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Relay Your Way - How To Make VCO Features Work For You! Two-Line Voice Carryover

Patti Bannier

Patti Bannier: Thank you for coming to Relay Your Way. At Hamilton Relay, we pride ourselves on making the relay as individual and personalized as possible. We try to do whatever best meets each customer's needs. Today what I will be focusing on is voice carryover, two-line voice carryover and Internet relay. Christa Cervantes, from our Nebraska office, and Holly Thomas Mowery, from our Idaho office are also here to help us.

To use two-line voice carryover, you will need a telephone line. The reason I put that down is that, as opposed to wireless, this system works the best with a land-line telephone. You may also need, if you have residual hearing, a phone with a strong amplifier. These are available at stores such as Kmart. There are also other more powerful amplifiers that you can buy in the handset. You may need a TTY with a fast transmission—preferably one that uses turbocode, as ASCII is a bit fuzzy. Or you could use a VCO phone or a PC. You also need to have 3 way calling, which allows you to be able to conference a third party. This is a feature that you purchase through your local telephone company. If you have a PC, you can use that instead of a TTY for your two-line VCO call. Get on the web and pull up <http://www.hiprelay.com>

Two way voice calls are for VCO users—those of you who want to speak for yourselves. You call in through the relay, but the person that you are calling will hear your voice. And when the other person responds, what is being said will be typed back to you. When the CA dials the person you are calling, she announces that it is a relay call. This can cause some problems--as some people, who are not familiar with relay, may hang up. Hang-ups are very common. At Hamilton Relay, we have what's called a customer profile. You have an opportunity to tailor the relay calls the way that you want them done. You can do that by filling out a form that asks if you want the CA to announce your call as a relay call or not. If you choose for them not to, the CA will place the call and say nothing. So when you get the GA signal, you have to start talking right away, with the understanding that the person on the other end may or may not have

any idea of what a relay call is. If there is a lag involved, it is not going to be as smooth as a voice call.

I am pretty sure all relay providers have their own version of a profile. We have been trying to expand what we can do with our customer profile. So that when you call and it comes into our relay center, all of your preferences automatically pop up on the screen, and no instructions to the CA are necessary. However, if you have a profile, and for one call you don't want to use it, you can tell or type the instructions to the CA instead.

I encourage you to really take advantage of using the customer profile. If you don't want a standardized greeting, you can tell the CA what you want them to say on a case by case basis. Having a profile is best. However, you are free to think through what you want for every call. When you spell out a greeting on your profile, every call that you make will be affected by that profile unless you specify otherwise. If you are writing your own greeting, you may want to make it very generic. If you don't want to follow that one greeting, simply tell the CA what you want said.

Now let's try an ordinary VCO call. The phone we are using for this demonstration is an Ameriphone. It has the screen built in. You can use a TTY and a hand set and go back and forth or you can use a TTY with a splitter in the back so you can keep the handset at ear level to speak into. This particular model has a push button that will inform the relay automatically that you want VCO on. You dial the relay, hit the button and it says there is a request for VCO. Wait until you see on the screen VCO is on. And then you are free to begin voicing. Voice the number directly to the CA and, from that point on, you are voicing your half of the conversation and reading what is being said to you.

Audience Member: I don't know how to do this. I have never done this before.

Christa Cervantes: Call the relay, wait until they answer, then give them the number and start talking.

Patti Bannier: You must say GA after you finish talking and it is the other person's turn to talk. This is so each person knows when the other is done. Hearing people on a regular call interrupt each other, but with the relay, only one person can talk at one time.

Voice mail is not a problem in a VCO call. If you know what extension you need, you simply tell the CA before she dials so that she can maneuver through the menu. You can interrupt the CA at this point. If you see coming across, "press two for customer service," and that's what you want, you hit the interrupt button, if you have one, or tap on the space bar. It may not come up. That's why some people will tell the CA, "CA, I want to talk to a live person." The CA will listen until that option comes up.

Let's talk about a two-line voice carryover call. This type of system allows you to hear what's happening on the other end, if you have residual hearing. And it is being typed to you, too. With two-line voice carryover, the CA is not in control of the call. That's a good thing, as it makes the call far closer to a normal call. However, you need to give the CA permission to not type verbatim, or that is just what they will attempt to do. The CAs are not allowed to ask the person

you are talking to to slow down. Hearing people like to talk very fast. We hire CAs who can type a minimum of 65 words per minute. But a person is talking 130 to 170 words a minute and the CAs cannot ask them to slow down. Before you have your call completely set up, tell the CA that it is okay to summarize. That does not mean editing, but rather, give you the important information.

