

Vision Voice Vantage, Inc.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

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Trends Towards Self-service



Customer self-service certainly has its advantages as customers can find the answers they need or perform a transaction regardless of your firm's

business hours.

From the user's point of view:

-  Convenient & meets user's schedule
-  Easy to do even for a 1st time user
-  Quicker to obtain information
-  More secure as a live representative will not hear bank card information
-  Doesn't require the user to interact with person
-  Transaction can be in a non-English language if that is what the user requires

Doing customer service through a self-service application can be less expensive, more productive and leverage cutting edge technologies. There are advantages of providing to your users various types of self-service systems whether this

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is through an IVR application, various web applications, or other types of self-service solutions. It may be advantageous to provide more than one type of self-service application for the same function. For example, a utility customer may pay their bill through an IVR application, a web site, or some form of automatic billing system. This multi-solution approach is referred to as **multi-channel access**. Basically it allows the user to use the self-service solution that works best for them. Always keep in mind that any self-service application needs to fits the user's needs and you may very well have different levels or group of users. It is always important in your initial discussion of a self-service application to look at types of users and their needs.



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History of Self-service

Everyone is seeing the trend of more and more self-service solutions. Users are becoming more accepting of dealing with an automatic attendant vs. waiting on hold to talk to a live customer service representative which may also require making that call during business hours. Self-service has almost been around for 100 years and in some cases... is changing how business is done.

One of the first self-service solutions took place in 1917. Clarence Saunders was awarded a patent for a "self-serving store." Saunders invited his customers to collect the goods they wanted to buy from the store and present them to a cashier. Before this point, customer gave the store employee a list and the store employee collected the goods. Saunders licensed the business method to independent grocery stores, these operated under the memorable name "Piggly Wiggly."



You might be surprised to learn that pumping your own fuel has been around since 1949 but has grown substantially in recent years. Only two states in the nation disallow this practice.

Those two states are New Jersey and Oregon. Initially a customer could select a full service or self service pump but the practice of full service has diminished over the years. Most pumps are now pre-pay to discourage drive-offs. Like many new self-service functions, some customers preferred to not use this self-service method but it is now widely accepted as the norm.

In 1961, Bell System developed a new tone dialing methodology (touch tone or DTMF- Dual Tone Multiple Frequency). In doing so Bell created the technological basis for the IVR or Interactive Voice Response system. It would take until the mid 80's for the IVR to become commercially viable for call center applications. One of the first big vertical markets to use this new technology was banks. It allowed them to offer a 24/7 telephone accessible self-service solution to their customers that was secure, private and easy for any user to perform without the need for any equipment other than a standard phone.



In 1972, IBM invented the first ATM which was used at Lloyds Bank in the UK. Like many new methods of doing customer service through a self-service solution, it wouldn't become a daily event for a decade but now is a standard of any financial institution. Many customers would rather do



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Vision Voice Vantage, Inc.
1938 Zollinger Road
Columbus, Ohio 43221

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



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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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a deposit or withdrawal using this method rather than a live bank teller for its convenience, privacy and speed.



Airport Kiosk Check-In was introduced in 1995 and has become a standard method for airlines to check-in customers. It costs the airline less than 5% of the cost of a live ticket agent to process this check-in. As in many self-service solutions, it provides a simple solution which is easy to do and faster for the customer. It provides the airlines with the ability to handle more concurrent check-ins in the limited space found in most airport lobbies at a lower cost. The airlines still have live representatives to address special needs but this self-service solution is changing how every airlines operates their customer service function.

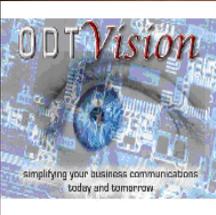
Doing the Math

It is always important to both satisfy your customers as well as your budget for

customer service. For this example lets say you are paying your live customer service representatives the Federal Minimum Wage of \$7.25 per hour with absolutely no benefits of any type. If we calculate the use of our VRU solution to replace these individuals the following table shows the annual cost for this self-service solution vs. the live individuals.

Hours/Days for Customer Service	4 Concurrent Calls
People 24 Hr/7 Days	\$254,040.00
People 8 hr/7 Days	\$84,680.00
People 8 hr/5 Days	\$60,320.00
ODT VISION 24/7 (One year payback)	\$18,500.00

So if you are running customer service 24/7 and have the need to have at least four concurrent sessions, the mere change from live representatives to the ODTVision VRU self-service solution would save \$235,540.00 in the first year. **Project that out to the savings in five years, you are looking at a savings of \$1,177,700.00.** For many companies this is a game changer and why they are implementing the ODTVision VRU self-service solutions in as many places as they can.



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Keeping It Simple

The two main driving elements for providing self-service solutions are to lower operating costs while allowing extended hours for customer service. Just as important as these two objectives are that the self-service application is **easy to use, tailored to what the user needs to do and finally that it has a high rate of completion with success.**



We have seen a trend over the years as a vendor of customizable VRU solution where our clients want to make their IVR solution too complex.

First define your users and their functions that will be preformed through the IVR application. If these functions are totally different, separate the various user groups to separate resources/lines which address the needs of that user type only. What a customer may want to do may be totally different than what your employee needs to do even though they are calling into the same VRU. In addition, don't overload the application. The most simple self-service application will be the easiest to use and have the most successful rate of completion. For example:

-  A cable client calls into the IVR application
-  Client identifies their account or perhaps it is auto-detected based on Caller ID
-  Hears their balance
-  Makes a payment
-  After payment, general menu presented where other functions are allowed like service call functions or other customer service functions

The fact that we are not asking much of the self-service application and that it is designed directly to the point of what the user needs to do will lead to a higher success rate.

Knowing the quality of your self-service applications.

Customer self-service certainly has it advantages where customers can get answers they need regardless of business hours, without waiting for an agent to assist them, and with a remarkable cost savings to the company, but you can't stop once the application is up and live. There are always many gray areas where the service provided by the self-service solution may not be addressing all the needs of the user. You thought you planned for everything but until it was in production, you just didn't see these issues. **You need to measure the success of your self-service channel's performance. Within the application, you need to enable transactional analysis. If you don't measure the completion and transfer-out-rate, you can't really know how well the self-service solution is addressing its user needs.** Look for trends, for example reasons the user often hangs up or reasons the user often transfers. You may want to modify your self-service solution to address these issues and improve the self-service application.



Remember, easy, friendly, and efficient. ▣