

The Human Side of AI

**Behind every conversation is a team
focused on your success**



What is AI without humans?

While AI is often described quite breathlessly as an end-all-be-all solution for many of business's thorniest problems — including customer service — realizing true AI value requires humans to be at the core.

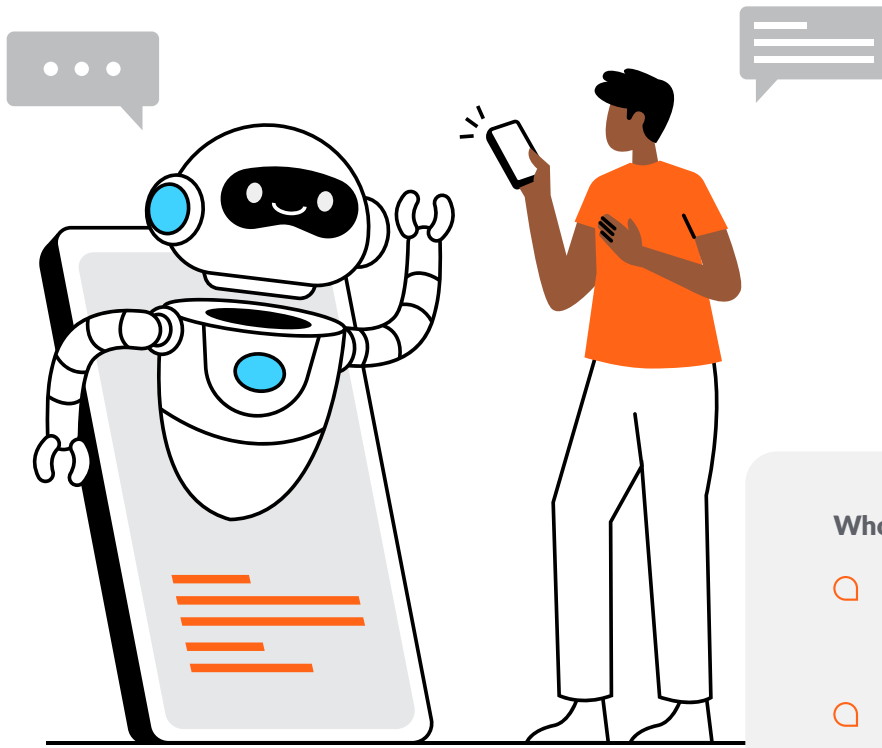
From designing intelligent applications that blend different types of AI for superior results to uncovering new ways to optimize with AI to human-augmented AI where people actually help move automation forward, humans are a critical part of the equation.

People are also key to driving value from any complex technology solution. The difference between an out-of-the-box technology platform and one that is customized to and evolves with your business needs comes down to the expert attention, innovation, and support you receive.

At Interactions, we stack our conversational AI (CAI) customer success and conversational design teams with people who thrive on listening, collaborating, and providing creative solutions that deliver remarkable value.

In this ebook, our goal is to share exactly what that looks like. You will meet some of our team members, hear how they help, read some creative success stories, and ultimately learn why it's critical to find a partner, not just a vendor, when selecting an AI platform.





The AI-Human equation

First, a bit of background. Interactions is a conversational AI company, which means we offer an innovative IVA platform that combines several AI technologies with human ingenuity to deliver amazing, effortless, automated customer interactions.

Ours understands and engages on a human level due to the humans behind the scenes. We accomplish this through:

- State-of-the-art conversational and generative AI technology (with 130+ patents and 20+ years of experience thus far).
- Unique human augmented understanding (HAU) capabilities, which enable human intent agents to parse utterances the AI cannot understand within an acceptable confidence threshold, seamlessly in the background without losing containment.
- Assisting live agents by automating basic calls so they have more time for complex intents, providing a warm handoff that eases each call, and employing generative AI for contact summaries.

Who will be the humans working on your IVA?

- Expert developers who author your AI code and seamlessly integrate back-office, contact center, telephony, and other relevant solutions.
- Creative conversation designers who ensure dialog flows adhere to your business rules, leverage your data to make interactions more easeful, use the right tone and brand voice, and know that just a few words can make or break the success of automated interactions.
- IVA voice talent because every word is recorded by a human voice selected to best represent your brand.
- Customer success teams that develop close relationships with you to anticipate your business needs and find innovative ways to boost your most critical KPIs and deliver stellar customer experiences.
- 24/7 customer support that proactively monitors your IVA with automated end-to-end call path testing, and can respond to issues and facilitate joint troubleshooting calls.

The implementation process

Interactions provides customized, ongoing managed services for each of our clients. Long after implementation, we work side-by-side with your team on continuous improvement and application life support. But let's look at the initial build process first.

