[VoG] – [Voice of the Guest]

The Operator's Dictionary · https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/vog-voice-of-the-guest/

Definition

Voice of the Guest — the operator-owned, Road 2, external-party listening discipline through which the operator reads Guest-signal directly against the [Guest Contract] the operation is holding with each specific Guest. Sits inside the [Voice Systems] family as the external-party child on the Road 2 axis, positioned against VoC (Voice of the Customer) as the industry-canonical Road 1 external-party read.

VoG names the reading discipline the operator was already running under the framework's Road 2 language but which the industry does not have a canonical acronym for. The industry has VoC as the transactional-register external-party listening architecture; the relational-register counterpart existed as vocabulary in specific operator-consulting practice but was not locked as canon. This entry locks it.

Mechanism

Direct-signal read against a specific contract-object. VoG runs against the [Guest Contract] the operation holds with each specific Guest — not against a market abstraction, cohort average, or aggregate customer-satisfaction score. When a Guest returns for the fourth time in six weeks, that returning-behavior is Guest-signal against the specific [Guest Contract] the operation and that Guest are holding. When another Guest stops returning after a specific stage-interaction, the not-returning-behavior is Guest-signal against a specific contract-breach the operation caused. VoG reads the signal against the specific contract, not against a category.

Relational-register signal only. VoG runs on signal that arrives in relational form: language, story, complaint, silence, return-behavior, ask, refusal, tone-in-conversation, referral-behavior, Guest-to-cast-relationship formation. Score-form signal (star ratings, sentiment scores, review-aggregate output) is Road 1 by structure and belongs to VoC regardless of whether the operator prefers Guest-language. If the incoming signal is a number or a category, the read is Road 1. If the incoming signal is direct Guest-language or direct Guest-behavior, the read is Road 2.

Causal reading without aggregation. VoG output is a causal read of the specific Guest-signal against the specific [Guest Contract] state. The operator asks: what is this Guest saying about the contract we hold with them? Where is the contract being kept? Where is it breaking? What is the specific move on the operator's side? Aggregation across Guests is a separate Road 1 activity that produces different output; VoG does not aggregate the specific into the general and does not treat aggregate-output as a substitute for specific-read.

Guest-as-contract-party, not customer-as-data-source. The Guest is a party to a specific contract the operation holds. The Guest has a name, a history with the operation, a specific relationship to a specific stage and a specific cast, and specific expectations that were established by prior operating conduct. The customer, in the VoC frame, is a data-source whose signal is aggregated into the platform's model. VoG refuses this collapse. The Guest is the specific person the operation contracted with; the read is of that party against that contract.

Operator-owned, not platform-mediated. VoG runs from Guest-signal directly to operator-read, without an intermediating aggregation platform interpreting the signal for the operator. The operator hears the Guest, reads against the [Guest Contract], produces the causal read, and decides the move. Platforms may input Road 1 signal that informs the operator's context, but they do not replace the operator's Road 2 read. The moment a platform is producing the read and the operator is consuming the output, the read has collapsed to VoC regardless of vocabulary.

Contract-state is the load-bearing output. A VoG read produces a specific assessment of contract-state: contract is being kept in dimension X, breaking in dimension Y, at risk in dimension Z. The output is not a Guest-satisfaction verdict, not a Guest-experience score, not a NPS-adjacent metric. The output is a causal read of the specific contract with the specific Guest, actionable at the operator's next-move layer.

Load-Bearing Distinction

Not VoC. VoC is the industry-canonical Road 1 external-party listening architecture — customer-as-data-source, aggregation-mediated, transactional-register, score-form output. VoG is the Road 2 counterpart: Guest-as-contract-party, direct-signal, relational-register, contract-state output. VoC has legitimate Road 1 uses (market positioning, platform-mediated review response, aggregate trend read); VoC does not become VoG by being applied to Guest-labeled data. The register is the read.

Not [Guest Experience] output. [Guest Experience] is the produced Product the operation delivers under the [Guest Contract]. VoG is the reading discipline that hears whether the [Guest

Experience] the operation is producing matches the [Guest Experience] the [Guest Contract] specifies. [Guest Experience] is what VoG reads about; VoG is the reading discipline itself. Conflating the two collapses the framework's Product-vs-Read distinction.

Not [Guest Data]. [Guest Data] is a corpus of transactional signals about customers-as-data-source (transaction history, POS behavior, ordering patterns, dwell-time, party-size, day-of-week frequency). VoG output is a causal read of Guest-as-contract-party. [Guest Data] may inform a Road 1 read of the customer-aggregate; it does not become VoG output by being consulted by an operator who prefers Guest-vocabulary. The two are different reads with different registers.

