

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX
IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

Everybody is talking Green these days from the President down. IBM implements the assignment, "Save the Planet." What is your firm doing regarding Green Initiatives?

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Things To Do In A Recession

Sometimes You Need to Spend Money to Make Money

It is apparent that we are in the midst of a very deep recession that is effecting every business and organization. Evidence exists in every sector that this current economic state is not improving any time soon and it will affect how business is done now and in the future not only domestically but globally. In order for your organization be a thriving and prosperous enterprise in these times, you need strategies that incorporate "Things to Do In A Recession."

There is a natural trend that when things become tough, you cut back on the spending. Budgets are normally frozen and IT is an area that a lot of firms look to cut expenses as it isn't seen as an income generator. In the early 90's we were in the mist of a very severe recession. We had a mid-sized food distributor that called on restaurants and governmental organizations. The downturn of the economy had caused real hardship in their sales as restaurants are a vertical that always feels the decline of the environment directly. This firm has acquired a host fax interface from us for their IBM System 38 so purchase orders could automatically faxed from their IBM host once entered into the purchasing system. It was interesting that they made the choice to add this automatic faxing solution as the green light came two days after I

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was told by this IT Director that the for mentioned project was on hold due to the economy. The change came because the client realized that they could delay the hiring of a staffer in the purchasing department by automation of the delivery of the purchase orders. ***This is not the point of this story although it does point out one of the benefits of this acquisition.*** A few weeks after the fax interface was installed they tied it to the order entry posting system. In this firm, salesmen would bring hand written orders back that were posted to the host. The true benefit came when they applied this new application and immediately sales increased by 37%.

Real life story

This was during the heat of a massive recession. When the order was posted, it immediately sent a confirmation to the client as to what they ordered and when it would be delivered. Sales were dramatically turned around. Orders/sales increased as the customers now knew exactly when their product would be delivered and ordered from this supplier instead of their competitors. The restaurants were now using the supplier's inventory as their own.



The process the supplier had hoped would clean up errors in order posting had the unforeseen benefit of increasing sales.

Sometimes it is the little things in customer service that can improve your market share and increase sales. Needless to say, I had a very happy client who believed the new acquisition had paid for itself though generated new sales in the middle of a recession.

Things To Do In A Recession (Part 2)

Sometimes You Need to Save Money to Make Money

To make more money, you can either increase revenue such as the story in part one or you can decrease cost. Obviously, a machine can always answer a call for less money than a live customer service representative. We first saw many accounts use some form of telephony solution to perform ACD (Automatic Call Distribution; where a caller supplies information and the call is then transferred to the proper person or department based on this Information). Using the ODTVision VRU technology to address your user's calls will cost pennies per call verses dollars for a live

Real life story

We were recently in a conversation with an existing customer as to what their ROI had been on our solution. In the past four years they had taken 7.3 million calls through our unit that had cost originally thirty-eight thousand dollars. The acquisition cost for this solution was less than one-half a cent per call. Try to address those calls at that cost with live representatives. It can't be done.

customer service representative. If you can filter off a percentage of calls to be addressed through a self-service IVR application, the savings can be substantial.

Things To Do In A Recession (Part 3)

Sometimes You Need to Make Money by Doing More Business

When you are able to create self-service solutions through either our ODTVision telephony solution or web services, you have extended your hours of operation. In essence this means you are now doing business 24/7 and that may indeed give you a competitive advantage. This enhanced business approach allows you to reach customers you may have never dealt with before or even improve the relationship with existing customers.

A number of years ago we had a wholesale supplier of lawnmower, chainsaw, and snow blower parts that implemented our solution to address after hour calls. The unit was only turned on afterhours.

Real life story

One of the things I always do about sixty days after we install our solution at a client is to ask them how many calls the unit is taking. Please keep in mind that this customer also had a web self-service solution running along side our unit. The IT director told me, "About fifty calls a week." I was alarmed thinking they hadn't marketed the service to their clients enough. The director replied, "We are quite pleased, these calls were all orders and they believed the unit had paid for itself as this was business they were not getting before this implementation."

Vision Voice Vantage, Inc. is a certified ISV for IBM. Visit our web site on IBM.com at <http://www-304.ibm.com/jet09002c/gsdod/solutiondetails.do?solutionId=25001&l>

Obviously we can't control the economic environment that we have to do business in but we can control how we do business within that climate to increase sales, control cost, and build our competitive edge. An improvement in the way we do business and provide services can go a long way in minimizing the effect the recession has on our business success. We welcome the opportunity to discuss with you how we can optimize existing personnel and improve how you function while reducing your cost. Please feel free to call us to discuss your business needs in detail. ■

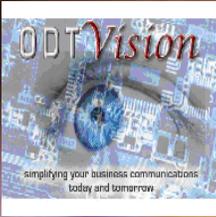
Actual Data shows that the ODTVision VRU Solution Lowers the Cost of Providing Customer Service

It is always more affordable to address calls through the ODTVision VRU solution verses a live customer service representative. The following table is a simple analysis of the acquisition cost based on year(s) for amortization. A four line unit would handle 4 concurrent calls, a eight line 8 concurrent calls, etc.

