

**Inside this  
issue:**

**Debate between using Live  
Customer Service  
Representatives vs. Self-Service  
Automated Applications**



It is a point of view that I have heard from prospective clients many times,... "But we have always had a live person answer the phone and our clients expect that."

Does having a live person to answer the phone really provide the

best solution for your client's needs? Does it really improving the functionality and service that you want to provide through your customer service department?

**We have had this type of debate before**



Voice mail was first introduced in the late 70's and started to become popular in the 80's. The general purpose of voice mail was to give the

Cost Savings	2
Cost Savings	2
Additional Benefits	3
Conclusion	4

caller the ability to leave an audio recorded message for the recipient and this function could be done 24/7, 365. In many companies, this was combined with auto call distribution where the caller could enter an extension number or name if the recipient did not have the extension number and the caller was routed to either the that person if available or to their voice mail box if unavailable. This eliminated the need for a live receptionist to greet the caller, find out who they need and then to transfer the call. Soon, this self-service type of function was enhanced where the caller had the ability to tag the voice message as important or urgent where it might be delivered immediately. On the recipient's



side, security via passwords were also quickly established that allowed the voice mails to be kept private.

Initially, voice mail met resistance. It was new and corporate America always resists change. Some users felt it impersonal.

*“But I always got through to a live person before and they could take my message if Mr. Jones was unavailable”.*

*“I can never get through to the person I am trying to call and then I am waiting for a call back”.*

*“If a firm is really interested in my business, they would provide a more personal assistance to my needs”.*

In the beginning, voice mail was only in a few companies. Since voice mail was generally a function of the company’s phone system, it was added during upgrades or when those phone systems were replaced. Corporate America recognized the cost savings and the aforementioned benefits of incorporating voice mail into their contact management functions. As voice mail became more commonplace, callers began to not only accept it’s use but considered it necessary that a company provide this functionality.

*“What is wrong with this firm where they don’t have voice mail? I need to leave a personal detailed message for Mr. Jones and I need to know he will get it”.*

*“I don’t care if it is after hours, I need to get Mr. Jones this message and it is an emergency so I need to be able to mark the message as an emergency so he gets it immediately”.*

Pagers, faxes, voice mail and email all brought a new trend in business....”**The I need it now mentality**”. Voice mail satisfied this need for instant communication functionality that meets the user’s desire for immediate contact.

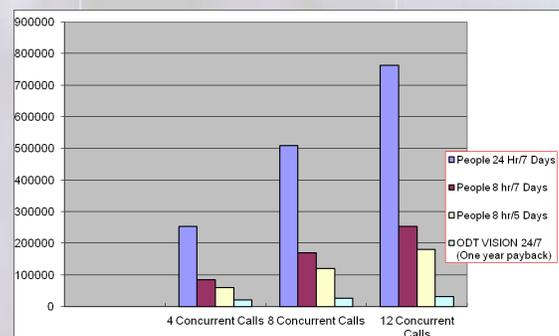
## Interactive Voice Response

Interactive Voice Response systems allow computer systems to interact with human users to perform a variety of self-service customer service solutions. The IVR application uses a combination of touchtone input and voice banners or dynamically generated voice prompts that breakdown the process into a series of simple interactions that can be used by any caller regardless of sophistication or training. The only equipment required on the user end is a telephone. This form of self-service has been around since the 80’s but is becoming very popular due to cost savings and improvements to the user’s experience.



## Cost Savings

An IVR application will handle the calls for a fraction of the cost of a live customer service representative taking those same calls. Based on current minimum wage, compare the cost of just the hourly rate with no benefits. Note the green bar is the cost of an ODTVision amortized over 1 year.





PAGE 3

Vision Voice Vantage, Inc.  
829 Bethel Road #213  
Columbus, Ohio 43214

Phone: 888-252-2555  
Email sales@ODTVision.com



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.