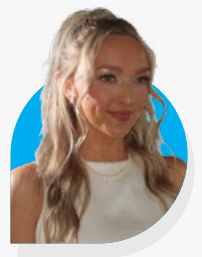
During the sales process, Interactions works with your team to create a Business Requirements Document (BRD). "Then, once the SOW is signed, we go to work," says Michael Pell, Director, Conversation Design Services at Interactions. "We meet with you to go line by line over the BRD to validate its accuracy and determine what's most important to you."



We're not an out of the box solution. We are a customized solution. Certain flows are our bread and butter, but they're all customized to your brand and your business. And we can customize dashboards and reports to give your leaders exactly what they're looking for.

Alina Coppola

Client Relationship Director,
Interactions



In addition to the general AI expertise and vertical knowledge that Interactions brings, we conduct deep research into your business to ensure the IVA will meet your needs. We look at:

- Your existing material like call flows, API documentation, etc.
- The KPIs your company uses to uniquely measure program success
- Recorded agent calls, listening sessions, and a contact center site visit
- Knowledge of your contact center architecture, skills, queues, CRM automation, training, etc.
- Availability of relevant data for API integration
- Persona questionnaire to help select the right voice talent, as well as branding guidelines
- Relevant business plans, such as expanding in regions with different languages

This way, we can ensure we're creating the right automated call flows for launch, building the application with future needs in mind, and informing your ongoing roadmap.

Out of this collaborative process, we create the Functional Requirements Document, Application Design Artifact, and Reporting Definitions Document, all of which put us on the same page as the client and guide the build and implementation.



Often, we go where the data takes us. If you have data that can help us solve a problem easily, even if it's not a huge call volume, there can still be a real benefit to building automation using that data.

Michael Pell
Director, Conversation
Design Services,
Interactions



Humans and the art of conversation design

One particular area we want to dig into is conversation flow design. While the IVA runs on several AI technologies to listen to, read, and understand what customers are saying, the actual dialogs — how the IVA talks to customers and progresses the experience — are built with human ingenuity.

Our automated dialogs are grounded in structured decision-making based on business rules and system integrations that allow the IVA to execute tasks, like accept a payment or reschedule an appointment. There is also machine learning that enables the IVA to improve responses over time. But every actual word spoken by your IVA is created by one of our conversational designers — and an incredible amount of thought, creativity, technical expertise, psychology, research, and best practices guides the process.

During the discovery phase, Interactions experts dig into the data sources listed earlier. Then, on an ongoing basis, all interactions are recorded (with PII, PCI, and PHI automatically redacted) and data is captured for reporting and analytics. Your customer success team regularly scours

these data sources and listens to calls to find ways to improve KPIs and save customers more time and effort.



“Our job is to look at the data and to listen to the calls. Then we facilitate conversations around our findings,” says Casey Thornsberry, Sr. Client Relationship Director. “The goal is to be a constant source of innovation and support for our clients.”



While many customer intents that we automate seem straightforward, such as checking a balance or making a product return, there can be unexpected nuances. Uncovering those nuances and driving even more value with automation is what separates an out-of-the-box solution from a more bespoke managed model like Interactions.

INTERACTIONS IVA OPTIMIZATION COMES FROM:

- Identifying new intents and self-service opportunities via deep dives into metrics, end-to-end analytics, and call listening
- Collaborative improvement sessions with your various stakeholders
- Best practices from inside and outside the client vertical
- Your business roadmap, including upcoming shifts like new product lines, acquisitions, system upgrades, and market expansion
- External changes, such as regulatory compliance or shifts in customer expectations
- Contact center site visits

Managing the complexity of conversation design

Solving the issues that arise requires a mix of technical know-how and human psychology. “You have to make the prompting concise, conversational, and simple,” says Pell. “You must anticipate what customers will say and want, and then devise handling for it.”

INTERACTIONS CONVERSATIONAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

- Use natural dialog, no jargon
- Let the user drive the conversation
- Keep it short, respect users' time
- Sound natural, be cooperative
- Take turns
- Engage beginners and attract experts
- Remember what users say
- Answer the question

This anticipation is key and can differ by business and industry, which is where best practices come in.



“For example, we spend a lot of time on appointment negotiation,” explains Cole Irvine, Sr. Client Service Manager. “If you can’t provide the date and time the customer wants, do you offer the next available appointment or the same calendar day the next week? It’s very dependent on the client’s industry. A tax appointment might not be as timely as an internet outage or doctor’s appointment.”





