Google to shutter CallJoy, virtual agent for SMBs, on July 22

Just as I was promoting CallJoy as a model for fee-based services for the small business market during my SMX Next session this morning, I learned that Google was shutting it down. The service will end on July 22.

Another Area 120 'experiment.' A Google spokesperson provided the following statement: "Like all projects from Area 120, CallJoy was an experiment. We're proud of the team's work and achievements, and we look forward to seeing the great things they'll continue to do at Google."

CallJoy was launched in May 2019. The virtual agent SaaS offering answered calls, filtered spam (including inside sales calls) and provided basic business information (e.g. , hours) to consumers. It cost $39 per month.

Helping SMBs focus and solve FAQs. CallJoy was initially aimed at two primary SMB problems: help owners avoid common calls that would distract them and ensure that their customers get answers to questions. It also offered call transcripts and customer analytics. These features alone probably justified the $39 monthly fee.

In November, CallJoy got a set of feature upgrades that allowed for considerable customization and verticalization. It was an enterprise-grade tool made accessible to the SMB market.

Probably not enough adoption. It's possible that Google got some interesting and useful insights from CallJoy and that it served its intended purpose. But that's less likely than the probability that there simply wasn't enough adoption or

revenue for Google to justify continuing the service.

Google may not have sufficiently made the case for CallJoy to the SMB market or it may have had a flawed go-to-market strategy. (I don't believe there was a free trial.) But it's a product that probably needed to be used fairly extensively before its full value could be recognized.

Why we care. Based on this experience, Google could conclude that SaaS products are too difficult to sell to SMBs. It might become reluctant to roll out more such offerings in the future, although it has had great success with G Suite. That would be too bad because there are lots of SMB operations and marketing problems that are better served by SaaS tools than by ads, for example.

But if you're the business owner and you relied on this product, you're probably not very happy. Like other discontinued Google products or undesirable product changes (e.g., GMB messaging), the move raises the question of Google's commitment to its non-core products.

About The Author



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