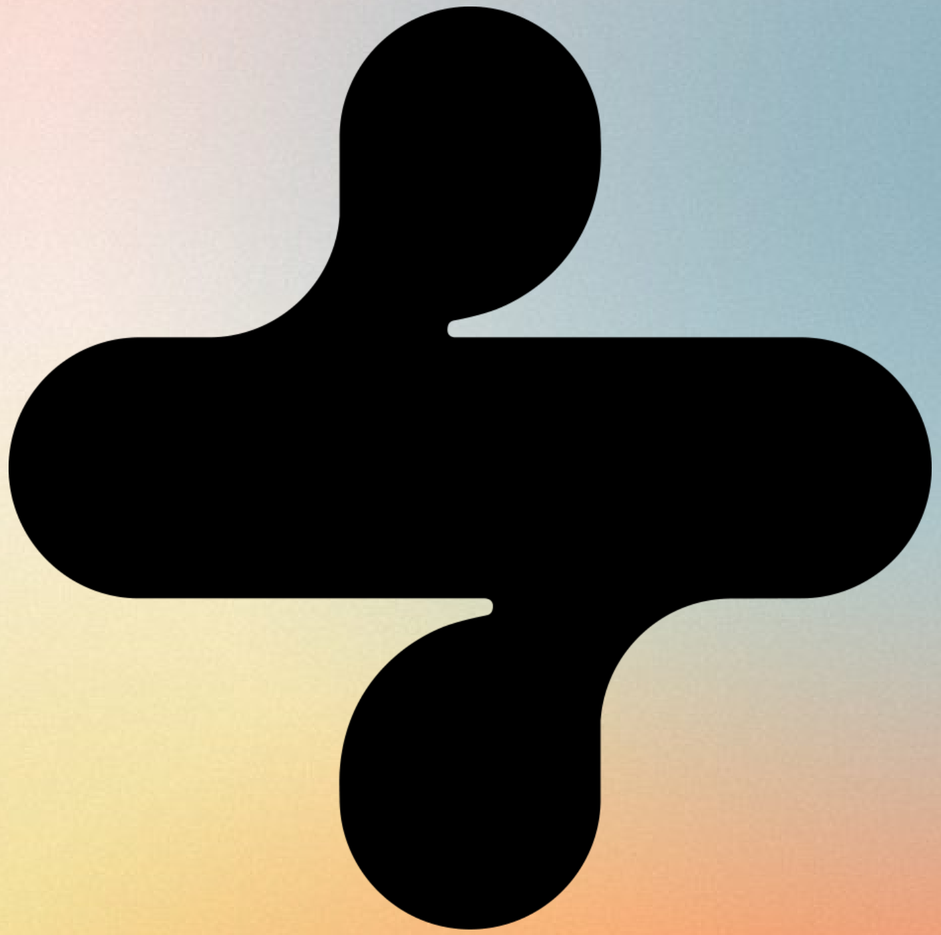
FREE GUIDE · 2026 EDITION

Voice Agents 101 in plain English

What voice agents do, where they help and how to choose a first call.
A guide for business leaders.



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What's inside.

Understand how a voice agent handles a call, assess where it fits and pick one conversation to pilot.

01

Understand

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READING TIME

Allow about 10 minutes, or jump to the suitability scorecard on page 12.

Three calls at once

At 9:02 on a Monday, three customers call. A voice agent can handle each conversation and route the work that needs a person.

THREE CALLERS

01 · BOOKING

“Can I book a service for Thursday?”

02 · QUESTION

“What time do you close on Saturday?”

03 · URGENT

“Our hot water system has burst.”



AI AGENT

Voice agent

Listens, identifies each request, checks an approved source and acts or hands over.

THREE OUTCOMES

CALENDAR

Books Thursday at 10 am and confirms the appointment.

APPROVED ANSWERS

Looks up Saturday hours and offers further help.

ON-CALL ROSTER

Takes the address and transfers the caller to the on-call technician.

WHAT IT DOES The agent can follow a defined route without keeping every caller in the same queue.

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The call keeps going while the agent checks

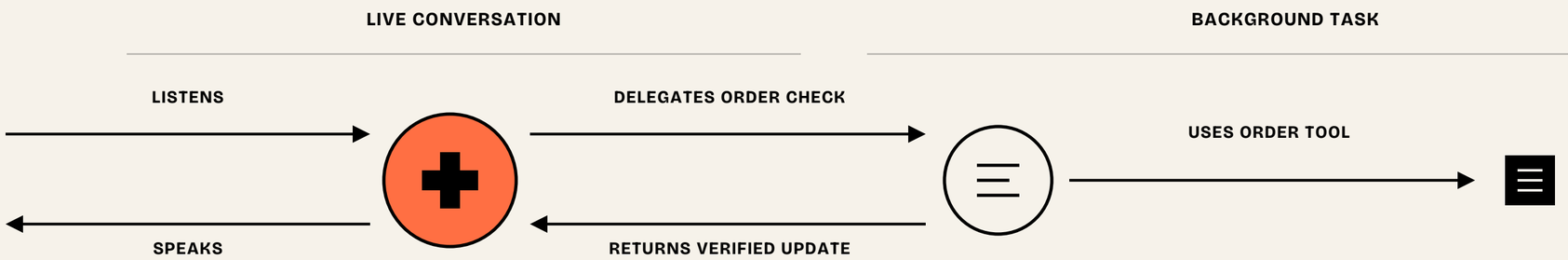
The voice model listens and speaks while a separate backend reasons, looks up records and uses tools.