Not "Guest feedback." "Guest feedback" is a generic category that absorbs whatever signal arrives — reviews, surveys, comment cards, comments-to-server, complaints — without register discipline or contract-anchoring. VoG is a specific discipline with specific input requirements (relational-register signal), a specific reading object ([Guest Contract] state), and specific output (causal contract-state read). Generic "Guest feedback" mixes registers, mixes signal-sources, and produces output the operator cannot act on at the contract layer.

Not sentiment. Sentiment is a Road 1 output category — a scored or categorized read of an emotional-valence signal. VoG reads emotional signal as one input among several, but does not reduce Guest-signal to sentiment. A Guest whose signal reads as "positive sentiment" but whose contract with the operation is deteriorating (fewer visits, higher ask-count, longer silences between visits) is producing a VoG contract-breach signal that a sentiment read would miss entirely. VoG holds the causal read; sentiment produces a categorical label.

Not [Third-Party Arbitrage] output. [Third-Party Arbitrage] describes the mechanism by which platforms capture operator margin, experience, and Guest intelligence. Platform-produced "Voice of the Customer" output is one form of that captured Guest intelligence, arbitraged and returned to the operator in the platform's register on the platform's terms. VoG is what the operator runs to refuse the arbitrage on the intelligence-layer specifically — reading Guests directly instead of consuming the platform's read of them.

Why it is load-bearing: without VoG named as its own canonical read, every operator conversation about Guest listening defaults to VoC vocabulary because that is what the industry offers. The operator running Road 2 discipline has no term for what they are doing and cannot teach it, cannot hire against it, cannot audit whether the operation is doing it, cannot defend it against platform-substitution pressure. Naming VoG makes the discipline instrumentable — operators can build for it, cast can produce for it, and the register split becomes visible in the operation's

operating vocabulary.

Diagnostic Tests

Test One — The Contract-Object Test. Ask the operator to describe the last three Guest-signals they read and to name the specific [Guest Contract] each signal was read against. If the operator can name specific contracts (with specific Guests, in specific relational context, at specific contract-states), the read was contract-anchored and Road 2. If the operator's answer is a general category (Guest satisfaction, brand health, GX quality) or names no contract-object at all, the read was not VoG regardless of vocabulary — it was general-purpose listening or Road 1 aggregate read.

Test Two — The Signal-Form Test. For the last five pieces of Guest-signal the operator processed, ask how each signal arrived. Direct language, direct-observation, direct-conversation, direct-behavior are Road 2 forms. Star-rating, review-score, sentiment classification, aggregator notification, dashboard update are Road 1 forms. VoG requires Road 2 signal at the input layer. If more than one or two of the five arrived in Road 1 form, the operator is running VoC and calling it VoG.

Test Three — The Aggregation Test. Ask: does the operator's Guest read produce specific contract-state assessments for specific Guests, or does it produce an aggregate output that generalizes across Guests? Specific-contract-state output is VoG. Aggregate output (this month's Guest satisfaction, this week's GX trend, the segment's satisfaction score) is Road 1 output and belongs to VoC. VoG can be complemented by aggregate reads; it does not consist of them.

Test Four — The Cast Read-Back Test. Ask the leads and stage cast what the operator learned from the most recent Guest read. If the answer is a score, a category, or a general observation, the read was Road 1. If the answer is a specific Guest, a specific contract-issue, and a specific next move the operation is taking, the read was VoG. The cast's read-back of the read is a diagnostic on what actually got produced — VoG output is teachable to the cast at the specific-Guest level; VoC output collapses to averages the cast cannot act on.

Test Five — The Move-Trigger Test. Look at the operator's last five operating moves triggered by "Guest signal." For each move, trace the signal-to-move chain. VoG-triggered moves are specific: a specific Guest-signal produced a specific contract-state read that produced a specific move against a specific contract-position. VoC-triggered moves are categorical: an aggregate signal produced a general read that produced a general policy or general adjustment. The ratio of

specific-move to categorical-move is the VoG density of the operation.

Family Position

Sits inside [Voice Systems] as the external-party child on the Road 2 axis. Family:

- External axis: VoC (Road 1, industry-canonical) — VoG (Road 2, this entry)
- Internal axis: [Transactional VoE] (Road 1) — [Relational VoE] (Road 2)

VoG is one of two operator-owned Road 2 reads that [Voice Systems] holds. The other is [Relational VoE] on the internal-party axis. VoG reads externally (against Guests as contract-party); [Relational VoE] reads internally (against cast as contract-party). Both share Road 2 register, direct-signal discipline, contract-object anchoring, and operator-owned reading. They differ only in party.

