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Evaluating VRU Solutions and Vendors

Whenever a firm is looking to create or replace an existing telephony IVR self-service solution, they must first look at the possible solutions and what characteristics make each vendor's product different and applicable to their own needs. The purpose of this newsletter is to help you understand the ODTVision system and our capabilities and experience so that you can compare us to other solutions for your applications.

Introduction to the Product

So you have identified the need for an IVR application and you want to find a vendor with a product that can provide a telephony self-service solution for your company. You know this isn't



buying an "out of the box" or commodity product that you just plug in. There are a number of possible vendors out there. Many have similar descriptions and features and some provide a customizable interface that is used

to create and provide the IVR application. The first obvious question might be **"what is it like and can I see it work?"**. When a prospective client comes to us, we schedule a conference web seminar which consists of a live demo, discussion about how system administration and customization are done and finally what your

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application might look like. In addition, if a potential client wants a locally installed test environment of the ODTVision software, we make that available. The software is loaded on their Windows based PC with soundcard and speakers and they can run the solution in "Test Mode" to demonstrate most operating and administrative features. This hands on approach combined with our industry experience will allow them to actually experience how the solution can be implemented at their company.



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Who Does the Customization and How is it done?

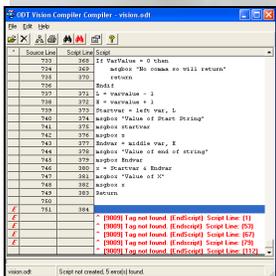
The real beauty of the ODTVision VRU solution is that the customization requires no previous programming experience and it can be used by both novice and experienced local personnel to create powerful applications. It is actually more similar to creating a macro than it is to programming code. There is a learning curve, but what is important is that it can be maintained and new applications can be created in-house without always going back to Vision Voice Vantage personnel.

This gives your company tremendous flexibility. If you are in a 10:00 o'clock staff meeting where a request is made for changes in the IVR application, you can leave that meeting to go make those changes and implement them immediately. To give you a jump start, the base of the initial customization script required for the project is done by Vision Voice Vantage personnel. This gives the implementation of the new application a leap forward, shortens the development cycle and facilitates the education of the new user. In

addition to providing the initial consulting and design assistance for your application, we also include an on-site installation day with our systems for training, implementation and testing of the initial application.

Development Environment

Once a client commits to purchase, the second reason to load the ODTVision VRU on a secondary PC is to set up a development environment. This provides the ability to test and to customize external to the production system. This approach allows users the



flexibility to make changes to the IVR application without disrupting their currently running IVR system. This provides a real plus for future changes and ease of development.

Compile Feature

The compiler program can be run in both the test environment and the production environment. The customization script can be created with any editor as long as the file is saved without any formatting. Once again, non-technical personnel will learn use the ODTVision Compiler as any script error condition will be displayed with error banners that are easy to interpret.

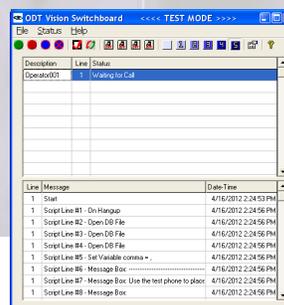
Test Phone

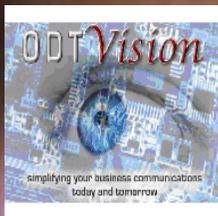
To simulate a phone call in the "Test Mode", just use the Test Phone. If the software is loaded on a secondary PC without the security USB HASP key, it will automatically start up in the "Test Mode". Once the simulated Line 1 is associated with a compiled program, it can be started. By simply starting that line, the "Test Phone" application will automatically start. When the user clicks on the phone icon on the "Test Phone" it will turn green and you can then simulate the phone call into the application.



Switchboard Screen

No one ever wants to add a system that will be difficult or complicated to administer or monitor. The ODTVision VRU has a simple console screen that not only administers the system but also shows all system statuses and activity





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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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Testing & Debugging

In order to debug and fine-tune your application script, your VRU solution should have the features and built in utilities to help make that job as easy as possible. With the ODTVision system, you have the ability to put the system into a debug mode which builds a system log file that shows how every line of the customization script interacts with a caller's progress through the logic of your IVR routine. Through the use of the "Test Mode" environment and the availability of a detailed debug log file, you can see what is needed to make your script and IVR application run without errors.



Openness and Connectivity

Life is always changing, so in the selection of a VRU vendor, look for a solution with openness. Does it come on industry standard hardware with an operating system that you can access? Do you have control over the application? Can it adapt to changes made to your environment, data systems, or phone systems?

Phone Environment

You may initially use standard analog phone lines (pots), digital lines or take advantage of VOIP systems. Can your VRU vendor address these options and can they change later as you are changing your phone environment?

Data Connectivity

By the very definition of an IVR, a large part of any application is the connectivity to the data which may be on one or multiple platforms. Whether you are using HLAPI screen scraping to an IBM host or ODBC to data files residing elsewhere, your VRU needs to be able to access the data. If that data source changes, the IVR routine needs to be able to pull from the new source. If you change host computer systems or data platforms, your IVR needs to be adaptable to your new data location and file specification.

Voice Files & Standards

Basically all VRU's have both outbound voice files and system voice files for the creation of audio strings for dates, currency values, etc. It is important that these voice files can be created with audio



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technologies that are industry standard. If you are also incorporating Text to Speech, does the engine that is supplying the Text to Speech using industry standards? The ODTVision TTS option uses the standard Microsoft SAPI 5.1. this means you can integrate inexpensive 3rd part TTS dictionaries into the ODTVision TTS engine. If you are using optional Speech Recognition, you will want a system like ours that can use the Microsoft SAPI standards for SR as well.

Scalability

Unless you are replacing an existing telephony IVR application where you have historic call volume data, you may not be able to predict the capacity needed for the application now, and you will also have difficulty predicting future needs as you add and modify applications for your users. Make sure your vendor can supply a solution that allows you to cost effectively add lines for additional capacity as it is needed.



Life is full of Changes

Phone systems and features, connectivity, computer systems, and data sources are in a continuous state of evolution. Look for a vendor that keeps up with all of these industry standards and features and one that provides an easy upgrade path to the latest release of their solution. Your VRU solution should not only be able to meet the new requirements but also have incorporated an easy migration path so that all the work you have done on the customization of your IVR application will come across to the new version of that vendor's VRU solution. We provide this capability in any new release we do.

In conclusion, most new customers chose our solution for its affordability and connectivity to multiple types of systems, but fall in love with its ease of customization and features. Please feel free to contact us if you would like a demo of our product or have questions of how we would address your telephony needs. ■