners, adjacencies and even competitors around your offering as the best solution for the customers '[job that must be done](#)'.
 - o Horizon 3 – the development of your product, within the new ecosystem as a platform (or key component of a platform) that supports community evolution of the brand/product, it's uses and its growth.



Organizations with FoF simply cannot move fast enough to bring ideas to launch in a world where competitors - start-ups, digital giants and digital legacy competitors continuously disrupt the playing field with rapid-to-market innovations.

Structured Innovation Process - an Innovation Factory approach

A recent article from [Hannah Mirza](#) in [Mediacom's' Blink](#) publication, speaks to the need for marketers to have a structured process, building off a theme: "Eureka moments must come with discipline to become advances". We cannot help but; completely agree.

The [Innovation Scout](#) has an app for this; We leverage our SaaS [Platform, FastTrack](#) development and Innovation Factory processes to drive repeatable, measurable efficiency; accelerating the 'Eureka' moment from napkin to launch.

An Innovation Factory creates a repeatable approach to identify, assess and utilize innovative & emerging technologies in building products, platforms and possibilities.



Along with an AI platform and FastTrack process, The Innovation Factories super-powers include the ability to integrate emerging technologies right from the start, within the innovation canvas phase. For Voice, this would involve a [Voice Marketer](#); whose role will include: 'crafting the scripts that fuel new and anticipatory inspiration for voice-ready consumers.' More about that in the **Designing the Context & Content** section, further below.

Aligning with Voice Search - as a foundation

Understanding Voice Search is the right place to start. It's currently [1 out of 5](#) of all Google searches. [ComScore](#) reports that by 2020 - 50% of all searches will be a voice search. Think of Voice Search as one side of the coin – Voice on Speaker Devices is the other side.

So, the question is: how do brands become a digital voice assistant's top pick in the search? Getting your brand/product in line for this top pick means you have solved the consumers wants and intent.

Search will help you understand intent. By clearly defining your customer's journey you can map the intent of voice search. For example, when someone is searching for hair care products are they looking for information about specific brands, where to buy them or who has a deal? Think: Informational, Navigational or Transactional as the primary Search Intent of Voice.

However, search is only part of the voice story. [Voice Searches are different](#) - there is a behavior change when using voice search. If you are hungry, you might type 'areas for lunch close by'. With Voice you will add more elements; revealing intent, need, and parameters. This will be more of a conversation, creating interactions such as; 'I'm hungry, where is the best pizza and how do I get there', etc. Understanding the nuances contained in Voice search can help you move beyond simple consumer intent and into the underlying wants, needs, etc. Voice engages you in the customer journey, revealing all the elements of the journey and opening the door to a variety of solutions.

Designing the Context & Content around [Voice Interaction](#)

From [Julia Bernard's](#) most recent article: [Meet the Voice Marketer](#), comes a most insightful question: "What will your brand sound like? And what will it have to say"?

Remember, in our previous [Voice-First](#) insight article we said: Designing for voice applications is quite different than designing for graphical interfaces. Think about it, humans are used to using voice to communicate with other humans – not with technology. This simple understanding sets up the expectations of users.

"The key is conversation. Asking the right questions to start the customer on a journey, that has needs; to be solved by your offerings" – Michael Glavich, Chief Business Accelerator, The Innovation Scout

"When thinking about designing a voice application, put yourself into the mindset of talking with another human", says [Joel Evans](#). "I would instruct companies to have one person play the role of the human and the other to play the role of the voice assistant. This immediately separates the technology and allows you to focus more on the conversation and the information being delivered." – Joel Evans Co-Founder and CEO, [n-Powered](#).



