

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

New generation 6.0 is finally here

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ODT VISION Continues To Deliver More For Less

Editor's Note:

I have always been the biggest cheerleader of what the ODT VISION VRU can do for our clients. When we first designed the unit, our goals were to:

- Make telephony affordable
- Make it easy for the client to do their own customization and development
- Connect to multiple platforms concurrently
- Allow migration to newer releases and hardware
- Work as a team with our clients and their applications

We have always looked at our clients and their needs in the various releases. Many times you have heard me say, "Tell me what you want, we will put it on the Christmas Wish List. You may see it on the next release." I can look at most features within our product and can tell you which client requested each. I am quite excited about things found in generation 6.0 of our product. When you think back to 1.1 which was DOS based on a twinax PC, we have come a long way. Existing customers can upgrade to the new release. If you are a new customer, once again..... **"With the ODT VISION VRU,**

You are getting more for less than any of our competition."

We are pleased to announce generation 6.0 of the ODT VISION Voice Response Unit. This is a major release which includes many features and functions which have been requested by our clients. We always strive to bring our customers, "More for Less." This release has taken over a year in development and is the combination of clients' requests and our staff striving to make the ODT VISION VRU the best product possible in the telephony industry today.

History

When you think back to our initial product, it was a DOS based PC which came in either a twinax model for IBM System 36/38 or coax model for IBM Mainframe Systems. For the most part, new generations were primarily used when we changed the Operational System on the PC or if there was a major re-write. There were many new releases within each generation to provide minor features and changes.

Generation 2.0 of our product was a major change as we used Windows 3.11 and provided the first GUI screens to assist the user in system administration. There were several minor releases in this generation.

Generation 3.0 took the unit in a new direction where the

ODT VISION VRU now met "ODBC" standards. This allowed interactive connectivity to databases as well as the screen scraping session to the IBM hosts. This release also contained our own database manager utility.

Generation 4.0 took us to Windows 98 and we switched from Netsoft Routers to Rumba which allowed us to reset the unit automatically as the subsystem went up and down. We also went to dialogic voice cards. One of the most important features within this release was the introduction of the "Test Mode" which allowed testing and development on any Windows based PC which could be then moved to the production unit. We did away with our own database manager which was replaced with an API to Microsoft Access. The Voice Manager Utility was added which allowed voice files to be recorded on any sound card & then be moved to our unit.

Generation 5.0 was on Windows 2000 Professional and introduce the 'Control Window' which allowed scheduling of batch type functions. Also new in this

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generation was multi-language support, email support, line capacity monitoring, and improved logging methods for the establishment of audit trails.

Generation 6.0

Here are some of the main new features which are found in release 6.0 of the ODT VISION Voice Response Unit.

- *Text to Speech (Option)*
- *Remote Monitoring*
- *Calling of External Programs*
- *Automatic Verification if Office Is Open or Closed off of System Data Setup*
- *Improvements to the Control Window for Scheduled Batched Processing including iSeries/AS400 and E-mail Support*

Migration

As in the past, all customized scripts which ran on a previous release of the ODT VISION VRU will run on this new generation. If you desire to run the "Text to Speech" option, it is recommended that you run it on our new generation of hardware which is more powerful since this feature requires a lot of resources. **Please contact your ODT VISION representative for upgrade pricing.**

Future

There are more features in version 6.0 than the ones listed here. Each of the main features will be covered in detail later in this newsletter. ■

Please contact Ohio Data Transfer to discuss your applications in which the ODT VISION VRU will be the solution or if you need pricing information. We also welcome feedback as to what future features you would like to see added to our product.

Text to Speech, "How will you use it?"

The ODT VISION VRU has always been able to do "Text to Speech" TTS with numbers, dates, and currency amounts. The string variable is obtained and combined with either a SpeakNumbers, SpeakDollars, SpeakDate or just Speak to say letters. In the case of SpeakDate, you have to use a format statement to say how the date will be spoken back or displayed.

Generation 6.0 has an option to allow full text to speech where your variable string group of words are separated and each word is spoken with a synthesized computer voice. This process works much like your word processor spell checker. The program looks for a match in its own dictionary and uses that or uses a phonics pronunciation when speaking back the word. *(This process is a resource hog so older ODT VISION VRU system users should upgrade to new hardware with a faster processor if you plan to take advantage of this option.)*

Lets say you have an order entry system and the item entered by the caller is found in your database or on the host system. It still may not be the correct item the caller wants. We now just go get the description field and speak the description back to the caller for verification.

For example, you are an insurance firm and you have a user

who wants to review a claim. The user entered the patient policy number but want to go through the sub-file review to look up that particular claim by hearing the procedure description or doctor's name.