INTERNAL BUSINESS RULES

“One of our energy clients had really intensely complex rules around payment arrangements for missed payments,” says Irvine. “We essentially turned their APIs into a knowledge tree and built out all the possible things the IVA could say. It was a complex and cooperative project. But when it was done, the client loved it. It took a ton of calls and volume out of their center.”



REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

Compliance is also a critical area where the collective brain trust at Interactions can help clients navigate thorny issues. “A current example of this is AI disclosure in EMEA,” says Casey Thornsberry, Sr. Client Relationship Director. “We’re looking at whether Interactions use of AI falls within the regulated parameters. What’s the best way to phrase the disclosure so that we’re building trust, rather than scaring them?” Additionally, Thornsberry notes, Interactions has technology in place that can automatically wipe all recordings and records for those who opt out, while still enabling the full IVA experience. “This is a great example of where our conversational design and technology come together elegantly to solve a challenging issue.”



LIVE AGENT NEEDS

Creating more efficient contact centers isn’t just about containment, but also about helping live agents be more productive. To that end, Interactions listens to calls with agents (with PII redacted) and can visit contact center sites to learn about agent pain points directly from the source.



“We free up agents to handle more complex cases, but we also streamline those contacts,” says Rob Wilson, Sr. Client Service Manager. “Our IVA can authenticate the customer, capture the intent, and route more accurately to ensure customers are sent to the right queue for their specific intent. We can even provide a transcription of that opening intent, so agents know exactly what the call will be about.”



THE HUMAN TOUCH

Interactions IVAs are intended to be as human-like as possible to make conversations flow. It’s valuable — and frankly fun — to add little human touches during conversation design. Early on, the Interactions team learned it needed to build in the niceties that occur with human agents. For example, customers often say “how are you” or ask the IVA if they are human or say “thank you” at the end of the call, and the IVA needs to respond. Some clients that use birthdates to authenticate customers will have the IVA say “happy birthday” if they make a contact on that day. Another example is when the Interactions team added a branded jingle as on-hold music for an entertainment company; it became so popular with fans, they would call in just to hear it.



The rewards are in the wins: Optimization success stories

Continuous optimization enables Interactions clients to derive even more value out of the platform over time — and it keeps the Interactions teams revved up.



“The most rewarding part of my job is when I’ve suggested a new call flow or a change to a flow, and we see containment jump noticeably. We send that data and a recording from that new flow to the client, and it’s the best email you’ll send all year,” says Ty Ruff, Director, Client Services.



Here are six more Interactions optimization success stories.

THE CHANGE:

One retail client left customers confused by using internal jargon. Customers calling about product returns were confused when the IVA asked if they were calling about a “claim” and if it was from a “non-brand store.” Coppola notes, “Listening to the calls, you could hear customers were unsure what the IVA meant. You wouldn’t get that insight just from looking at the data.”

THE RESULT:

Changing the IVA’s phrasing to “return” and “third-party stores” **ELIMINATED CUSTOMER CONFUSION AND REDUCED AGENT TRANSFERS.** “You didn’t hear any more confusion,” says Coppola, **“AND THE SUCCESS RATE WENT UP.”**

THE CHANGE:

Interactions found that 38% of live agent transfers for one insurance customer fell under a specific intent. **AUTOMATING THAT INTENT SAVED THE COMPANY UP TO \$4M PER YEAR.**



THE RESULT:

“Due to the data we have, I was able to make a flow chart of what customers were saying and where they fell out of the IVA,” says Jess Brady, Sr. Client Relationship Director. “Understanding their business and having the data to really visualize and back up our claims allowed us to **GAIN TRUST AND GIVE THE CLIENT THAT ‘AHA’ MOMENT.**”




THE CHANGE:

One client increased **LIVE AGENT RECOVERY BY 10%** by switching the IVA from saying “Tell me what you want so I can get you to the right place” to **“TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT SO I CAN AVOID SENDING YOU TO THE WRONG PLACE.”**

THE RESULT:

“Stating a consequence for not giving an intent versus framing it as a request really changes the game,” says Ruff.



THE CHANGE: To help callers progress a call without frustration, the IVA typically tries twice but then will transfer the customer to a live agent. However, when clients are setting appointments, this rule can be turned off to allow customers to keep searching for the date they need.

THE RESULT: “It’s a small change in our system, but to the customer, **IT HUGELY IMPACTS THEIR ABILITY TO SELF-SERVE AND GET WHAT THEY NEED**,” says Irvine.

THE CHANGE: The client needed their IVA data to integrate with Salesforce.

