

LOOK, NO HANDS

THE RISE OF VOICE

Why Your Business Needs
a Voice Strategy



SONICAIⁱ
AUDIO INNOVATION

INTRO

Welcome to the “post-text” world, where voice-activated technology is transforming media habits and content consumption, and smart speakers, powered by voice commands, are claiming a permanent spot in family rooms, on nightstands, and on kitchen counters.

As the number of voice-activated speakers — led by Amazon and Google, but followed closely by Apple, Samsung and Microsoft — is proliferating, consumers are increasingly comfortable using voice technology integrated into their smartphones, speakers, and cars to access information and execute commands. In fact, by 2020, half of all search will be done through voice, according to comScore.

Smart speakers, powered by voice assistants like Amazon Alexa, Apple’s Siri, and Google Assistant, serve as the basis for this accelerating technology. According to a recent Jacobs Media survey, 18% of American homes have at least one voice-activated speaker and that number is rapidly ascending.

Voice removes the friction of paper, pen, typing and clicking. Just ask.

We believe brands need to move quickly to develop effective voice-first initiatives, much like they did with web and then mobile. Publishers need to be where their customers are — and be there with compelling content.

At SonicAI, **we are audio experts** with decades of experience in content and brand development for AM/FM radio, satellite radio, podcasting, and digital audio. We are deeply invested in voice technology and have a proven track record building successful skills for media companies integrated into their smartphones, speakers, cars, and mobile devices to access information.



By 2020, half of all search will be done by voice

- comScore

We are rapidly transitioning from
text to voice-first

Point and Click



Touch



Voice



“Post-Text” World



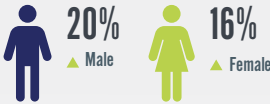
ONE

WHY YOU NEED A VOICE STRATEGY, *NOT JUST A SKILL*

If you've already developed a skill showcasing your brand, you're off to a great start. Now, it is time to evolve and strategize your voice technology work. Voice-activated speakers are more than a novelty, with 42% of users saying they're essential to everyday life, according to Jacobs Media research.

18% of American Homes have at Least One Smart Speaker

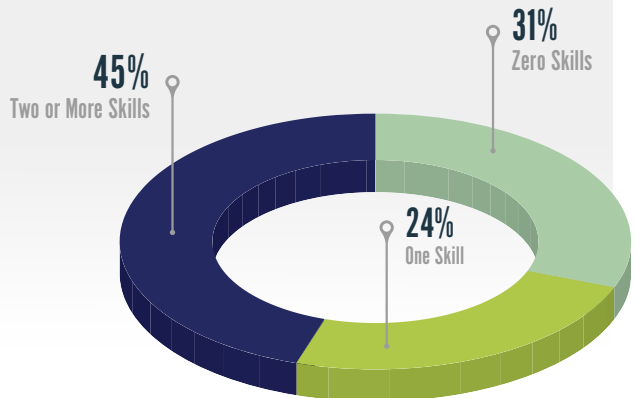
Online Respondents Age 13+ **18%**



% Who Own an Amazon Alexa Enabled Smart Speaker



of Alexa Skills Enabled Among Amazon Smart Speaker Owners



- Jacobs Media

Behind the wheel, carmakers are responding to consumer demand for voice integrations. Ford, BMW, and more automakers are integrating Alexa and other voice assistants into their newest vehicles, while others offer Apple Car Play and Android Auto, which interface with smartphone voice assistants. A seamless voice experience in the car makes it easier and safer for drivers to call up content. If your audience calls up your skill at home or at work, they're more likely to ask for it while driving, too.



TWO


HOW IS THAT SKILL WORKING?

In 2017, many brands raced to lock up an invocation name (that's smart speaker-ese for a skill name) and launch a basic product. Those efforts were not always backed by research, but rather motivated by urgency to make a land grab. So far, early uptake from consumers has been tepid. Among Alexa owners, one-third of users have no skills enabled at all, while another one-quarter say they have just one skill enabled, Jacobs Media research shows.

In 2018, you need a plan to develop content for your skill, and to attract users with a comprehensive promotional and marketing rollout. And the work isn't finished there. Skills need to be revised and refreshed with new content and improved interfacing.

As audio specialists, we can help identify these features and curate the best voice experiences. We have significant experience designing and creating audio programming for multiple platforms, and we are well-positioned to adapt your content for voice-activated devices.

SONIC AI[®] SMART SPEAKER DEVELOPMENT TIPS



- ✓ What is the benefit to the audience?
- ✓ What problem does the skill solve?
- ✓ Is the invocation memorable and intuitive?
- ✓ How will people learn about the skill?
- ✓ Who is going to use it?
- ✓ What is the functionality?

THREE WITH THOUSANDS OF SKILLS, HOW WILL YOURS STAND OUT AND BE USED?