ODT VISION Cost per Hour for unit Amortized by Year

	4 Line	8 Line	12 Line
Cost per hour based on 1 year	\$2.91	\$3.69	\$3.69
Cost per hour based on 2 years	\$1.45	\$1.85	\$2.24
Cost per hour based on 3 years	\$0.97	\$1.23	\$1.49
Cost	\$18,500.00	\$23,500.00	\$28,500.00

Graphically this is displayed on the next page. You can see hourly, how much less expensive addressing customer service with our self-service solution is versus live personnel when you compare this hourly cost verses what you pay your live customer service personnel.



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THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX Get Your Own Demo Today

Go to www.ODTVision.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. Manuals and case studies are also available on the web site.

Improving Customer Service Affordability

Get free project analysis regarding your telephony application or submit technical questions at:
TechSupport@ODTVision.com
Or Call: 614-985-3814



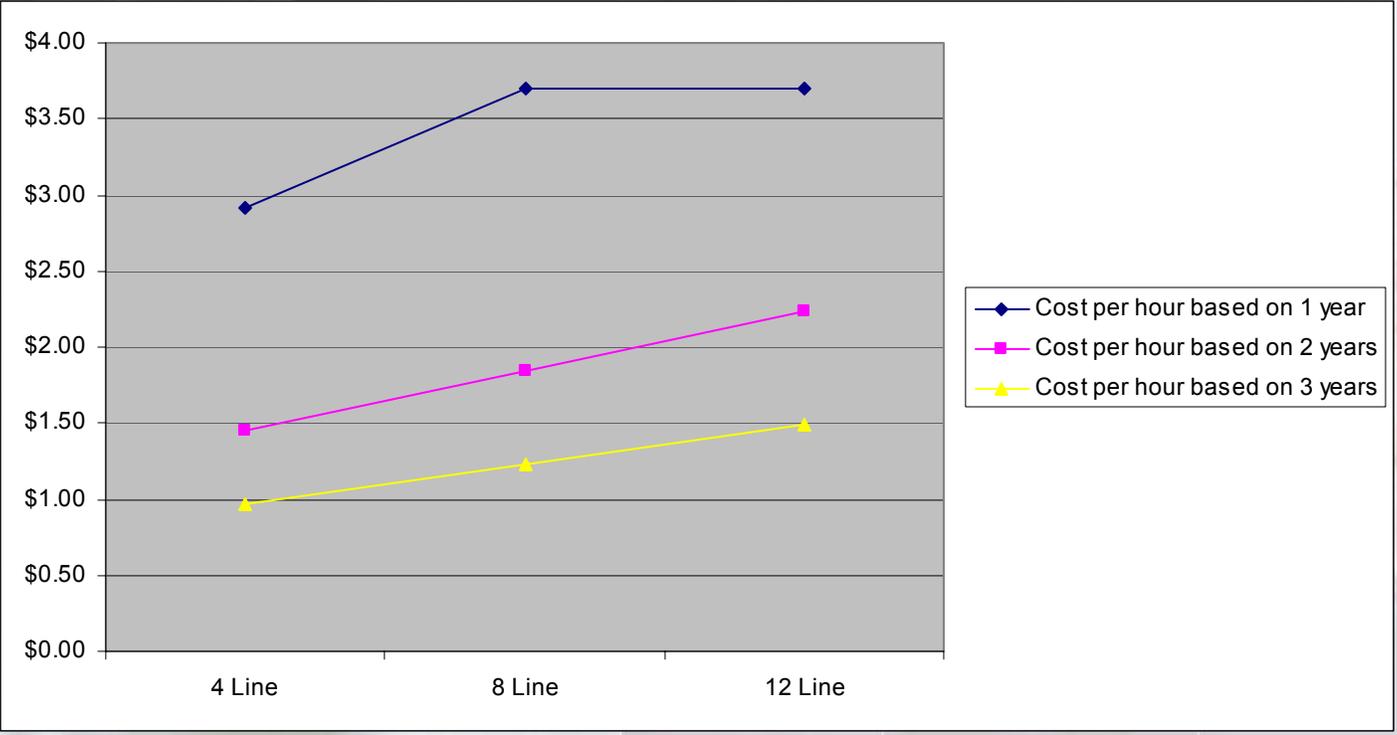
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http://search400.techtarget.com/productsOfTheYearWinner/0,296407,sid3_gci1157611_tax302575_ayr2005,00.html

Obviously, not every call can be addressed though a self-service solution and you may still need a live representative to address some calls, but through the reduction of resources you may be meeting your firm's requirements to lower cost, lower resources, and in fact, be establishing a "Green Approach." ▣



Coming next month, a look at the new release of the ODTVision solution.