

Vision Voice Vantage, Inc.

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THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

issue:

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The Implementation Process From the End User's Perspective

The purpose of this newsletter is to cover from the client's perspective, how the ODTVision VRU is implemented within a customer's environment. The previous newsletters have never broken down the client's steps to going live in this much detail. Many previous newsletters have covered the three aspects of client relationships:

- ☎ Introduction, Educational and Marking
- ☎ Product implementation and design
- ☎ On-going support

What has not been discussed is the client's view of working through these three stages of customer relationships. This month's newsletter is a cooperative undertaking between Vision Voice Vantage and Elliott Beach Rentals of North Myrtle Beach, SC. It is important to understand the bi-directional communications that VVV and the client has during the decision process, the design process, the implementation of the solutions, and the ongoing support of existing and new IVR applications.

Introduction of Elliott Beach Rentals

Elliott Beach Rentals is a family-owned company that has become vacation experts and has been serving the public since 1959. For generations, families have chosen the North Myrtle Beach area for their beach vacations and golf packages. For more than 50 years, Elliott Beach Rentals has been around to help with the accommodations and

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vacation needs. Their expertise goes beyond family fun in the summertime. They also feature winter rentals and shoulder-season golf getaways. When you go with Elliott Beach Rentals, you'll get service you expect from people you trust. From renting to buying, Elliott Realty, Inc. has four divisions to better serve you: Elliott Beach Rentals, Myrtle Beach Vacation Rentals, Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate Elliott Coastal Living, and Myrtle Beach Golf Authority. If you have plans to travel to this area, I strongly recommend you use their services.

Chris Bridges was the project leader on the implementation of the ODTVision VRU. Chris has been with Elliott Beach Rentals since 2007. He started working in Property Services in the position of Services Administrative Support. He also worked with Department Payroll, Inventory



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Control and Labor Cost Analysis. Before starting at Elliott Beach Rentals, Chris worked 23 years as a programmer analyst in the IBM AS400 environment. He was moved to the position of programmer in December 2011 to work on implementing the ODTVision VRU solution.

Synopsis Of Application

Elliott Beach Rentals' application began as many new client applications start with a web demonstration meeting to give a live presentation of the ODTVision solution. This meeting also covered how customization is done as well as various aspects of system administration. At this point, not only were Elliott Beach Rental personnel learning about our solution but we were also learning about their needs for the self-service IVR system. What we discovered is their IVR application varied by the type of user. There were three distinctly different users:

-  Property Renters
-  Housekeeping Crews
-  Maintenance Personnel that may be Elliott Employees or 3rd party associates

Initially, we wanted the ability for the property rental clients to be able to call in to see if their property was now available for occupancy. Also to be built into the system was the ability for the system to email or text to this user if the unit was now available based on the second type of user...the housekeeping staff.

The housekeeping staff would also have the ability to call into the system to post the completion of the cleaning of the unit. This in turn would change the status of the property to available and if the client that had rented the unit had already checked in, an email or text message was now to be sent to that client that the unit was now available for occupancy.

The final type of user would be the maintenance personnel that had been assigned a work-order regarding a maintenance task required for that unit. Once again, this is a type of job posting system where the user is

changing the status of a unit. As in the housekeeping posting system, an email or text message may be generated to notify the renter that their unit is now available.

All three types of users may be identified within the IVR application by the CallerID Value that is passed to the system during the ring. From the database, the CallerID value will tell us what type of user has called in.

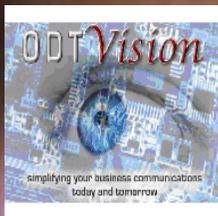
Chris Bridges – “I was excited about the possibilities of the ODTVision VRU capabilities and began thinking of applications beyond the initial project”

Design Phase

What made this whole process really interesting was that it involved three individuals in three different locations. Chris was at the Elliott corporate offices in North Myrtle Beach SC., Rick Flanagan designed the application screens and he worked from St. Thomas, while Terry Rogers at Vision Voice Vantage did the base script from our office in Columbus Ohio. Needless to say, there were a lot of phone calls and traded emails. It all began with a flowchart that was created by Chris.

There was a lot of discussion about the logic of the flowcharts and after that task was completed, Rick began his task of the creation of IBM AS400 screens that the IVR would use to interact with the actual data files. Once the application screens were created, I took the flowchart and the screen images (which included documentation on key strokes to move in and out of the screens) and created the initial base script for the application. Of course, there are always a lot of assumptions as to field locations, keying mnemonics, and call flow and logic that needs clarification and cleanup before any actual testing is performed.

Chris Bridges – “The Design Phase gave me the chance to determine what we really needed to do and how to get it done.”



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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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Initial Walkthrough

It sounds simple enough and easy to do but testing begins with just a walk-through of the base script that was created against the screens. There are a whole series of elements that may require cleanup before any serious testing will begin:

- ⇒ Check the key strokes mnemonics or commands entered to make sure they move your application into the proper screen or out of the existing screen to the required next screen
- ⇒ Check to see if the script is always on the right screen (easy to scrape the screen banner and compare it to what is needed)
- ⇒ Check the field locations to send data to (Cursor location of row and column)
- ⇒ Check the field properties where the data is collect from for the variable values (Row, column, length)
- ⇒ Check all logic elements of the flowchart to make sure the base script has incorporated the rules required for any condition the user may encounter, entry they make or any action that the return values from the data require
- ⇒ Verify that the script recovers from any condition including unexpected termination of the call by the user and resets your application session for the next caller

Initial Testing Phase

The real power of our customizable interface is in the ability for the end user to do their own modification and future customization. There is nothing difficult about our script syntax or the way we do customization.... but every individual needs to go through this learning process. We have found through the years that by VVV personnel doing the initial application base script, it starts a client on their own project faster.