### Improving Customer Service Affordability

Get free project analysis regarding your telephony application or submit technical questions at:  
[TechSupport@ODTVision.com](mailto:TechSupport@ODTVision.com)  
Or Call: 888-252-2555



**IBM Solution Connection..**  
Integrates solution information with IBM eServer, software and TotalStorage technology



<http://www-304.ibm.com/partnerworld/gsd/solutiondetails.do?&solution=25001&lc=en>  
<http://search400.techtarget.com/review/Ohio-Data-Transfers-DTT1000-Voice-Response-Unit-60>

<http://www.ibmssystemsmag.com/ibmi/productnews/>

## 24/7 365 with Lower Cost

This benefit is kind of self-explanatory as a machine has no holidays, takes no vacations, requires no benefits and takes calls around the clock.

## Concurrent Calls/Scalability

Not only are you always operational, but you can also take multiple calls at the same time. Most VRUs like the ODTVision allow you to easily add ports for additional lines as the demand rises for your self-service application. Built within the ODTVision VRU is a line graphical representation of line usage. By using this with your log reports, it is easy to judge when it is time to add lines for your application. Adding an additional line is cheaper and easier to add than additional personnel.

## Multi-lingual Support

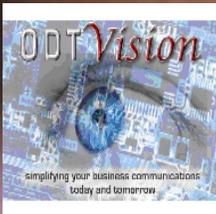
You may not have a live representative that can handle a customer that doesn't speak English but a self-service IVR application can easily allow the user to identify the language they require for their session. That session is then conducted in the chosen language even though the language of the data in the self-service application is different.

## Security

One of the first big users of IVR applications were banks. There were many factors such as easy of use, only equipment needed by the user is standard phone, no training of user, and 24/7 access that made the IVR application attractive for this type of application. Most important was that through the use of an account number and pin number, only the user that was allowed to gain access to this account could do so.

Privacy and security are very important in so many self-service applications where only the authenticated user should have access to use the system. If you are providing a payment transaction system where users are making payments, the user's credit card information is not exposed to a live phone representative. A number of years ago, a major university put our solution in their HR department and was using it for 24/7 employment verification. This unit replaced two clerks that were doing the same function live. This provided two major benefits:

1. Service was now 24/7 and at a much reduced cost
2. Clerks no longer needed access to employees' confidential information such as pay rates or other financial or marital status data & it stopped ongoing gossip of personal information



PAGE 4

Vision Voice Vantage, Inc.  
829 Bethel Road #213  
Columbus, Ohio 43214

Phone: 888-252-2555  
Email sales@ODTVision.com



THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX  
IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

## 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 ODTVISION 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](mailto:TechSupport@ODTVision.com)  
Or Call: 888-252-2555



<http://www.ibmssystemsmag.com/lbmi/productnews/productreviews/Product-Review-DTT1000-from-Ohio-Data-Transfer/>

## Call Distribution/Emergencies

The user can be defined by their account profile, input responses or system returned field values as to what they need from the application and how they will route through the process. For example, if a user is doing a shipment status transaction and they find out that the items were not shipped due to a credit hold, they need to either make a payment to get the credit hold released or talk to someone regarding this matter. Based on the user's input and if the office is open, the user may request a transfer to a live representative. The call is then routed to the specific department or agent based on who the caller is and/or what they are trying to do. If this call is made after business hours and is the type of situation that requires immediate attention, the system can have the ability to text, email or even transfer the call to on-call personnel.

## Having an Audit Trail

One of the things we suggest that all accounts do with our IVR solution is to build into the application an audit trail of how the system was used, who did what and when, as well as the reason the user had to still transfer out to a live representative. By using this log to build reports of the self-service functions, we can improve the functionality of how the system performs its tasks as well as trace what was done on specific calls.

## Blending Multiple Systems

Not all your data that the IVR application uses may be on the same computer system platform. Your IVR application may blend the various data sources to address the needs of the caller.

## External Personnel

A user may make a request such as a work order for repair where that work order is generated and then transmitted to personnel in another department or perhaps even to a third party vendor that works with your firm. This all can be done automatically and seamlessly.

## Conclusion

Lower costs and the availability of providing customer service 24/7 through an IVR, the ease of customization of modern IVR solutions, the acceptance by users, and the improved designs and functionality of IVR self-service has lead to the popularity of this approach in customer service functions. No IVR solution can eliminate every call that requires a live person to assist the user but if X % of your calls can be handled by this self-service function,... you have now stretched your staff and reduced wait time where a user may be on hold looking for that live help. ■