

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX  
IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

I don't receive Health Benefits, You don't have to pay FICA, nor do I Take Days Off

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**Inside this issue:**

**Contractors Have Many Reasons To Use the ODTVision VRU**

This month's newsletter deals with the concept of remote project scheduling and management. A general contractor may have a problem managing a construction site since it is remote and they have a number of subcontractors doing different projects which may all be related. As an example, Subcontractor A is working on the drywall in the kitchen until 10:00 PM to finish his part of the project as Subcontractor B is planning to hang the kitchen cabinets the next day. Subcontractor B needs to know at 5:30 AM. whether the drywall is done so he can assign his men to report to that site. The project director may not be at this site but still there is a need for a centralized database as to what has been completed. If there are project elements that are falling behind schedule, he needs to know which tasks and the reasons why they are late. The project manager needs to have the knowledge as to what is needed to bring the goal tasks back in line.



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**Elements That Make Remote Project Management Difficult To Administer**

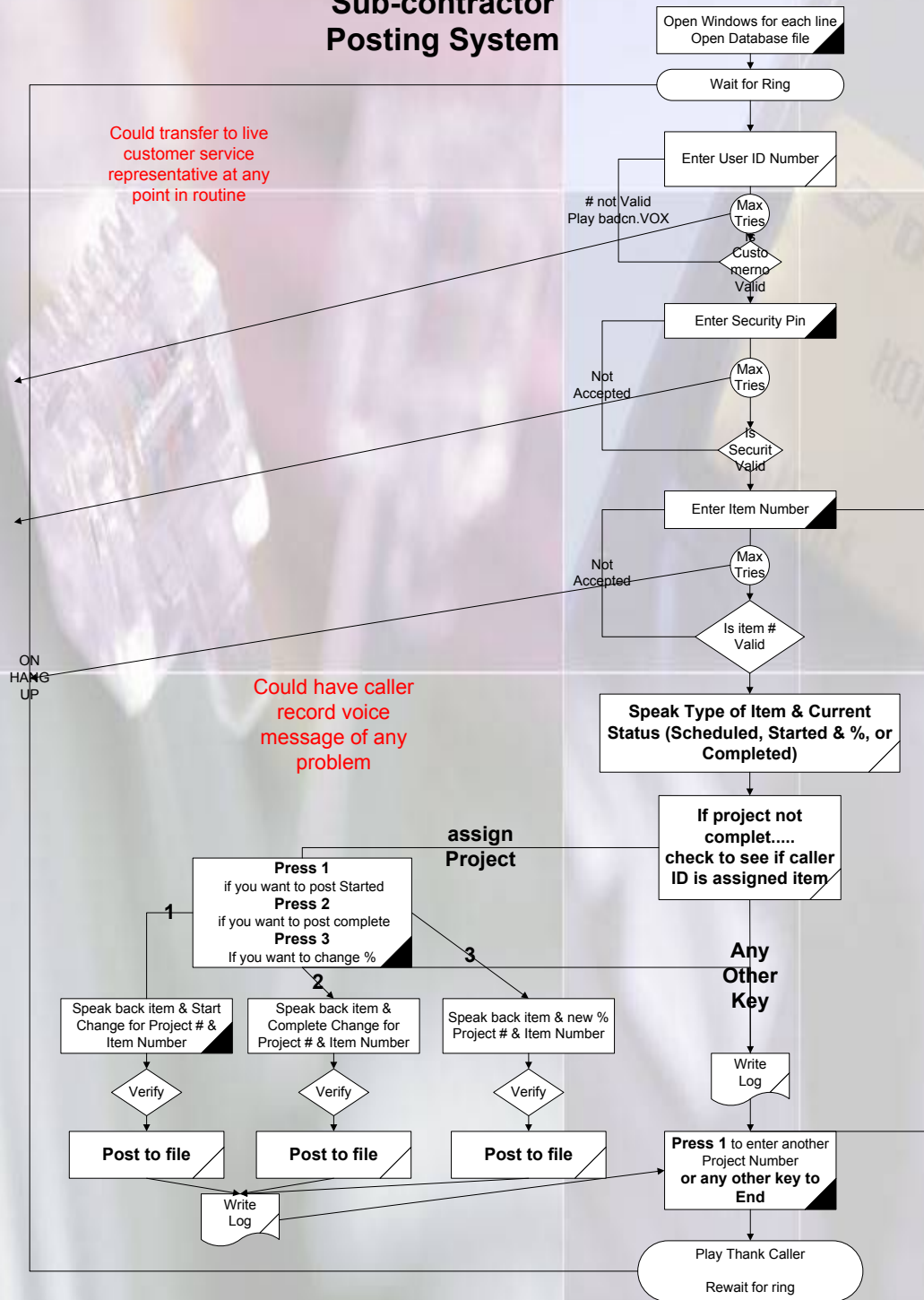
- The need to perform 24/7 posting and inquiry of items (especially important after customer service has closed)
- Not only is the remote collection of information required but that caller's information may need to be forwarded to multiple people and locations
- The user may not be sophisticated/mobile where they only can provide information via a cellular phone as they may not have internet service at the job site
- The caller may be a 1st time user with no training on the system
- Based on what the caller is doing or their status, special instruction may be given or they may even be transferred to a live personnel CSR if the office is open
- The corporate office needs to know the job status
- Multiple foreign languages such as Spanish may be needed
- If there is an emergency, information may be gathered and forwarded to the project supervisor even if the subcontractor doesn't know who that is
- The need to lower the overall cost of project management while providing a centralized collection of statuses
- The company wants to optimize its personnel and build an log trail of all activities



