Turn Up the Volume on Your Customer's Voice

A U.S. television program called "The Voice" challenges musicians to perform onstage, while judges listen with their backs turned, forced to identify the next great singing talent based purely on the quality of the voice they hear, but can't see. Based on the judges' reactions, the appearance of many of the contestants isn't much of a surprise. But every once in a while, there is genuine shock – one contestant was greeted with a "whoa — you're a guy?!"

The conceit of the show is — of course — that we have preconceived notions of what a successful singer *looks* like, and at times that can overtake what a great singer *sounds* like. Indeed, the actual voice can get overlooked.

I was thinking about this recently in terms of customer experience initiatives—especially when they involve speech analytics. When we think about speech analytics, we often think in terms of how we can use the solution to solve problems we know about — long handle times, high call volume, customer satisfaction, product or process issues, etc. We build categories to bucket calls that pertain to these issues, so we can easily track and access them and continue to make progress against our KPIs. Categories such as "complaint", "repeat calls", "self-service failures", "compliments" or "product quality" track what's important to us and identify root cause.

However, whether we know it or not, we're filtering what our customers are telling us. We're taking this amazing, unsolicited feedback and focusing it according to what we *want* to hear, or what we already know. But in the process, we can lose sight of an invaluable benefit of speech analytics – using unsolicited customer feedback to tell us the things about our business that *we don't already know*. What are we overlooking in our quest to maximize our ROI and make progress against KPIs?

Speech analytics solutions maximize their value when you take the time to just listen—without filters and without bias. Use speech analytics to surface words and phrases that have seen the biggest increase or decrease in use across time and find out what's spiking. Find out what customers are saying without predetermined or fixed labels.

Can you still track issues that are important to you? Sure. I mean, even on "The Voice", the contestants eventually have to perform in front of people that can see them. But having that initial pass of just listening – without bias? That's invaluable!