

## Are You Looking For Ways to Stretch Your Workforce?

## Recession is Causing Firms to Look At How They Use Their People

### Customer service

Quoted From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia:

“Customer service is the provision of [service](#) to customers before, during and after a purchase.

According to Turban et al. (2002)<sup>[1]</sup>, “Customer service is a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction – that is, the feeling that a product or service has met the customer expectation.”

Some have argued<sup>[3]</sup> that the quality and level of customer service has decreased in recent years, and that this can be attributed to a lack of support or understanding at the executive and middle management levels of a corporation and/or a [customer service policy](#). Others, like Headsets.com CEO [Michael G. Faith](#) (Mike Faith), believe that providing a high level of customer service, which he refers to as Customer Love, is the only way to grow your business in these times. Faith recently spoke at the Inc. Growco Conference on the subject of using customer service to grow your business.<sup>[4]</sup>”

Obviously most would agree that competitive advantage can be obtained through great customer service but it is a balancing act in the middle of the recession to determine how to improve customer service, maximize existing personnel and yet lower cost. Clearly the

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ODTVision can answer most customer service calls more economically than a live customer service representative and a self-service solution will also allow customer service functions to continue on a 24/7 basis. Analysis begins by examining your callers to CS to determine what functions and information they need. It all starts there.

Most modern PBX systems do ACD (automatic call distribution) where a caller can either enter an extension number or spell a number of characters found in that person’s or department’s name and automatically be directed to that individual or department. This is a very simplistic form of ACD and has removed the need for a receptionist to answer every call coming into your office. Most companies now recognize the savings of ACD but there was an initial resistance in the belief that an automated greeting and transfer just wasn’t as personal. There used to be the same opinion of the initial use of voice mail, it just wasn’t personal. The cost savings and effectiveness of voice mail has changed so that most callers wouldn’t dream of not



## Automatic Call Distribution (ACD)

Defining who the caller needs to talk to and transferring that call to that department or person.

being able to leave a voice mail if they don't reach their contact directly.

The ODTVision will take ACD to the next level going beyond the ability to just transfer per caller's request to the ability to look at data or applications and route the call based on the rules laid out in the system. For example, a caller may be in the customer service application of shipment status to review the status of an order shipment and the self-service system sees a credit hold on the customer's account record. The VRU would not only inform the caller there is a credit hold but could transfer the caller to a payment system allowing them to release the credit hold or to a customer service representative that could make the proper arrangements to remove the credit hold. Clearly any call handled by the VRU will be less expensive to handle but some calls need to be administered by a live representative as there is

### Why ACD

Most companies now recognize the savings of ACD but there was an initial resistance in the belief that an automated greeting and transfer just wasn't as personal. There used to be the same opinion of the initial use of voice mail, it just wasn't personal. The cost savings and effectiveness of voice mail has changed so that most callers wouldn't dream of not being able to leave a voice mail if they don't reach their contact directly.

a condition or problem that requires live assistance. This brings up the question....

## Is the Office Open or Closed

Is there a difference in the way a call needs to be addressed based on whether your office is Open or Closed?

For a number of years we have had configuration screens in our VRU solution that define if the office is open or closed. These screens are based on business hours for each of the days of the week combined with holidays and special days where the office is closed. The hours of operation screen looks like this:

Daily Hours	Closed	Open Time	Close Time
1. Sunday	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12:00 AM	12:00 AM
2. Monday	<input type="checkbox"/>	08:15 AM	05:10 PM
3. Tuesday	<input type="checkbox"/>	08:20 AM	05:09 PM
4. Wednesday	<input type="checkbox"/>	08:35 AM	05:08 PM
5. Thursday	<input type="checkbox"/>	08:45 AM	05:07 PM
6. Friday	<input type="checkbox"/>	08:59 AM	05:06 PM
7. Saturday	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12:00 AM	12:00 AM

OK Cancel Apply

Our latest release of ODTVision has an improved configuration screen for holidays and special days where the company is closed that has been enhanced to allow the configuration of business hours for those days. Note there are now 11 days that can be configured for non-holiday closures. Most standard governmental holidays are observed on Monday so the actual dates change every

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<http://www-304.ibm.com/jet09002c/gsdod/solutiondetails.do?solutionId=25001&l>

year. Once defined in the new scheduling system, the dates will automatically adjust as the years pass. Please note the grayed-out area of the selection screen. You can not configure a holiday that has already passed.

Now let's look at an emergency customer service call where there the caller needs immediate attention after hours. The VRU can take the caller's contact information and then either call, text, or email an on-call individual to address the emergency condition. This just requires us to know the protocols for after hours assistance and to incorporate those rules in our customization script.

**Lowering the cost of Customer Service**  
 If you can filter off any percentage of calls to a self-service solution, these calls will not occupy the time of expensive live CS personnel.

