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Siri Investor Morgenthaler On The Next Generation Of Voice Investments

Gary Morgenthaler has always put his money where his mouth is—particularly if the technology recognizes his voice.

A partner at the eponymous firm [Morgenthaler Ventures](#), he was an early investor in voice-recognition companies [Nuance Communications](#) and [Siri](#), whose technology Apple acquired last year and incorporated into the new iPhone 4S. He has watched the role of voice technologies evolve from answering simple and rigidly structured questions at call centers to helping iPhone 4S users do, well...pretty much everything.

Allowing users to converse with their phone to send messages, schedule meetings, place phone calls, find restaurants and play music, Siri is one of the most buzzed-about features on the iPhone 4S. Siri answers questions with snark and sass, understands natural speech, predicts intentions and, some say, represents a major leap in human to machine communications.

What follows are edited excerpts from a conversation with Morgenthaler about why voice is the new user interface and what he wants to invest in next.

Q. Why is Siri such a big deal?

A. First there was the mouse, then gestural and now this. Conversational interface is the third advancement in user interface. There's a lot of excitement around this because people see it's a whole new way of interacting with computers that's easier and more efficient—it's a more human way of connecting with computers.

People are realizing that once you try this, there's no going back. Within two to three years, you can expect Siri to respond as fast as a human, except where network service is poor.

Q. How do we push forward from here? How does Siri become the default UI platform?

A. Today, Siri is limited to 15 use cases—texting, email, calendars, notes, reminders, music, directions, web search, etc. These use cases are mostly Apple internal that make the iPhone 4S more productive and easier to use. What's left to be done is to open it up to the 200,000 developers. The real revolution will be when Apple opens it up and developers begin building applications on it.

Q. So what will you be investing in?



Gary Morgenthaler says that within two to three years, Siri will respond as fast as a human, except where network service is poor.

A. Perfunctory speech applications are dead. It seems a given that you will be able to talk with your Macintosh and your iPad in the future using Siri. But why not Apple TV? Why shouldn't you be able to request entertainment services at home from your couch and have Siri intermediate and provide those services for you?

More broadly, it's easy to imagine myriad uses for Siri in your car and for other devices in your home. Why shouldn't you be able to speak to them in ordinary language to elicit information, services and transactions? Now that Siri exists, these extensions of the technology seem inevitable.

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