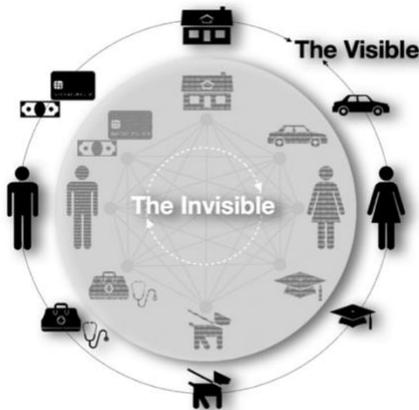
Two big, new concepts forming a foundation for designing context & content to be explored in the next Voice First insight:

The first is [Multimodality](#) - a new way of thinking about accelerating growth in a Voice-driven environment. Voice interaction, in whatever form of delivery, will become the powerhouse medium for; marketing, sales, distribution, fulfillment and, service centers, all rolled into one.

The second, is a concept from [Thomas Koulopoulos](#), author of [Revealing the Invisible: How Our Hidden Behaviors Are Becoming The Most Valuable Commodity of the 21st Century](#).

Koulopoulos' idea of a '[Digital self](#)', generated by the convergence of AI, IoT, Voice and other emerging technologies will create a whole new world for marketers. The world today is relatively disconnected in terms of tracking activities & interactions. That is sure to change as the Digital Self emerges, the True Self becomes continually connected, and the two of them together begin to create a Total Self - truly a multi-dimensional picture.

Tracking across this multi-dimensional connection will bring about a world of Hyper-Personalized Products, discovered through the interaction of people, their digital selves, and AI's ability to predict patterns and behavior. This will create a personal shopping experience like no other.



Voice as a Digital Agent, empowered by AI, and connected via IoT to both the True Self, and the digital self; is why Voice will have such a powerful impact. And, why every marketer needs to be right on top of this emerging super-power.

Our final piece in removing the “Fear of Failure (FoF) in Innovation” obstacle is; **the strategic plan that accelerates the brand/product roadmap**. The elements are laid out again below, but the content will be published in our 4th & final [EDGE](#); Voice-First insight paper:

- o Horizon 1 – the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) – developed and launched with a continuous improvement process
- o Horizon 2 – the creation of a new ecosystem (or re-shaping of the current ecosystem) to change the playing field. Aligning partners, adjacencies and even competitors around your offering as the best solution for the customer's '[job that must be done](#)'.
- o Horizon 3 – the development of your product, within the new ecosystem as a platform (or key component of a platform) that supports community evolution of the brand product, it's uses and it's growth.

So, how do you get started?

What are you trying to achieve with voice? Many companies are starting with building brand awareness in voice. For example, Nestle released an Alexa Skill that allows its users to interactively find recipes for meals to prepare. You can interact with the skill in multiple ways, with the end result being a shopping list, step by step recipe, voice instructions on how to prepare, and if you have an Alexa device with a screen, or a web browser, you'll also see photos and videos along each step of the preparation. While not overly selling the Nestle brand, the brand is reinforced in the form of a utility: recipes.

Others simply use voice to deliver information, while also reinforcing brand awareness, in the form of frequently asked questions.

Again, starting the customer on the journey with an MVP, and then continuing to improve in iterations is a great way to get started in voice.

This EDGE Voice-First, "Marketing's New Super Power", is 3rd in the series. Previous insight articles from The Innovation Scouts EDGE series on Voice-First can be found on The Innovation Scout website @:

- [Voice-First: reshaping customer interactions.](#)
- [Voice-First: accelerating growth in a voice-driven environment](#)

EDGE is an outgrowth of Innovation Scout's 'emerging technology' communities. It creates the opportunity to do deep dives and interact with a range of start-ups, digital giants and companies leveraging each technology to power new offerings. Along with continuing evolution of the Voice- First community, future topics will include: Artificial Intelligence, Robots & Drones, IoT, Blockchain and the truly interesting potential impact of 5G.



Intelligence Driven Innovation

About the Authors



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About [The Innovation Scout](#)™

The Innovation Scout works with Global 1000s to accelerate development of new offerings - superpowered by emerging technologies, big data & start-ups. We leverage our SaaS [Platform](#), [FastTrack](#) development and [Innovation Factory](#) processes to drive repeatable, measurable efficiency; accelerating the offering from napkin to launch.