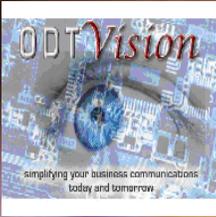
Any call answered by a self-service IVR application will not only be lower in cost but will also free up your live personnel to do things that require human attention. If you can address 50% of your calls through our solution, you have just doubled your live customer service personnel. This provides the benefit of using those same customer

Holidays		Closed	Open Time	Close Time
0. New Year's Day	Thursday January 1, 2009	<input type="checkbox"/>		
1. Martin Luther King Jr. Day	Monday January 19, 2009	<input type="checkbox"/>		
2. President's Day	Monday February 16, 2009	<input type="checkbox"/>		
3. St. Patrick's Day	Tuesday March 17, 2009	<input type="checkbox"/>		
4. Good Friday	Friday April 10, 2009	<input type="checkbox"/>		
5. Easter	Sunday April 12, 2009	<input type="checkbox"/>		
6. Memorial Day	Monday May 25, 2009	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12:00 AM	12:00 AM
7. Independence Day	Saturday July 4, 2009	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12:00 AM	12:00 AM
8. Labor Day	Monday September 7, 2009	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12:00 AM	12:00 AM
9. Rosh Hashanah	Saturday September 19, 2009	<input type="checkbox"/>		
10. Yom Kippur	Monday September 28, 2009	<input type="checkbox"/>		
11. Columbus Day	Monday October 12, 2009	<input type="checkbox"/>		
12. Halloween	Saturday October 31, 2009	<input type="checkbox"/>		
13. Veteran's Day	Wednesday November 11, 2009	<input type="checkbox"/>		
14. Day before Thanksgiving	Wednesday November 25, 2009	<input type="checkbox"/>		
15. Thanksgiving	Thursday November 26, 2009	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12:00 AM	12:00 AM
16. Day after Thanksgiving	Friday November 27, 2009	<input type="checkbox"/>		
17. Christmas Eve	Thursday December 24, 2009	<input type="checkbox"/>		
18. Christmas	Friday December 25, 2009	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12:00 AM	12:00 AM
19. New Year's Eve	Thursday December 31, 2009	<input type="checkbox"/>		
20. Cinco de Mayo	Tuesday May 5, 2009	<input type="checkbox"/>	09:00 AM	02:00 PM
21. Boss's Birthday	Saturday August 22, 2009	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12:00 AM	12:00 AM
22. H22	Tuesday September 15, 2009	<input type="checkbox"/>	08:00 AM	03:00 PM
23. H23	mm/dd/yyyy	<input type="checkbox"/>		
24. H24	mm/dd/yyyy	<input type="checkbox"/>		
25. H25	mm/dd/yyyy	<input type="checkbox"/>		
26. H26	mm/dd/yyyy	<input type="checkbox"/>		
27. H27	mm/dd/yyyy	<input type="checkbox"/>		
28. H28	mm/dd/yyyy	<input type="checkbox"/>		
29. H29	mm/dd/yyyy	<input type="checkbox"/>		
30. H30	mm/dd/yyyy	<input type="checkbox"/>		
31. H31	mm/dd/yyyy	<input type="checkbox"/>		

service personnel to just address problems or callers needing a higher level of support. The hold time for a caller with a problem will diminish and the self serve callers will not experience hold time at all.

### Improving the Quality of CS

One of the additional benefits that companies see when we automate various customer service functions is the ability to build reports and audit trails of what is actually being done. This will help you understand your caller's needs and enable you to structure customer service to better address



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THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Get Your Own Demo Today

Go to [www.ODTVision.com](http://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

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their needs. The reports may also show some of the following elements:

- Number of Calls
- Length of Calls
- What applications or data is being used most
- What causes callers to require a transfer to live representatives
- Are there peak periods
- How many calls come outside of office hours
- Is there a difference in what is needed after hours

Clearly Customer Service will be improved if you provide it 24/7, and doing that at a minimized cost would be very advantageous. There is a new trend where customers expect to get whatever they need at their convenience and if that is 1:00 AM, it

is 1:00 AM. One of the things that has stimulated the explosion of IVR applications in recent years is that everyone has expectations to interact with your firm 24/7 and they want to do it from anywhere. The revolutionary explosion of cell phones means anyone now has a terminal to your applications/data from anywhere. This IVR solution doesn't require specially trained or sophisticated users. All self-service solutions in CS should allow anyone the ability to do what they need to do or transfer to a live representative if further assistance is required. You can build in your own rules and logic as to how any caller's request is to be handled and know that this self-service solution is secure as the caller can only do what the logic of the script allows. Please feel free to call us and discuss what needs you have in CS. It all begins by knowing what your users need. ▣

**ODT VISION Cost per Day Amortize by Year and number of lines in unit \***

**Concurrent calls**

<b>24/7</b>	<b>4 Line</b>	<b>8 Line</b>	<b>12 Line</b>
Cost per day for one year payback	\$50.68	\$64.38	\$78.08
Cost per day for two year payback	\$25.34	\$32.19	\$39.04
Cost per day for three year payback	\$16.89	\$21.46	\$21.46