Perspective application. VoG is a Perspective-fundamental discipline first because it names how the operator perceives Guests. The perceptual choice — Guest-as-contract-party vs. customer-as-data-source — is the load-bearing move VoG makes at the Perspective layer. Every downstream Guest-related discipline (Product design against [Guest Contract], cast production against Guest-signal, Profit read against Guest-behavior) depends on this perceptual anchor being VoG-shaped, not VoC-shaped.

Product application. The Product is the GX the operation produces under the [Guest Contract]. VoG applied to Product is the read that tells the operator whether the GX being produced matches the GX the specific Guest was contracted into. Product-side VoG discipline produces contract-state reads at the specific-Guest layer that inform Product refinement: this specific Guest's contract-experience is breaking on dimension X because of a specific Product-decision the operation is making. Aggregate Product-read is a separate discipline; VoG is the specific-party-level Product read.

People application. People-side VoG discipline is the operator hearing Guests directly about the cast the operation is deploying — not through review-aggregators or platform-mediated cast-evaluation, but through direct Guest-signal about specific cast-Guest interactions. VoG informs [Cast Contract] adjustments the operator makes based on Guest-signal about specific cast-execution. This is different from cast-side VoG (which does not exist as a term — that read runs on [Relational VoE]) and different from VoC-aggregate cast-scoring platforms produce.

Performance application. Performance-side VoG is the shift-level Guest read the operator runs during and immediately after stage-execution. Real-time relational-register signal from Guests (facial expression, body language, tone-of-request, unsolicited comment, discretionary behavior) is read directly against the [Guest Contract] the operation is holding with each Guest in the room. Shift-level VoG produces same-shift correction moves and post-shift contract-state assessments that inform next-shift Product decisions.

Profit application. VoG output is a leading indicator of Profit lag. Guest-side VoG signal (return-behavior, referral-behavior, ask-behavior, complaint-pattern, silence-pattern, discretionary-spend-pattern) leads Guest-side revenue by weeks to months. The operator reading VoG output sees contract-state movement before it lands on the P&L. VoG-triggered moves at the contract layer can arrest or accelerate Profit-side lag depending on the operator's read discipline.

Cross-References To Locked IP

Parent:

- [Voice Systems] — the operator-owned, Road 2 listening architecture; VoG is its external-party child
- [Two Roads] — the parent architecture that produces the register split VoG runs on

Related:

- [The Guest Contract] — the contract-object VoG reads against
- [The Read] — the aggregate operator discipline VoG feeds into
- [Guest Experience] / [GX] — the Product VoG reads about
- [Causal Read] — the reading discipline VoG runs at the party-signal layer
- [Relational Compounding] — the operator discipline VoG signal feeds; Guest-side compounding depends on VoG output
- [The Guest] — the party VoG reads
- [By Design Or By Default] — VoG is the by-design external-party read; VoC is the default

Opposing patterns:

- VoC — the Road 1 external-party listening architecture VoG names against
- [Third-Party Arbitrage] — the mechanism that captures VoG territory when the operator delegates listening to a platform
- [Guest Data]-as-Guest-read — the collapse VoG refuses on the input-signal side
- Sentiment-as-Guest-read — the collapse VoG refuses on the output side
- Platform-scored review output — the format VoG refuses to treat as VoG output

Why This Matters

The industry has no canonical Road 2 external-party listening acronym. VoC is the only term the industry offers, and it carries Road 1 register into every conversation about Guest listening by default. Operators running Road 2 discipline — hearing Guests directly, holding [Guest Contract] as the reading anchor, refusing platform-mediated aggregation as the primary read — have had no name for what they are doing. Without a name, the discipline cannot be taught, hired against, systematized, or defended. Without a name, VoC absorbs the vocabulary space and Road 2 external-party listening remains invisible even to operators running it.

VoG earned its name because the Road 2 listening territory is what separates operations that hold Guest relationships across years from operations that cycle Guests through transactional experiences at industry-average rates. The reading discipline is load-bearing. Operations that run VoG produce contract-state reads their competitors cannot see; operations that run only VoC produce the same aggregate reads every operator with the same platform subscription produces. VoG is where the Road 2 operator's competitive edge on the listening axis actually lives.

Beyond the operator-competitive layer, VoG is where the [Guest Contract] becomes real as an operating discipline. An operation without VoG cannot know the contract-state of any specific [Guest Contract] it holds; it can only know aggregate customer-satisfaction levels. The [Guest Contract] as a framework term requires VoG as its reading discipline. Without VoG, [Guest Contract] is a rhetorical frame; with VoG, it is an instrumentable operating discipline the operator runs against every specific Guest the operation serves.