Or, you have created an application where one line of your unit monitors the system console screen. If an error condition arises after-hours, which requires a response, you can have the unit call you and read the error message or send the error via e-mail. You can now give a response to that error condition by calling the unit.

Additionally, in a customer support system, our client needs to select which location the service is needed since they have more than one location. The ODT VISION VRU speaks back the address field. They select the one they need. If your firm is providing a service in the field, your employee can call the unit and see what their next work assignment is. The system tells them what to do.

Finally, off an 800 number, a potential client calls in to locate a store, repair center, distributor, or restaurant in their area. They enter their phone area or zip. We locate the information and speak it back to the caller. ■

Remote External Commands, "What does it mean?"

This is perhaps the most exciting new feature within this release. This adds a totally new dimension to our product allowing the script to call an external program from logic within the ODT VISION VRU routine. This would allow you to turn on/off devices, start/stop processes, or interact the ODT VISION VRU with programs from a large variety of vendors.

A possible application might be if you need to process a credit card payment and need to run a program which will dial the bank via modem and establish a link for the transaction. After the transaction is completed, it will break the connection

and stop the program.

This feature does have certain rules that you must live by:

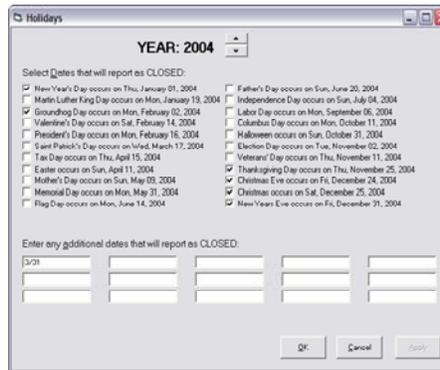
- You must initialize the externally called program
- Only one externally called program can be active at a time
- Use the "TerminateProgram" command to end the program
- If a variable is to be returned, it will return one of the following: (0-Called, n-Error)

Please feel free to call us with any special applications using this feature. ■

Our Office is Open/Closed

During the call, the options which are available to the caller may change based on whether the office is open or closed. A typical example of this is transferring to a live customer service representative. Also, you may have a need to handle certain emergency calls which may come in after hours. In this example, the unit will gather information which will define the problem and then that information will be forwarded immediately to individuals who are on call.

We have been doing this type of function for some time through the application script. We establish a start time and end time for each day



Holiday Setup Screen

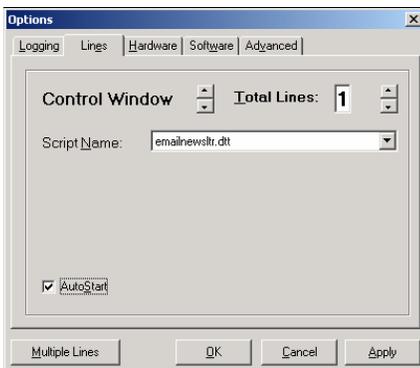
of the week. We also look at which days the office is open or closed. Finally, we look at a database table

to see if date is among the days the office is closed. It was a simple process during the call, to get the date/time and compare it to hours of operations & days open. The only problem with this approach way that you had to update the holiday database table yearly.

In 6.0 this has become easier with a setup screen which defines the hours of operation and holidays. The benefits include the simplification of the script and you no longer have to modify the holiday database table since it automatically updates the holiday dates on its own. This feature can also say what holiday it is. ■

Control Window, when will I use a batch process

The control window feature has been included in the ODT VISION VRU since version 5.0. This is basically a scheduling program where on a given date and time, you can do a process defined by a script which is assigned in the control window setup screen. This script must be created by the same rules and methods which you use when



Control Window Setup Screen

creating your other scripts assigned to the lines. The main difference is that, this is not tied to a line but tied to the PC clock. When the unit reaches that

date and time, the routine will be ran. This allows our unit to run in a **“Batch Processing Mode.”**

Lets say you are a manufacturer and at 8:00 AM. each morning, your factory production system has a new database file or screen of orders which now are going into production. You want the unit to review those orders and send individual e-mails to each client which will inform them that:

- Their order with description of...and order date of... is going into production
- The estimated completion and delivery date

You may be a logistic company and instead of orders, you want to inform a client about a delivery.

Or, all day long you have collected credit card payment information and at 2:20 AM. You want to process these transactions with your bank.

Another example is where we are using an database table which needs to be updated weekly or daily. At a given time, we may do a file import function.

As a final example, You could use the ODT VISION as a robot to look at certain conditions and if those are met, the VRU can then can initiate some task. This may be combined with the new “remote program command” where the unit is now interactively working with an external program. These external

When the unit reaches that date and time, the routine will be ran. This allows our unit to run in a “Batch Processing Mode.”

programs may be even turning on or off devices such as security systems, conveyor belts, other devices or starting any process or task.