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## Sub-contractor Posting System

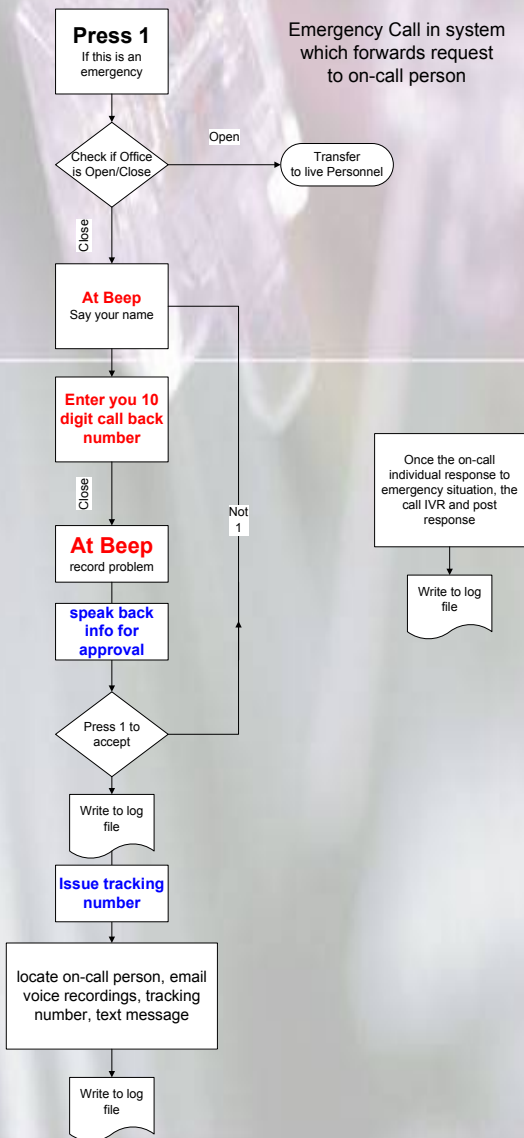


In this flowchart, a sub-contractor could call in and check the status of any prerequisite to their goal item. If they are assigned to this item, they can provide an update as to whether the item has been started, completed or the percentage of completion. Your IVR application could also allow the recording of voice files to be forwarded to management regarding problems or issues where the sub-contractor needs assistance or wants to explain why the completion of an item is being delayed. In project management, this ability to interact keeps everyone on the same page and allows unrelated parties to exchange information without training, equipment, or even working the same hours. In essence, it keeps everyone on the same page even though the site is remote.