CALLER

“Where’s my order?”

The caller can add a detail while the order is being checked.





Voice model

Keeps the conversation moving. Speaks the result when it is ready.

Reasoning backend

Verifies the caller and checks the delivery record.

Order system

Provides the current delivery status.

MULTILINGUAL CALLS If you need multiple languages or accents, test representative calls and check the summaries your team receives.

Six jobs voice agents do well

Start with a repeatable conversation and decide what a successfully completed call looks like.

INBOUND · THE CUSTOMER CALLS



Answer routine calls

A customer calls after hours. They get an answer while the office is shut.



Book and remind

A customer needs a new time. The agent moves the booking and sends a reminder.



Handle everyday questions

A customer asks about an order, opening hours, prices or an approved policy.

OUTBOUND · FOLLOW-UP AND STAFF PRACTICE



Call new leads quickly

A web enquiry comes in. The agent qualifies it and briefs sales.



Follow up at scale

A renewal, feedback call or payment reminder is due. The agent follows up.



Train your team

A new starter rehearses a difficult call with the agent playing the customer.

When a person should take over

If a caller asks for a person, offer a transfer. Use the same rule when the call needs judgement, authority or information the agent cannot verify.

HIGHLY EMOTIONAL CALL

"I've already called three times."

Acknowledge the frustration, offer a transfer and tell the next person what the caller has already tried.

COMPLEX NEGOTIATION

"Can you waive the fee if we sign today?"

Send the proposed terms to someone with authority to agree to them.

OTHER HANDOVER TRIGGERS

Sensitive decisions

Route credit, hiring or health decisions to an authorised person.

Unclear requests

Ask one clarifying question. If the goal is still unclear, bring in a colleague.

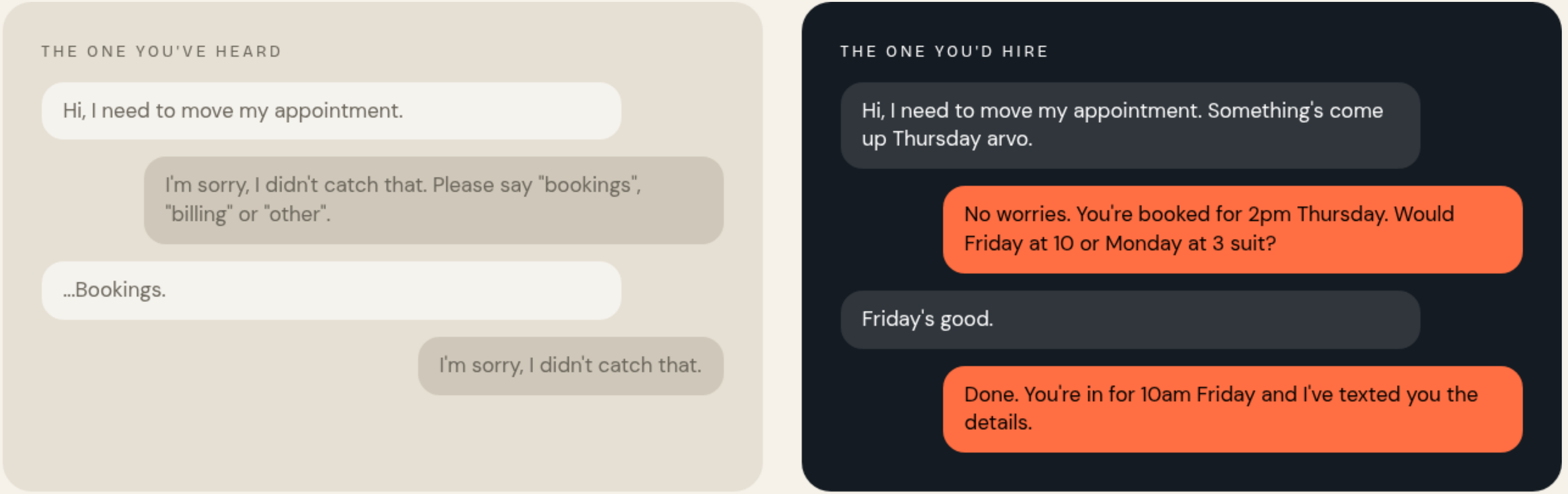
Unverified answers

If the approved source is missing or out of date, offer a callback.

