



Gold Systems on the Cutting Edge of Voice-Data Interface

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For nearly twenty years, Terry Gold of **Gold Systems** has been operating his technology company from Boulder, Colorado. Over these decades Gold has witnessed substantial change, both from a technology perspective but also within the community. Speaking from an office that houses a small collection of computer and telephone relics, Gold remembers that when he started, “I knew one other [technology] entrepreneur” in Boulder, and recalls with a wan smile his firm’s first speech recognition product – a system built for the Ford Automobile leasing division. But just as Boulder has gained considerable momentum over the years, so has Gold Systems; what started out as a two-person partnership (with Jim Fudge) now counts approximately fifty employees, and has created voice-recognition interfaces that service hundreds of millions of phone calls every year.



GOLD SYSTEMS

Gold, who considers himself a “techie at heart,” believes his company’s success is a result of putting less emphasis on the technology, instead focusing on how

customers use the products; oftentimes he believes engineers “try to go to far,” while Gold Systems “tries to take the user’s perspective.” In practice, this means that Gold spends a lot of time considering how customers interact with a voice-recognition system, deconstructing the most efficient methods to supply callers with the information they desire. A key aspect is developing system prompts that elicit responses that make it easier for the voice recognition software to understand. Employees regularly listen to recordings of actual calls to determine how callers are responding to the interface. Explains Gold, “a big part of deployment is tuning.”

The products Gold Systems offers are largely customized for each client, and include applications for both intra-company communication as well as engagement with customers. The award-winning Password Reset product, for example, replaces the need to call the company help desk when an employee’s password is lost, forgotten, or expired. Gold estimates that 25% of calls to a given IT help desk involve password replacement, a costly prospect in companies with tens of thousands of employees. This highly secure and scalable product works with existing databases, directories, and

phone systems, and provides employees immediate access to a temporary password once the worker has supplied answers to a series of security questions. V-Dialer, another Gold Systems product, works as an automated receptionist. Callers merely say the name or department of the employee they are seeking to contact and are immediately transferred, dispensing with the need to remember extensions. Like Password Reset, this product works with a company's existing hardware and phone systems.

Gold Systems works closely with Microsoft, which holds the patents to quite a bit of voice-recognition IP, but considers itself "platform agnostic" when it comes to designing interfaces for its clientele. During the firm's history it has worked with partners such as AT&T and Cisco, and Gold takes pride in his company's ability to provide solutions that fit within a customer's existing systems. While the most advanced products on the market today utilize Voice over the Internet Protocol (VoIP), Gold understands that many firms have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in hardwired PBX systems they are unlikely to abandon. Gold believes part of the value the company provides their clients is advice on telephony spending decisions: "We're helping companies plan for the future," a day when "we won't have PBXs or copper lines."

Despite vast changes in the methods of communication, Gold Systems has managed to not only stay relevant but remain on the leading edge of technology. As a techie, Gold's curiosity drives him toward "knowing what [technology] is out there," ensuring the company stays on top of new developments. What Gold has learned through experience "is knowing when to jump" into a new product area that is both exciting in theory while also delivering on the promise to offer real value to customers.

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