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### Reporting and Emergency After Hours

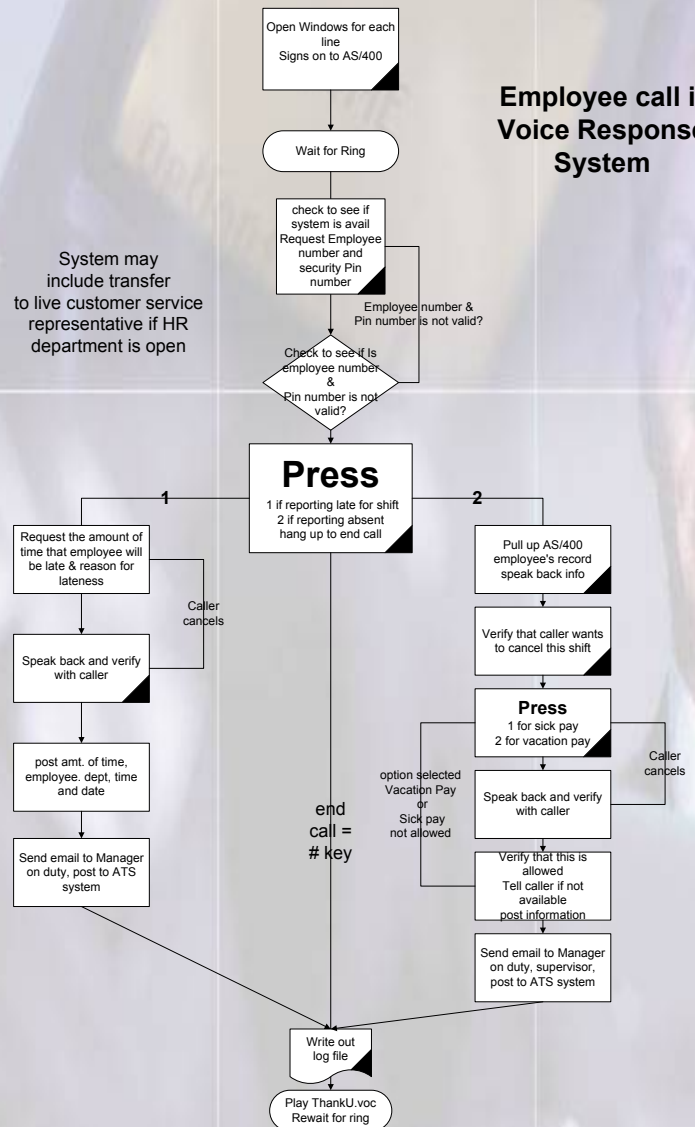
Let's go back to the example of the remote jobsite where there is no security or personnel on duty after hours. You could post a sign at that site to call an after-hours emergency phone number if an emergency has arisen. The following flowchart outlines how that call is handled by the ODTVision VRU.



### Employee Call in

Reporting of who is going to be late or absent from a remote job assignment can be automated through the ODTVision VRU and the employee can call the IVR application 24/7. This application may even include an automatic employee fulfillment application where employees who will be absent are automatically replaced from an available pool.

### Employee call in Voice Response System





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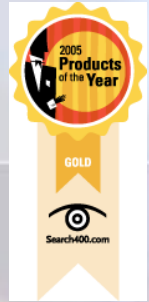
### THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX Get Your Own Demo Today

Contact us to get your own demonstration of the ODTVision Voice Response Unit. This demo application 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.

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### Employee Getting Job Assignments

When employees are working remotely, they may need to call into the system to see what their next job assignment is. This same application may also be used for the employee to post the status of the assignment or to transfer it to another employee as that caller may have gotten behind schedule in the completion of their previous work assignments.

communicate with all the volunteers who ran this conference, they had to call into my IBM 36 via modems and sign on to get correspondence. Since the message system on the 36 was limited in character length, if the message was too long, ..the message would refer them to read a file. We have come a long way in remote project management. ■

### Final Thoughts

One thing becomes clear when looking at what is required when the project scheduling is remote,.. communications and management need to be paramount. A number of years ago I was the director of a mini Common type of IBM conference that the local mid-range user-group did for a 5 state region in Columbus. At that time we didn't have project management software so we set up the project as a database where each task was a record including function, description, assignee and due date. To let the local IBM office know what they were responsible for, I just handed them a hardcopy report that showed their tasks and the dates they needed to be done by. For example, they may have been required to have the speakers' abstracts and bio's back to us by a certain date as we had another task to have that info to the printers by a certain date to print the attendee's manuals. I am really dating myself here but this was long before email and the internet. To