For two line VCO to work, you need to have two telephone lines with two different telephone numbers. In some states, the Public Service Commission has ruled that the telephone companies cannot charge you for the installation or use of the second line, or for 3 way calling, or conference line.

Start with the text end of the call. You can use a TTY or a PC to do this. If you have a TTY, it is best to have one with a fast transmission speed. A TTY with Turbo code is preferable.

Now, one of your lines is for a voice telephone. Then you have another line with its own telephone number that's hooked up to your laptop or your desktop or TTY. With your TTY or PC, call the relay CA and tell them that you want to make a two line VCO call. Then ask that they call you back at your voice phone line and give them that number. When you use two line VCO, it is a good idea to remind them because you are making the call to the relay and then the relay is calling YOU back. When they call you back, ask them if they can understand your voice. You can read their answer on the TTY or computer. Then explain what it is you are doing—that you are making a two line VCO call and are going to put them on hold while you conference somebody else in. Remind them that you want them to type the voice of who you are calling, not your voice. When they type yes, tell them again you are putting them on hold. Whatever it is that you use to access your 3 way calling on is activated at this time. The CA is now on hold. Call the number you want and then press the hold button again to take the CA off hold. So now the call is perfectly set up and, when it is answered, the CA begins typing what is being said to you. The CA will tell you in parentheses if who you are talking to is talking too fast. If the CA types "talking too fast," then it is up to you to tell whoever you are talking to to slow down or not. It is up to you to let that person know that it is a relay call. If you wish to use 2 line VCO regularly, and want it included in your profile or brand, you should contact your relay provider's customer service department.

Our new national number for contacting relay, 711, is wonderful, but we need your help. You may find that it doesn't work at hotels and other places. You need to contact the person who is responsible for the telephone system there and ask them to contact the relay customer service department. The relay will help them to program their telephone system so that dialing 711 will be connect you to the relay.

You can also access relay on the Internet. Now to do this, I am going to use my laptop instead of the TTY. I have two lines. First we need to log on to the relay, and ask them to call us back here on the voice line. Then proceed as we would if we were using a TTY.

When you log onto the website you will be asked to fill out a form for the call. This will include a screen name of your choice which allows you to follow who is saying what on the call. You do need two lines, both with their own numbers, just as you do for a TTY 2-line call. The voice telephone, or line, must have 3 way calling.

Audience Member: Why would a person use a computer instead of a TTY or the phone itself?

Christa Cervantes: Some people like to use the Internet. It is a matter of personal preference. The other thing about using the Internet is no long distance costs. You cannot be charged for that because it is done through the Internet, and your local ISP provider.

Holly Thomas-Moweryy: Also, if you have a computer, you are probably already logged on and it is all set to go.

Audience Member: It seems as though people are not comfortable with my calling them using VCO. No matter how I try, I cannot get anyone to call me using that service. Any suggestions?

Patti Bannier: At Hamilton we have what we call "call me" cards and we give those out free. You have to call the relay and ask for them. It is the size of a business card, and put your name to call me, please dial 711 and then it explains how it works. You then give these out to people you call.

Audience Member: Does the 711 replace 1-800numbers?

Patti Bannier: 711 is in addition to the 800 numbers. When you are traveling, if you are at a pay phone, you can dial 711 and you are connected to that state's relay, whose number you may not know.

Audience Member: I tried using two-line voice carryover. A lot of times the people I am calling will hang up on me before I get a chance to say anything. I have to wait for the relay operator to type what they say when the call is picked up before saying anything.

Patti Bannier: Remember, in a two-line VCO call the CA says nothing. They are invisible to your caller. You are making the call to the relay and receiving the relay and conferencing somebody in. Their job is to type that person's voice. Second, once you have dialed the number and hit the conference button, you need to watch that screen. As soon as you see the gender, go ahead and start talking so they don't hang up.

Bio: Patti Bannier is the Contract Manager with Hamilton Relay Services. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Deaf Education and Interpreting and is a Certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. Wisconsin Self Help for Hard of Hearing awarded Patti the Outreach Award for the year 2000.

Patti has worked in the relay industry since 1992. She has assumed various positions within relay, which has allowed her to diversify her skills. She has extensive experience working in Customer Service, as the Human Resource Interpreter, a Communication Assistant (CA), a CA Supervisor and as a Trainer. Her passion continues to be education and outreach. She believes that technology has little value unless people have access to it and know how to use it effectively.

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