What happens during the first walk-through phase is the client begins to understand how everything comes together. In addition to them now learning how customization is done, we need the client's eyes to catch any mistakes within the script. It is most likely that bad assumptions were made in the base script. Once the client is happy with the initial walk-through, it is time to enter into the "Initial Testing Phase." We now need the voice files recorded and testing data collected to begin the initial testing.

Generally it is recommended that the initial testing is done in the "Test Mode". This is just simpler and sometimes necessary as it was at Elliott because we needed to test various values for CallerID. In the "Test Mode" we can enter the value of what we want the CallerID to be and test the logic against the screens for the various values.

Chris – "In addition to checking the script against the AS400 screens, the walk-through process was a key element in helping me becoming familiar with the basics of the script code and how it worked."

It is usually found that the initial testing will bring up errors in the script's logic that we had not foreseen. At this point in time, there is no such thing as too much testing. You need to plan to test every possible element of the flowchart. We normally provide a spreadsheet which has all the various data required to test all the logic of the flowchart. Basically, you will call into the test mode program using the Test Phone and simulate any possible user input or system condition. If you see errors anywhere, the script needs to be corrected to handle that condition.

Built into the system is the ability to create a debug log file which you can compare to the script to see how each line of code within the customization script interacts with the system. This will aid in the cleanup of the script.

Chris – “I used the Test Mode on a PC other than the Production Box. I was able to test in an environment where I had access to all the information I needed to test with. The Test Mode allowed me the chance to test for all situations that could arise. I was able to control the situations I was testing with looking for anything that needed to be changed.”

Testing on the Production Box

Testing on the Production Unit is very much like the initial testing phase that was just completed but now you are going through your application on the actual production unit through real phone lines. It is assumed that this environment has already been tested and all that is required is to:

1. Move the script and voice files to the proper folder
2. Compile the script
3. Assign the successfully compiled script to the lines
4. Start the lines from the switchboard.

It is also assumed that the script was fully tested in

the previous phase and no possible error conditions exist. The main thing that we need to test here is that each and every phone line is working as designed and needed and the application is up and running.

Chris – “Testing on the Production Unit helped us identify issues with our phone lines coming into the Unit and issues we had with the way our voice files were created. I was able to address these issues and make corrections.”

Taking the Project Live

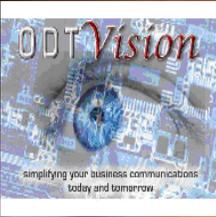
Once a client is totally happy with the project, they may reach a signoff point where they present the application to management. At that time, it is not uncommon for the text within the voice banners to be changed, the logic of the routine to be modified, or new features added to the application. At this point, those changes will be made and specific voice files may be re-recorded so they are high quality and professional sounding, which may not have been done with the quick and dirty voice file recordings used for testing purposes.

Changes After the Project Went Live

The real power of the unit is the ability for the end-user to make their own changes or to build new applications. There was a learning curve that the client went through during the initial application but it pays off dividends for future changes. A montage that you will always hear me say, “look at your log files as to how the system is being used and modify it to be better used by your users or more responsive to your needs.” Elliot Reality has done a great job of this. Here is their explanation of how they have tailored their IVR application and some future applications they plan to implement.

By Chris Bridges:

After bringing the project up live, we had no issues, all of that was handled during the fore mentioned development



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and testing phases. I wanted to look for ways to use the ODTVision VRU to make us more efficient and more customer service friendly. We found that the call volume coming into our company phone system was at beyond capacity. This create a situation where guests were unable to call in to check on a unit and the housekeepers were unable to call in that the unit was ready for occupancy. By creating specific job logs with the ODTVision VRU script I was able to determine who was calling into the Production Unit and when they were calling in. The first step was to create the script code to send a text the our guest once a housekeeper called the unit in ready. This helped with the volume because we notified the guest instead of the guest having to call in. Through the logs I also determined that a majority of the guest calls were coming from just a few guests calling in multiple times. I was able to create script code that limited the guest calls to a certain day and time frame. With these two changes that involved minimal coding time we were able to reduce guest call volume from a high of 1000 calls on a busy day to less than 50. We are working on code to text a housekeeper when a unit is ready to be cleaned. A few of the future projects include an automated housekeeping schedule verification, and over the phone reservation payments. I see the list to continue to grow as others in the company see the potential.

existing and future applications. By creating log files to see how the system is being used, modifications can be done to make the self-service application better. What Chris saw at Elliot is the same rental guest calling to check over and over again if their property was ready. Simply automatically emailing or texting the guest that the property was ready once the housekeeper called and posted that they were finished cleaning the unit dropped the call volume considerably. It also improved how fast the guest was informed since it was done as soon as the status of the unit changed and the information is delivered via the delivery method that the guest specified in their profile. Sometimes you don't see the forest for the trees and it isn't until the application is actually running that you now see what needs to be done.

I thank Chris and Rick at Elliott for all their efforts to bring their application live and for their help with this newsletter. I always enjoy working with clients to bring new projects live. They are excited about what they can do in the future and they would tell you that the ODTVision will be a integral part of their customer service functions in the future. ■

In Conclusion

The newsletter outlined the various steps that are used to design, develop and implement an application. As you can see, there is a lot of cooperative effort between the client who is implementing that IVR application using the ODTVision VRU and personnel at Vision Voice Vantage. This is all a learning process but the real power for the client comes when they can do their own modification of



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