PASS ON Why the caller rang, what you checked and who will take it from here.

Moving an appointment

The same request yields very different outcomes. Listen for whether the agent understands the change and confirms it in the calendar.



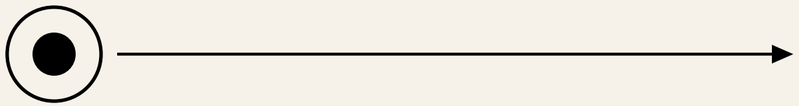
Source · Spark Factory, Voice agents

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Hand over without starting again

Sam was charged twice. The agent finds the booking and gets the issue to someone who can fix it.

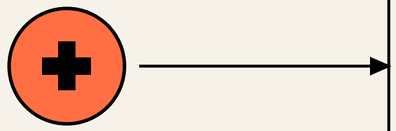
01 CALLER ASKS FOR HELP



“I was charged twice.”

The caller explains which visit the charges relate to.

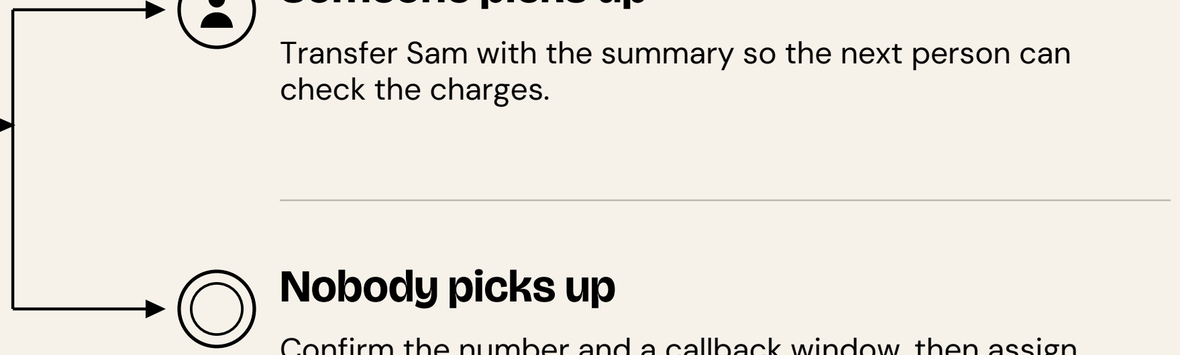
02 AGENT SENDS CONTEXT



Booking found

Pass on Sam’s name, Monday’s booking and the disputed charges.

03 A PERSON OWNS THE NEXT STEP



Someone picks up

Transfer Sam with the summary so the next person can check the charges.

Nobody picks up

Confirm the number and a callback window, then assign the task to a person.

BEFORE LAUNCH

Test the live transfer and the callback with the people who will take them.

Six risks to plan for

Plan a specific response for the failures your callers and staff are likely to notice.

01 Delays

Slow lookups leave an awkward silence.

PLAN FOR IT

Keep lookups fast and let the caller know what the agent is checking.

02 Misheard details

Names, numbers and addresses are easy to mishear.

PLAN FOR IT

Read critical details back and ask the caller to confirm.

03 Made-up answers

An agent can give a confident answer without evidence.

PLAN FOR IT

Use approved information. Hand over when the source cannot confirm the answer.

04 Privacy

Calls may contain sensitive information.

PLAN FOR IT

Tell callers when AI is speaking, minimise collection and know where recordings live.

05 Caller frustration

Some people want to speak to a person.

PLAN FOR IT

Offer a way to reach the team early.

06 System outages

The agent cannot act when the calendar or CRM is down.

PLAN FOR IT

Tell the caller and arrange a callback.

What a voice agent costs

Count the setup and the ongoing costs, including the calls that still need a person.

WHAT YOU PAY FOR

Usage
Phone line, speech and AI model charges per minute.

