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TECH SAVVY BRITS EMBRACE SELF SERVICE BUT QUEUING IS NOT DEAD YET

London, 21 August, 2007 – UK adults are embracing self service in the call centre when querying services and buying products, according to new research conducted for Vicorp, an advanced voice solutions provider. Over half of UK adults are willing to use an automated service, with twenty two per cent preferring to use the self service option immediately rather than going to a live agent. Buying cinema tickets was the most popular use of automation, with 56 per cent. Checking bank balances came in second place with 52 per cent, followed by paying bills at 48 per cent. Surprisingly, 40 per cent of us are willing to use automation to check delivery times.

However, people still want to talk to somebody if their day-to-day lives are being inconvenienced or if something is potentially hitting them in the pocket. Technical issues appear to be the biggest bugbear. Nearly a third of those questioned were willing to stay on the phone for as long as it takes to solve problems, such as not having Internet access or losing the TV satellite signal. Resolving a gas bill and booking a holiday are the next things that are most likely to keep us on the phone, with 28 per cent and 27 per cent respectively. However, only 18 per cent were willing to wait as long as it takes to purchase their car insurance.

Where you come from in the UK also has a bearing on how long you are willing to spend on the phone, with the North East winning hands down. When calling about a technical issue, 45 per cent of residents in the North East are prepared to spend as long as it takes to resolve the issue, compared to just 20 per cent of Scots. Similarly, 41 per cent from the North East were willing to stay on the phone for as long as it takes to query a gas bill, compared to 16 per cent of Scots.

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The survey also revealed a surprising generation gap when it comes to queuing. Contrary to popular belief, the 18-24 age group is the most tolerant - waiting up to 16 minutes in a call centre queue. For the 25-34 age group, the waiting time drops to 13 minutes, whereas the 65 plus age group were only willing to wait for nine minutes. On average, 18 – 24 year olds queued for 60 per cent longer than those aged 65 plus and, when booking concert tickets, this differential doubles.

Call centre queuing can be an emotional rollercoaster, but the overwhelming dislike showed by 61 per cent of the respondents, is not knowing how much longer they have to wait. Nearly half of those questioned ranked repetitive announcements and having to restate account information given earlier in the call in joint second place.

Lee Cottle, chief operating officer at Vicorp, commented: "As the call centre is often the first point of contact between an organisation and its customers, every effort needs to be made to improve the experience for both customers and staff. Organisations have to get the balance right and if automation is the preferred option to keep customers happy then it creates a win-win situation. Call centre employees can avoid dealing with mundane, repetitive queries, which ensures that motivation levels remain high and staff turnover is reduced. And for customers, their queries and needs can be met in a hassle-free manner in a timeframe that they control."

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Editor's Notes: The survey was conducted amongst 1,000 UK adults by ICM Research and the findings were analysed by Contact Babel on behalf of Vicorp Ltd. To view the survey findings, please go to www.vicorp.com

About Vicorp

Vicorp, a privately owned, AIM listed company, is a leading provider of speech self-service solutions. The company drives realistic returns on investment across all verticals in the contact centre industry and has a unique approach to the full speech solution offering, enabling easy migration from legacy systems whilst providing businesses with control over their application environment.

Vicorp is an end-to-end service creation solution provider that helps organisations create and manage voice and data services rapidly and efficiently utilising media rich components, open standards and web technologies. The company is committed to

remaining generic at the technology platform layer as this enables businesses to accommodate migration strategies and focus at realising the benefits of self-service automation independently of underlying technologies.

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