With this feature you could be monitoring your system console and sending a staff member who is on call, error conditions with either a call or e-mail. That individual could even call into the VRU to take corrective action. ■

Get Your Own Demo Today

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Go to www.ODT VISION.com to get your own demonstration of the ODT VISION Voice Response Unit which will run on any Windows based PC of Windows 98 or later with sound card and speakers. This is a simplistic order entry and shipment status system which is running off a Microsoft Access database. The demo is in the test mode and you will be using the "Test Phone" feature of the ODT VISION VRU to simulate a phone call to the data.

Improving Customer Service Affordability

Submit your technical questions or get free project analysis regarding your telephony application to:
TechSupport@ODT VISION.com
Or Call: 614-985-3814

HOW DO THEY DO THAT? "Checking if Office is Open/Closed and working with Text to Speech"

Checking if the Office is Open or Closed

Sometimes a portion of your application may require you to know if the office is open or closed. An example of this may be if the caller is transferring out of the IVR system to a live customer service representative. Perhaps you are in an order entry system where you promise the customer same day shipment. If the office is close because of a holiday, a weekend day, or if the call has come in after office hours, that type of service is not possible and the caller needs to be informed that the normal same day service unavailable. This is even easier now. Once the system has been configured with the office setup screen, you now get a system variable as to whether the office is Open/Closed. Based on that return, you can provide the logic within the routine to assist the caller.

Example:

```
; Check today's date to see if it is a holiday
; Passing DATE as a parameter is the same
; as not passing any parameter at all since
; DATE returns today's date.
```

Daily Setup Screen

Holiday = HolidayNum-

Check for Holiday

ber Date

```
; HolidayNumber returned a 0,
; so it is not a holiday
If Holiday = 0 then
    Goto PassHoliday

; Holiday 1 (#22) is our "Closed for Inventory" day
Elseif Holiday = 22 Then
    Play "CloseInv.vox"
    Goto EndCall

; Today is a holiday, but not a custom holiday
; See if we are closed.
Else
    AreClosed = ClosedHoliday
    If AreClosed = True then

        ; We are closed, so say....
        ; "Today is" (Voice file)
        ; "Christmas" (TTS)
        ; "We are closed" (Voice file)
        varHoliday = HolidayName
        Rtn=Speak "Todayls.vox"
        VoiceText varHoliday
        Rtn = VoiceSpeak
        Rtn=Speak "Closed.vox"
    Endif
Endif
```

PassHoliday:

Returns True if you are now closed (if no time is specified), or if at the time specified, you are "Closed". Only checks the time to see if you are closed. Does not take the date into account. Use this command when you have already performed a "holiday" routine in the script. To check the date and time together, use the Closed command.

Check Date/Time if Open

Example:

```
; Check now to see if we are closed

AreClosed = ClosedTime
If AreClosed = True then
    Speak "Closed.vox"
    Goto EndCall
Endif
```

ItemNumber = "893728"

Text to Speech

ItemDesc = "Red Widgets"
OrderQty = 2145
OrderTotal = 127,322.56
OrderWeight = 235.5

Address= "54 West Belt Drive, Chicago, IL"
ZipCode = "43215"
PhoneNo = "(614) 555-1212"

```
; You ordered 2145 of item 893728, Red Widgets,
; for a total of $127,322.56.
; The total weight of your order is 235.5 pounds.
; Your order will be delivered on December 27th 2004
at 12:30.
; Your delivery window is 20 minutes.
;
```

```
VoiceText "You ordered "
VoiceXML "number", OrderQty
VoiceText " of item "
VoiceXML "digits", ItemNumber
VoiceText "; "
VoiceText ItemDesc
VoiceText "; "
VoiceText " for a total of "
VoiceXML "currency", orderTotal
VoiceText ". The total weight of your order is "
VoiceXML "decimal", OrderWeight
VoiceText " pounds."
VoiceText "Your order will be delivered on "
VoiceXML "mdy" "12/27/2004"
VoiceText " at "
VoiceXML "time", "12:30"
VoiceText ". Your delivery window is "
VoiceXML "time", "20"
VoiceText = " "
VoiceText "Your order will be delivered to "
VoiceXML "address", Address
VoiceXML "zip", zipCode
VoiceText ". An order confirmation will be faxed to "
VoiceXML "phone", PhoneNo
rtn = VoiceSpeak
```

The code listed is if we are going to use TTS for the entire stacked* pattern so the voice matches. You may also use a blending of "TTS" and normal playing of voice files banners in this stacked* pattern. ■

*stacked pattern is the blending of variable values and voice banners which are launched with a return code (rtn).

VoiceXML is used to modify the way a variable is spoken.