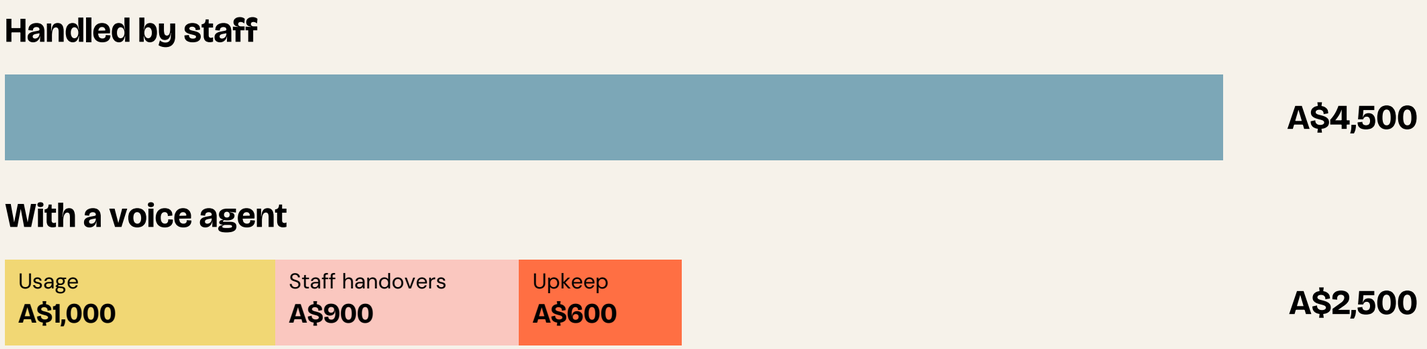
Implementation
One-off design, setup and tests.

Integrations
Connecting the calendar, CRM or order system.

Maintenance
Updating prices, policies and services as they change.

Oversight
Reviewing calls and handling escalations.

ILLUSTRATIVE BUSINESS CASE · 1,000 CALLS A MONTH



A$2,000 in monthly staff capacity freed

Setup is a one-off cost. Divide it by the monthly capacity freed to see how many months it takes to pay back.

Assumptions: staff-only calls average 6 min at A$45/hour. Agent calls average 4 min at A$0.25/min. A person spends 4 min on 30% of agent calls.

CAPACITY AND CASH

Freed staff time becomes a cash saving when it reduces spending. Figures exclude GST.

Your first voice agent pilot

Choose one call type, test it against real exceptions and give a person responsibility for the rollout.

01

Choose a call type

Use the scorecard on the next page to choose a frequent call with a clear outcome.

READY WHEN YOU HAVE

One call with a clear outcome.

02

Define success

Choose one measure, such as correct bookings or calls resolved without a handover.

READY WHEN YOU HAVE

A baseline and a target.

03

Connect sources

Start with read-only access to approved answers, the calendar or the order system.

READY WHEN YOU HAVE

Approved sources and access rules.

04

Test exceptions

Rehearse a changed request, missing details, a failed transfer and an upset caller.

READY WHEN YOU HAVE

A fallback for each case.

05

Launch and review

Give the pilot an owner and review calls weekly. Expand once the results hold.

READY WHEN YOU HAVE

An owner and a weekly review.

WHEN TO PAUSE

Pause if the agent confirms a booking it did not make, or if the team misses a promised callback.

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WORKED SCORECARD

Would it work (in your business)?

Score one call type against six questions. Start with a call your team takes often.

HOW TO USE IT

01 Choose a single type of call your team handles.

02 Score every row from 1 to 3 using recent calls.

03 Add the six scores and check the result bands.

04 Name your pilot, success measure and owner.

NEXT STEP

Use this score to choose one call to test.

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ORGANISATION	CALL TYPE	COMPLETED BY	DATE
Wattle Quay Services (fictional)	After-hours booking changes	Dana Lee, Operations	17 May 2027

Score the call

Choose the description that fits best, then enter 1, 2 or 3 in the Score column.

QUESTION	1 · WEAK	2 · OKAY	3 · STRONG	SCORE
Volume How many calls each week?	Fewer than 20	20 to 100	More than 100	3
Repeatability Do calls follow a pattern?	Every call is different	Some variation	The same few patterns	3
Information Can the answers be checked?	In people's heads	Partly written down	In a system it can check	3
Integration Which systems are needed?	Several hard to link	One, with some work	Easy to connect, or none	2
Risk What does a mistake cost?	Costly or hard to undo	Annoying but fixable	Easy to correct	2
Escalation How often is a person needed?	Most calls	Some calls	Few, with clear triggers	2
Total out of 18			ADD THE SIX SCORES	15

What your score means

6–10	Fix the process or information first.
11–14	Pilot with close human oversight.
15–18	Strong candidate. Start here.

Your pilot candidate

THE CALL

Reschedule confirmed maintenance visits after hours.

SUCCESS MEASURE

Confirm 90% of eligible changes with no duplicate bookings.

OWNER

Dana Lee · Operations. Duty manager handles exceptions.

We build AI workflows.

We run them, too.

Spark Factory finds, builds and runs AI workflows for growth companies. We take on one workflow at a time, with a result your team can measure.

01

Find.

Find the repeatable job where AI can improve cost, speed or quality.

02

Build.

Build into the tools you use and test against real work. Fixed price, live in four weeks from sign-off.

03

Run.

Monitor, support and improve the workflow while it runs, for one monthly fee.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Bring one workflow.

Show us one job your team repeats. We'll help you choose the first workflow to trial.

Scan to book a call.

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