

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/in-brief/a-voice-first-moment/>

Voicex founder and Cisco Contact Center VP and GM Omar Tawakol explains the value proposition behind Voicex, the company he founded in 2017 and sold to Cisco in September 2019. The strategy, he says, was to mirror what was happening in consumer tech with innovations like Siri and Alexa, and bring a voice-first interface into the work environment.



Transcript

So, first I'll ask you a question, back in 2018, in the summer, there was a baby who said their first words, and it wasn't mom or dad, anyone wanna guess what it was? - [Audience] Alexa.. - Yeah Alexa, old news by now.. So, that's Joe Brady.. And there's this new generation of people who have an expectation that they can go and have a conversation with a device.. And this is just taking off, it's just really interesting how it's gonna transform what you expect in dealing with devices.. And we had this thesis that, there was gonna be voice first moment.. Just like back in 2012, Zuckerberg had his mobile first moment, saying stop designing for the web, start first for the mobile, and think of the web second.. We thought that there was gonna be a moment in the enterprise, this is what's happening in the consumer space.. In the enterprise space, there will be a moment when you start designing interfaces for a voice conversation, and the expectation will be that the designers understand you, not you understand the interface.. So you have to get into natural language and make it easy for people to interact..

So that was really what we were building, we wanted to build the voice first world, for more a more productive work environment.. We looked at meetings first, because if you look at meetings, it's like 20 to 30% of your time, and if your an executive it's like 70% of your time.. And billions of dollars are spent keeping people in meetings, and you repeat the same things over and over, and what we wanted to do was just say, we're gonna make them productive and help you turn talk into action.. You can walk into a meeting, you can make a few notes, say, you know, this is the action we agreed on, this is the decision we agreed on, and it would be carried forward, shared with people, and no longer be ephemeral...