Vision Voice Vantage, Inc.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

Happy Holidays

On behalf of Vision Voice Vantage and our associates, we would like to wish you and yours a wonderful holiday season. We don't do it often enough but want to thank all our clients for our wonderful relationships built over the years of service. May 2014 be a year of growth and prosperity for everyone.

Making an IVR System A Part of Your Team for Customer Service

Perhaps at no other time of the year does it become more obvious that a self-service IVR application could minimize staffing issues that you may be experiencing due to the demands on your staff during the holiday season. Some of staffing requirements may be due to an increase in customer service transactions while there may also be reductions of available staff due to higher than normal vacation and personal days taken this time of year. Christmas Day is the one day each year that most companies are totally closed. Just because your office is closed, the need to interact with customers doesn't diminish. A self-service IVR appli-

cation will be live 24/7 and never be off for a holiday, ...even Christmas.

Stretching Staff

Any customer support call that a self-service IVR application takes is one less call that a live customer service representative needs to take. IVR applications can easily and quickly provide assistance for routine matters. So if someone is calling to trace a shipment needed for a Christmas present, it is more efficient to have an IVR self-service application do this rather than that caller being in a holding queue waiting for the next available customer service representative. Holding times can be source of aggravation when the customer is already experiencing a problem and needs an immediate answer to a question.

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Trends in Customer Service

There are certain social and business trends that are making the use of self-service IVR applications in many customer service functions very popular. First and foremost, most customers have an "I need in now" mentality. Gone is the long held notion that if you need customer assistance, it can only happen during normal business hours of operation. In recent years, self-service IVR application have become mainstream. Chances are that you will initially encounter some form of self-service assistance when you call an 800 number rather than a live operator.

A lot of self-service is now found on web applications but an IVR system can provide an alternative to this web assistance. Unlike the web, this approach can address the unsophisticated or mobile user, allowing them to access information or assistance through their cellular or home phone. Due to increasing competition and the need for more hours of customer service many firms are working to lower the cost to provide customer service. This is a purely economical approach as a machine will always address the client's needs less expensively than a live person and it will always be active, ….even on Christmas. There may be competitive pressure on your company, if your biggest competition offers a self-service application you may need to offer this as well.

Your customer service department may also need to deal with clients who don't speak English and providing self service in other languages is something that the IVR application could address. Since this is a machine, there is more confidentiality during the call as a live representative isn't working with the social security number or other sensitive data that the user doesn't want to give to a person. This interaction is very secure as the data stream isn't going over the internet and there is little possibility of hacking. In addition, your company may want all calls to be handled in a standardized manner. The very nature of the IVR application will limit what a user can or cannot do an you can structure your application to meet your expectations for how the solution is used. Even though the user is accessing live account information, they can only perform functions that you allow.

Finally, you can build logging into your application that provides an audit trail to help you see how your users are using the system and allow you to modify the application to better address the client's needs. Perhaps you have built into your IVR application the ability to transfer out to a live customer service representative. The log may help you identify a place during calls where users always transfer out. You can then redesign that section to eliminate the reason those calls were transferring out.

Improving Service

It is very possible to design your self-service solution so that it replicates and even im-

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proves the customer experience that a live representative would provide. Besides always being available and lowering the cost, an IVR can allow more concurrent sessions than the number of live representatives you have. More users' needs are being addressed, hold times will be reduced and customer satisfaction will increase.

Years ago Amazon and eBay began to track their user's preferences and change the logic of the caller's session based on the results from the user's profile. This is commonly called "Building Customer Loyalty." For example, if the application checks the customer issues file and sees that this caller has an outstanding issue, the self-service solution could automatically bring up results based on what is sees…..

Mr. Smith, we see you are having an issue with the return of an order with number 123456789. That issue has been resolved and the funds of $XXXX.xx has been refunded to your account.

This stacked voice banner (combination of recorded voice messages with data obtain from the database or screen) is automatically supplied as the user logs onto their profile as it is assume this incident is what they are calling about. This shortens the call if indeed that was the reason the user called in and the

only information supplied by the caller was gathered as they logged onto their account. Other companies may want to remind their customers of outstanding balances and route calls to different agents based on their response.

IVR applications can be built very quickly as the data already exists. IVR self-service assistance can go live almost immediately if an issue arises where customer service needs to handle a large number of calls such as storm damage emergencies or a common question that a number of your clients need answered. Perhaps the current federal and state exchanges for the Affordable Care Act

It is a huge benefit to have an easy to customize VRU that allows modification of an existing or addition of a completely new self-service IVR application in minutes by in-house personnel.

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.

could use such a solution to address common questions such as "Has your insurance policy been cleared and accepted?". Based on the results, additional information or further assistance may be provided.

Lowering Cost

In this uncertain business environment, it may be difficult to just keep the business alive let alone to build a profit. It is difficult to generate more revenue as your firm may be against the wall with market values and competition. One thing that any firm can do is look for methods to lower their costs. Let's face it, the cost of personnel is one of the largest items on a spreadsheet. It is very important for any firm to maximize the use of their personnel. What if you have customers calling in to live representatives who are simply reading data to the caller from fields on a screen, …...that process may be best addressed by an IVR application providing the same function at a fraction of the cost per call. An IVR self-service application can answer the call for pennies per call vs. the escalating cost of that same call being addressed with a live customer service representative. In addition, any call addressed by the IVR application will free up live customer service representatives

to handle other calls that actually do require additional assistance.

Self-service applications on the VRU lower cost in a variety of ways:

☎ Will always address a caller's needs at a fraction of the cost of the live personnel
☎ During office hours, can address calls that don't require human assistance and therefore will free up valuable personnel. It can make your Customer Service area more efficient and allow lower staffing levels
☎ Can address calls outside of business hours without requiring live customer service staff
☎ Can handle non-English speaking customers' calls so you don't have to hire specialized live personnel to address those users' needs

With most ROI within months, one can very easily see the savings. We maintain a running spreadsheet on the ROI of our VRUs installed at our client's sites. Most keep the units for years with very little modification. The average age of our units is 7.5 years. The average cost per day is $14.98. When you consider cost savings and additional benefits of operation, it would cost millions of dollars at many of our accounts for them to handle those calls with live personnel. You can see why most firms have either gone to self-service IVR applications or are considering it at this time. Please feel free to contact us for more information about the use of IVR's and how our ODTVision VRU can increase customer satisfaction **and** reduce your costs◘