VoG also names what platforms cannot deliver. Every "Voice of the Customer" platform, no matter how sophisticated the AI or how deep the language processing, produces Road 1 output by structure — because the platform's business model requires aggregation, categorization, and

scoring to justify the subscription. The platform cannot produce operator-owned, direct-signal, contract-anchored, causal Road 2 read. VoG is the operator's territory by structure. Platforms can inform VoG as one input signal; they cannot become VoG.

Operating Consequence

Name every Guest read as VoG or VoC. When the operator or leads reach for a Guest-listening output, they name the register. "Let me check the VoC output" for platform-aggregated review data; "let me run the VoG read" for direct-Guest reading against specific contracts. The vocabulary discipline is where the register-mixing failure becomes visible in real-time and correctable.

Read specific Guests against specific contracts, weekly minimum. The operator carries an active VoG reading practice: specific Guests, specific [Guest Contracts], specific contract-state reads, specific moves. Weekly is a floor; the specific rhythm depends on the operation's scale and the operator's discipline. The practice does not collapse to reading aggregate reports and calling that a VoG read.

Refuse the Guest-Data-as-Guest-read collapse. The operator does not treat [Guest Data] (transactional signal about customers-as-data-source) as VoG input. [Guest Data] is Road 1 input to a Road 1 read; it does not become Road 2 by being consulted by an operator with Road 2 vocabulary. The operator uses [Guest Data] for its Road 1 uses and reads Guests directly for VoG.

Refuse the sentiment-as-Guest-read collapse. Sentiment scores are Road 1 output. The operator does not confuse a positive-sentiment aggregate with a healthy [Guest Contract] state, and does not confuse a negative-sentiment aggregate with a broken [Guest Contract] state. Sentiment may correlate with contract-state at the aggregate; it does not substitute for the specific-Guest contract-state read.

Refuse platform-substitution of VoG. No platform, agency, AI, or consultant runs the operator's VoG for them. The operator hears the Guest directly. Platforms may input Road 1 signal that contextualizes; they do not replace the operator's read. Delegating VoG is delegating the [Guest Contract] to whichever party runs the platform, and the platform's incentives are structurally Road 1.

Reserve relational-register vocabulary for VoG reads. "Guest," "contract," "relationship," "returning behavior," "referral," "ask" enter VoG reads. Score-form and category-form vocabulary ("satisfaction score," "sentiment quintile," "GX index," "brand health") stays with VoC. The vocabulary discipline is where the register discipline holds at the operating-language layer.

Teach cast to produce VoG-shaped signal. The cast producing hospitality is where VoG signal arrives from. Cast trained to hear Guests directly, remember specific-Guest history, notice specific contract-breach signals, and surface them to the operator are the VoG production layer of the operation. Cast trained to route Guest signal to a survey link or a review-request script are the VoC production layer. The operator decides which layer the operation is running.

What Changes Tomorrow

Pick three specific Guests the operation is currently holding [Guest Contracts] with — one whose contract is compounding (returning, referring, asking for more), one whose contract is stable (regular but not compounding), one whose contract is at risk (silence, longer intervals, recent friction). Name them by name. For each, the operator writes down what the [Guest Contract] with that specific Guest currently is — the specific version, the specific expectations established by prior operating conduct, the specific compounding or breach state the operator reads.

Then the operator runs a VoG read on each of the three. For the compounding Guest: what specific signal is producing the compounding, what specific operating conduct is honoring the contract, what specific move keeps compounding on track. For the stable Guest: why is the contract stable rather than compounding, what specific move could shift the contract into compounding territory, what is the operator holding back or not producing. For the at-risk Guest: what specific contract-breach signal has arrived, when did it arrive, what specific operating conduct produced the breach, what specific move addresses it before the contract terminates.

The leading indicator to watch: does the operator's next Guest read run the same way — three specific Guests, specific contracts, specific reads, specific moves — or does the operator revert to aggregate output the platform produced? If the operator holds the specific-Guest VoG practice, the discipline is starting to hold. If the operator reverts to aggregate reads, the register has collapsed and the practice needs re-installation.

Beyond the three-Guest drill, the operator commits to running a specific VoG practice weekly minimum going forward — specific Guests, specific contracts, specific reads, specific moves. The practice becomes a rhythm the operation runs, not an event the operator schedules occasionally. This is where the discipline becomes operating architecture instead of workshop content, and the [Guest Contract] moves from framework term to daily reading object.