Voice-assisted technology dominated this year's Consumer Electronics Show, a strong indication that voice is rapidly ascending. To advance your brand's voice projects, your team needs to educate consumers on how to use the speakers, as well as their capabilities.

Among current smart speaker users, there is a low awareness of skills and a general frustration in accessing them. We have seen the confusion and frustration with enabling and recalling skill utterances, and we understand the need for clarity and getting it right the first time. Throughout our many years working in audio, we've devoted resources to understanding audio cues, signature sounds, and memorization techniques. We advocate skill names that are intuitive and easy to recall. We recommend offering step-by-step instructions and straightforward navigation, including the option to repeat or go back. An effective skill also requires a roadmap and extensive usability testing. We have the tools and the experts to help create and deploy that strategy.



“We’ve devoted resources to understanding audio cues, signature sounds, and memorization techniques.”

FOUR WE BUILD STICKY SKILLS

The bottom line is you need your skill to stand out, regardless of its purpose.

There is an advantage to being a first-mover, particularly if your competitors are still on the sidelines. Skills can help solve everyday problems, from ordering a pizza to assisting with homework. Tide, for example, offers a stain removal skill with step-by-step instructions for a host of tricky stains; Tide will even text the information to your phone. Other popular skills help users pass time, much like the smartphones in their pockets and handbags.



To deliver a skill in sync with your brand, SonicAi works with your team to identify your core voice strengths.

The sonic branding or sound of your skill is critical. Most skills are voiced by the default voice of Alexa or Google Home. Robotic voices are often devoid of human emotion, and frequently mispronounce names and locations. We advocate utilizing natural voice for all but the basic navigational commands. At Beasley Broadcasting's legendary rock station WMMR Philadelphia, for instance, the skill features a custom introduction from Preston and Steve, the station's beloved morning personalities. Similarly, the popular *Jeopardy* skill opens with Alex Trebek's well-known voice. Such a differentiated approach helps users easily recognize and connect with your skill.

Skills should be engaging, and they can be fun too, like the History Channel's skill, which offers a quiz to test users' historical acumen, or the *Jeopardy* skill, which makes for an entertaining way for family and friends to enjoy a skill together.

“ Robotic voices are often devoid of human emotion ...we advocate natural voice”



MANY OF THE POPULAR EARLY SKILLS ARE NOVELTIES

“Alexa open Cat Facts”

“Nicolas Cage Trivia”

“Taco Facts” “Gordon Ramsay”

Like the early days of mobile apps, many of the popular early skills are unsustainable novelties, but durable content will be rich, multi-layered, and have a clear user benefit.

Families are prime targets for voice-first content. As children grow up relying on this technology, they'll graduate into more advanced skills. We see exciting possibilities to engage children, including storytelling, non-fiction programming, and even homework help. Smart speakers provide a way to connect with members of Generation Z, a brand's pathway toward a successful, vibrant future. In fact, Jacobs Media research shows 14% of online households with users ages 13 to 34 years old own an Alexa, as do 10% of 35 to 44 year olds.

FIVE

HOW TO MARKET AND MONETIZE THAT SKILL

Brands and media companies need to educate users on smart speakers and provide incentives to select your skill. We will work with you to assess appropriate communications channels including “megaphones” from traditional media, as well as social media and digital video. To raise awareness for your skill, share tidbits and tips on your social channels, and plug your skill on-air, online, and on social channels. SonicAI clients Entercom Communications and Beasley Broadcasting were trailblazers launching skills that compliment their over-the-air programming and feature incentive content, and they’re backing them with appropriate promotional support.

As with any investment in new digital technology, businesses want a pathway to monetization. For now, we advise clients to focus on learning alongside your audience, conducting experiments, and keeping pace with the technological trends. In one early experiment, podcast studio Gimlet Media is creating an original Alexa show for kids with brand partners. The “Chompers” audio series will encourage good oral hygiene with brushing-related stories and jokes, with Oral B and Crest Kids as the sponsors. Stay patient on the payoff. Early research is encouraging, with comScore reporting that 16% of smart speaker users are asking for information on local businesses, 11% are ordering products, and 8% ordering food.





IN THIS VOICE-FIRST ENVIRONMENT, WE'RE ONLY JUST BEGINNING TO SEE REAL AND DURABLE CONSUMER BENEFITS

Ready to dig deeper into voice? With a team of Detroit-based developers and digital leaders, combined with our decades of creating outstanding audio experiences, we can help craft your strategy, build and deploy your skill, and advise you how to maximize voice technology's potential. After that, we can make sure your skills are keeping up with industry trends, user demands, and platform capabilities, and keep an eye — and an ear — on the latest devices around the corner, in the home, and in the car.

THANK YOU!

WANT MORE INFO? CONTACT US:



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