Ohio Data Transfer

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

May You Have A Happy & Propitious New Year

When Designing Your Voice Application, Always Consider the Nature & Needs Of Your User First

If there is any benefit of the ODT VISION Voice Response Unit that our customers love, it is the ease of customization. This allows that client to totally wrap our solution around their needs to address any user's requirements. Most future clients of the ODT VISION VRU are attracted to the ODT VISION VRU for its affordability but fall in love with the advance features not normally found in a telephony product of this price range and *the ability for customization in-house*. This ease of customization allows your firm to change or develop applications quickly and react to needs within your business environment. Many times each year, we replace existing   competitive VRU products with the ODT VISION VRU as these firms wants to take over control of the voice solution and have the ability to do in-house customization. This provides the ability to react to current business needs or address user's request. This very customizable   interface allows the ODT VISION to provide anything your user's application requires. This process is a two way sword as the ability for the ODT VISION unit to interface to or do anything, also means that   application design must be defined fully.   The user's perspective is paramount to the successful usefulness of your solution. You wouldn't design a web self-service solution without   considering the needs of the user as far as ease of use, the user's navigation through that web site, and its functionality to provide the self-service solution.. The same is true for any telephony IVR solution.

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The designing of your application isn't really like jumping through a series of hoops but more of a formulation of what the user is like, what the user needs from the application, where is that data stored for this application, and what future elements will need to be incorporated as your this application's needs change.

We have all done it before; called into a VRU unit which is more of an aggravation than a help. It is important in your designs of your applications to take a few steps to improve the ease of use for your caller. We start the design of the application with a flowchart which outlines the application but before you have the flowchart, you need to total define the traits of the user and their needs. When you are examining the user of an application look at:

- Level of sophistication
- Type of user, (you may have more than one) which defines their needs from the system
- If your various users requires a different foreign languages such as Spanish
- If needs or the application change after-hours vs. during business hours
- Does the user need to transfer out of IVR application to live customer service representative
- Does the caller need email/fax support
- Security requirements of the user/application

- Logging and audit trial requirements
- Does the user's requirements change if they are mobile
- Does the user's application require any external links such as a bank for payment processing

The most common reason for firms to consider using a VRU is to take their customer service functions 24/7. In today's business climate, it is not really practical or affordable to provide live customer service representatives for every call or request. If this self-service solution is not easy to use, the callers will not want to use it. There are some general points which can be built into any voice solution which will make it more appealing to users.

Rule 1, Don't ask a caller anything they don't Know.

If there is any golden rule that is more important than any other, this is it. Never ask a caller something that they may not know. A house wife may not know her water bill account number but can that account be cross referenced to the home phone number? Even better yet is the ability for the VRU to look at the CallerID number to see if it is linked to an account where the unit doesn't even

have to ask the caller who they are. If possible, store the CallerID identification into a database for future cross reference where the VRU will not have to ask the caller who they are ever again.

Rule 2, Can Not Transfer Out to A Live Customer Service Representative

The number one complaint against most IVR application is the lack of the ability to transfer out to a live customer service representative. This is especially true, if the caller is likely a senior citizen who is opposed to any voice self-service solution. Look for no input on the first prompt and if there is none during office hours, transfer the call immediately. Always build an exit strategy during office hours. If transferring out isn't possible in your environment, build in a feature where the caller can leave a voice message or play a voice banner which gives the caller an additional phone number which they can call to obtain live customer service and state the hours this service is available.

Rule 3, Limit the Number of Steps for the User

You might have called into a VRU to order a pizza and are immediately been identified as a previous customer and asked if you want the same pizza as last time. Whether the application is order entry, shipment status, return authorization, account payment, or merely account inquiry, once the user has been identify,

supply recent information where the user doesn't need to enter the order number or item number to work within the system. A utility billing system may immediately state the last billing amount and the date and amount of the last payment. NEVER ASK FOR THE SAME INFORMATION AGAIN DURING THE SAME CALL. The goal is to limit the number of steps the user need to administer to obtain or provide information.

Rule 4, Help, I am Caught In a Continuous Loop

Almost as aggravating and the inability to transfer out is where the caller is now caught in a continuous loop where the only way to exit is to hang up. Always build in to your routine the ability to back to previous menu/general menu or transfer out if the user request it. Look for improper data enter multiple times where it is obvious the user is either lost or doesn't have the required data for input and if this condition exist, help the caller. Silence is not golden and if a user doesn't enter data, there is a problem.

Rule 5, The Menu or the Routine Is Too Complex

Never take a menu or sub-menu beyond five items as the caller will forget what items are available by the time they get to the last prompt. Also list the menu items in order of most used and activate the ability for the voice prompt to stop playing as soon as the menu selection is

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selected. Most time the user will just be pressing 1 or 2 to select the first or second menu option and moving on in the application. The user will not want to hear a lengthily menu voice prompt once they hear what they need.

You can also assist the ease of use in some complex routines if you supply a user instruction form which may list the questions and possible input values for each question. An example is a company's Insurance Open Enrollment form which list the questions and values which the employee may enter as their selections. Another example is where storage tanks are recorded on a form where each tank ID is listed and the employee just fill out the form on the clip board before he calls into the unit to give today's tank levels.

Rule 6, Silence Is Not Golden 2

If the caller hears silence for too long of a period while information is retrieved, play a voice prompt "please wait" while your information is gathered so the user won't think the system has gone out to la la land.

Once the project is defined from the user's perspective, we build a flowchart of what the project will look like. This flowchart will show the logical paths that a caller goes through when they call into the application. It may contain the data link information to any data or system to satisfy this user's application and what format that data is in. The complete analysis of your application's users and their requirements of that application will lead to a successful voice self-service solution which users will want to use. This self-service system will improve how you provide customer service, and lowers the cost . Great customer service can give your firm a competitive edge against your competition, optimizes your current personnel, and "makes you firm the "easies company in the world to do business with."

Finally, know that your application is dynamic and monitoring the log file to see how the system is being used will be beneficial in future customization.   If designed from the user's perspective, it can be great. ◘