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**How to Select Your Solution
For Your IVR Application**



With the economy still in a somewhat tight situation, companies are looking for ways to reduce the overall cost of personnel. One of the significant areas of this rising cost is in customer service. Now, no firm can succeed if

their customer service doesn't meet the needs of their customers or users. Today businesses use an IVR application to handle certain calls that can be filtered off because the caller's needs are outside the business hours or simple in nature and a live customer service representative is not needed. This month's newsletter is aimed at a discussion of how to select the solution to address your automated attendant needs and requirements.

In the past about our newsletter has discussed what we refer to as the three stages of client relations.

Marketing and Introduction

The introduction stage begins with the introduction of the product as well as the vendor. This is a bi-directional communication phase where not only is the client is learning about the solution but the vendor is learning about the client and their IVR application needs.

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Design and Implementation

Once there is a project, it begins with the design and a plan for the implementation of the IVR solution. There is no such thing as too much planning for a successful implementation.

Ongoing Support

Any good IVR application should be dynamic in nature where it can be changed and modified to meet the ever changing needs of your customer service. Therefore it is important to have a vendor that will be there to assist. This vendor also should be keeping the product current with build in migration paths.



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Areas To Consider For Your Telephony Solution

There are four main areas to consider when selecting a VRU to provide your IVR solution.

-  **The Application**
-  **The Product**
-  **The Vendor**
-  **The Implementation**

The Application

Nothing is more important than getting a handle on the application itself. A good place to start is to look at the user or group of users that will be serviced by the application. What are you trying to accomplish in this self-service IVR application? Do you have one unique type of user which has specific needs or are there different groups and the needs will be defined by the type of user that has called in for each and every session.



Because the application needs to be interactive, where does the data come from? Is that on a single platform or does the IVR application need to cross platforms or systems? What is the time frame for implementation and are there plans to roll out one or multiple applications in stages? What personnel will assist in the design of this application? Is this application a capital budget item where any associated cost needs to fall within certain budgetary criteria? Does the IVR application require bi-lingual support? **Bottom line, it all begins with a thorough knowledge of what the application requires before you move forward to select the product and its vendor.**

The Product

Knowing what your application requires will go a long way toward defining which product you need to look at. Does the solution meet the requirements of the application? You need to not only look at the current IVR application but also consider any future applications. Is the VRU that will perform the self-service IVR application scalable for future growth? Who will perform the customization of the IVR application? In the future when modifications to the application are needed, who does that? Does the VRU product support current technologies and standards? Can the VRU product make use of 3rd party software to form a more robust IVR application? How will the VRU be integrated into your existing firm's phone system? If that phone system changes in the future, can this VRU product change to the new system? If you change computer platforms in the future, can this product support that? How is the system administration of this VRU accomplished and how difficult of a task is that? What type of track record does this product have? **As important as defining the application itself, the complete assessment of the environment now and in the future is just as important.**



The Vendor

It is almost impossible to separate the product and the vendor. Successful implementation of a great IVR application will require a partnership between your firm and the vendor. Whether this is a totally new solution or you are just adding a new application to an existing VRU, you need to have a comfortable relationship with this vendor. The vendor should be a resource that helps with everything from doing or instructing you about how customization is

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Features	ODT Vision®	Competitor
Live demo routine can be downloaded from web site to provide a complete product orientation tour for the decision process	Yes	
Requires no previous Programming Experience (actually creating a macro like excel) & your own customization can be done in-house	Yes	
Customization can be done on secondary PC	Yes	
Build in compiler utility helps with debugging and creates automatic debugging report	Yes	
On-site installation & training day included	Yes	
Connects to Analog phone lines	Yes	
Connects to Digital phone lines	Yes	
Connects to VOIP Systems	Yes	
Connects to most PBX systems	Yes	
Uses non-proprietary hardware & can be moved to another PC of your choosing in the future	Yes	
Uses an industry standard Operating system	Yes	
Contained within industrial 19" heavy duty rack unit	Yes	
Build in console screen for monitoring which can be view anywhere through the WAN	Yes	
Custom interfaces supported	Standard	
Connects to Industry Standard ODBC Databases allowing the unit to interface with almost any platform	Standard	
Connects to IBM iSeries (green screen HLIAPPI screen scrape or through ODBC)	Optional \$500	
Test and debug on another PC?	Yes	
iSeries controlled by ODTVision	Yes	
ODTVision controlled by iSeries	Yes	
Has Office Open/Close Configuration Screens based on Holidays and Hours of Operation so unit knows if office is open/closed so if caller wants to be transferred to live customer service representative, IVR know if possible	Yes	
Supports Microsoft scheduling program which can run batch processing off clock time or condition	Yes	
Allows the recording of voice prompts on any soundcard which are saved as ".wav" files	Yes	
Allows up to unlimited number of different foreign languages per system	Yes	
Text-to-speech support? (Allows 3 rd party TTS voice dictionary as long as they are Microsoft SAP 5.1 compliant)	Optional \$2000- unlimited lines	
Email support	Optional \$550	
Fax support	Optional \$varies	
Scaleable in the field with built in capacity monitor to tell when more lines are needed	Yes	



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

done to addressing issues with daily system administration. The vendor should also serve as a consultant who can instruct you on points that will make your self-service application more friendly and easier to use. This vendor should be able to tell you how most firms do various functions and what is important in your application. Application improvements such as "optimizing your voice prompts" or "optimizing your voice menus" may be foreign to you but a good vendor can help you with such enhancements to improve your application. **The proper selection of the vendor can be as important as the product selection itself. Always remember that.**

The Implementation

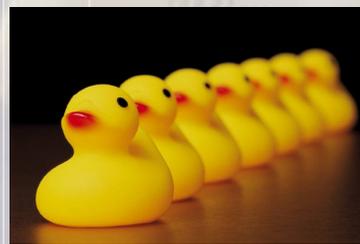
So you have done our homework and you know the application through and through. The correct



product and support vendor was selected. The VRU has been installed into your environment where it is integrated to the phone system as well as connected to the data. The software within the VRU has been customized to the ap-

plication needs. A game plan has been formulated so that you know who does what in the implementation and you know the time frame for reaching full production. You can have all your

ducks lined up but until you have fully tested the application, you can never be sure that everything has been done to



complete this project successfully. As important as the initial game plan for the total implementation is,

you should also have a testing routine which outlines all the possible responses from a user within your application. To aid in this, assemble data to test all these possibilities.

In summary, during the selection process know what you need at every stage and get a product and vendor with a game plan for how this application will be implemented. Follow that game plan and always remember there is no such thing as too much testing. We normally start a new relationship with a possible client with a web seminar where we demonstrate the ODTVision VRU solution, have a discussion of features, explain how customization is done and finish with a roundtable discussion of the client's application. Bottom line, there will be no surprises if you plan for everything. ■