THE RESULT: “The client didn’t realize we can **OFFER SEAMLESS INTEGRATION WITH SALESFORCE**. I told them we can capture calls, transcribe them with PII automatically redacted, and load them into Salesforce,” says Thornsberry. “We delivered this new integration **UNDER BUDGET AND EARLY**. In three weeks, the company did more than a **MILLION IN SALES THAT COULD BE ATTRIBUTED TO THIS APPLICATION ENHANCEMENT**.”

THE CHANGE: One client wanted more control over call routing to better match the sales reps with appropriate opportunities. Interactions custom-coded a portal addition allowing the company to throttle which intents and customers went to particular agent pools.

THE RESULT: “The company was able to get the cost of the project funded back within one week and ended up seeing an **INCREASE OF \$2.9M IN SALES IN LESS THAN A YEAR**,” says Coppola.

It's all about the relationships

Ultimately, these wins are derived from the relationships that clients build with Interactions.



“It’s a partnership. We’re not here to just check off boxes,” says Wilson. “We always want to be in front of our clients, checking in on them, having regular calls, and being quick to turn around their needs. That really builds the trust and belief that we’re here for them.”

Thornsberry concurs. “Our engineers, conversation designers, and customer success teams all have a high degree of care for their customers and their customers’ customers. But what is special is that not only do we have expertise and we care, but we’re very creative. When you add these things together, you end up with better experiences and better engagement because you can tell people behind the scenes are really invested.”



Now that you’ve met our humans, you can learn more about our AI in our ebook, [Under the Hood: How Best-in-Class IVAs Work](#).

Or if you’d like to see how Interactions transforms requests into completed intents for happy customers:

[Check out our demos page](#)



The minds behind the magic



Alina Coppola | Client Relationship Director, Interactions

With over 5 years of experience at Interactions, Alina has honed her skills in both account and project management. She excels at building strong relationships, is adept at working with technical teams, and is consistently identifying new opportunities for clients. Alina's expertise lies in her ability to bridge the gap between client needs and technical execution, ensuring successful project delivery and growth.



Ty Ruff | Director, Client Services, Interactions

As the Director of Client Services, Ty manages a team focused on supporting the continued success of Interactions client's applications, as well as looking and listening for opportunities to improve those applications to better serve client's goals.



Cole Irvine | Client Relationship Director, Interactions

Passionate about transforming complex insights into compelling narratives, Cole is a data-driven analyst and storyteller. He has over 12 years of experience supporting interactive voice assistants and driving understanding and action through his work.



Michael Pell | Director, Conversation Design Services, Interactions

With an unwavering focus on the end-user, Michael Pell has been a driving force in conversational design at Interactions for over two decades. Currently as the Director of Design, he leads a world-class team in creating the industry's most sophisticated and innovative user experiences. Throughout his 21-year journey with the company—from Senior Systems Designer to Principal UI Architect and now Director—he has been instrumental in shaping the firm's best-in-class technology. His unique blend of hands-on design expertise and strategic leadership ensures that Interactions delivers superior satisfaction, ease of use, and a seamless blend of AI and human understanding.



The minds behind the magic



Jess Brady | Sr. Client Relationship Director, Interactions

Jessica Brady is the Senior Director of Account Management at Interactions, where she has spent the past eight years cultivating strategic partnerships and delivering value to clients. With deep expertise in the insurance and financial services verticals, she leads efforts to drive measurable success, maximize savings, and elevate the customer experience. Jessica is dedicated to strengthening long-term client relationships and aligning Interactions solutions with evolving business goals.



Rob Wilson | Sr. Client Service Manager, Interactions

As a seasoned Customer Success professional with almost a decade at Interactions, Rob Wilson excels at navigating complex client landscapes across Utilities, Telecommunications, Technology, and Healthcare. Rob's daily motivation stems from his commitment to resolving client problems, no matter the scale, and empowering them to realize the full potential of Interactions solutions.



Casey Thornsberry | Sr. Client Relationship Director, Interactions

Casey Thornsberry is a Sr. Client Relationship Director at Interactions, where he helps some of the world's most recognizable brands make customer experience look effortless. With 15+ years in enterprise tech, including time on both the vendor and client side, he's navigated complex organizations and shifting priorities. He now focuses on turning complex AI solutions into clear business wins.





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ABOUT INTERACTIONS

Interactions provides Intelligent Virtual Assistants that seamlessly assimilate Conversational AI and human understanding to enable businesses to engage with their customers in highly productive and satisfying conversations. With flexible products and solutions designed to meet the growing demand for unified, omnichannel customer care, Interactions is delivering unprecedented improvements in the customer experience and significant cost savings for some of the largest brands in the world. Founded in 2004, Interactions is headquartered in Franklin, Massachusetts with additional offices worldwide.

For more information about Interactions, contact us:

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interactions.com