

IBM Technology to Protect Customer Data in the Call Center Industry

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IBM's global call centers deliver superior customer service through a range of secure voice-based services.

Researchers at IBM's India Research Laboratory have developed advanced data masking technology that helps call centers protect critical data without disrupting customer service or business operations. As IBM continuously seeks new methods to ensure privacy and security, the company intends to utilize this capability in its own call center operations to further protect information for its services clients around the world.

The new data masking technology helps call centers and Information Technology Enabled Service (ITES) organizations by providing effective security and privacy of data which helps in managing customer trust and

protecting the brand, which is critical for the call center industry. Developed by IBM's India Research Laboratory, the technology is a speech analytics tool that helps in complying with security and privacy legislation and compliance standards, which in turn enhances customer satisfaction.

Designed to help dramatically improve call centers, this sophisticated technology detects and masks private and sensitive information collected from audio recordings of conversations between call center agents and customers. Previously, there was no known technology which provided this functionality.

"Call centers, and the agents who answer customer questions and address their concerns, play a vital role in reinforcing their organization's brand experience while maintaining customer trust. The ability to maintain customer trust requires organizations to be able to ensure the security of their customers' private information, such as credit card numbers, personal identification numbers (PIN), social security numbers and other information collected through agent-customer interactions," said Dr. Guruduth Banavar, Director, IBM India Research Laboratory. "Designed to transform data for better security and privacy, this technology, developed by IBM Research, helps to ensure effective measures to safeguard company brands and manage customer trust."

Typically, in a contact center the audio recordings are stored and subsequently shared with various individuals for different purposes such as auditing, personnel training, and quality management. During the process of sharing, audio files become vulnerable to unauthorized individuals getting access to sensitive information, which opens opportunities for personal and confidential information theft and other misuse. This unique technology from IBM's India Research Laboratory processes these audio recordings in order to detect and mask the sensitive information and makes it accessible to authorized personnel

only; thus preventing misuse of the data.

The new solution will help companies protect their data while taking advantage of the best resources available throughout the world. Voice and screen masking utilizes a combination of speech analytics and metadata to locate portions of an audio or screen recordings that contain sensitive data such as a credit card or bank account numbers. The masking solution blocks that portion of the call or screen during playback for individuals that are not authorized to hear or view the sensitive information.

This novel technology helps in protecting audio files, particularly the agent customer interaction in a contact center against misuse and theft. It helps enterprises to comply with various security and privacy legislations and comply with multiple industry standards. "Though the technology can be used in any setting, it is especially vital for contact centers and the ITES industry where sensitive information is exchanged," said Dr. Mukesh Mohania, who heads the Information Management research team at IBM's India Research Laboratory.

There is an increasing awareness for companies to protect the privacy of their customer information. Given the pace at which outsourcing industry is expanding and the sensitivity to potential misuse of customer data, it becomes imperative to manage customer trust. This next-generation tool will help the outsourcing industry to secure customer information in agent-customer recordings by masking sensitive data in voice and screen recordings from unauthorized users to protect against identity theft and fraud.

Source: IBM

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