Vision Voice Vantage, Inc.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

As things change, there is an advantage if your VRU can adapt

Business is always changing due to market pressures, economic trends, new technologies, customer needs, and governmental regulations. My dear father who recently passed taught me a lot about life and business. He always use to say, "The definition of a successful business is one that succeeds in spite of itself." I believe what he was saying here is that all business has obstacles but to succeed, a firm must finds ways around them.

Due to the ever changing environment, a company needs to incorporate systems and procedures that can meet these ever changing business trends. We have talked many times in past newsletters that firms have great flexibility with the ability to customize and modify their IVR applications in house, allowing them to quickly and easily keep the system current with their business needs. The flexibility of the ODTVision VRU goes further than that as it can be adapted to various databases and system platforms. It also can adjust to changes in phone systems. This month's newsletter discusses some of those points but first, it will discuss some current changes in business trends. .

Changes in Business Trends

Customer relations and communications have been elevated over the years. Everyone has the "I Need It Now Mentality." Standard mail service which is days away from delivery was first replaced by fax and then email.

Self-service applications are a popular way to administer customer service functions. They meet many trends

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currently popular such as:

♦ Allows user to do the function 24/7 at their convenience

♦ Lower the over all cost to administer customer service

♦ Frees up existing staff to address calls that actually require live support as the self-service system can filter off routine calls and allow users to help themselves

A self-service application can take many forms. It may be a web application, an IVR application such as the ODTVision VRU or even a kiosk at the airport or at an restaurant for ordering. No one wants to hold on a phone line for the next available customer service representative or stand in line at the customer service counter if they can get their own answer or complete their task immediately.

Besides the need for immediate satisfaction, the demographics of the customer is changing. We are now recognizing the needs of non-English speaking customers   and want to provide customer service functions in other languages.

The client may want all communications to be delivered to them as soon as the information is available, so the function will be handled in the form of a text message or

email. We did an application last year for a vacation rental firm. The initial application had their cleaning crew do their job scheduling and reporting through the self-service IVR system. An additional enhancement was made after going live where as soon as the rental unit was clean, the IVR system would send a text message to the next renter that their unit was available. The end result was that calls to the corporate office on the weekend went from about 150 calls per day to around 30 calls. Not only was their cost reduced to administer this customer service but the customer got better communications which happened automatically. It was a secondary addition to the original application but an improvement that greatly enhanced the functionality and benefit of the self-service application.

In these times, there may be the need to optimize staffing levels where individuals are moved or even laid off due to revenues. We did a city utility system years ago where three live customer service representatives had been let go and the two remaining CS representatives couldn't handle the volume of calls. I remember on the installation day the hostility of the remaining staff saying, "If the city hadn't brought in this fancy new machine, they could bring back the other representatives".

ODTVision
simplifying your business communications today and tomorrow

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iSeries edition
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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 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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Now this was a false statement as the city couldn't even bring back one individual for one year for the cost of the VRU. Actually the city was bringing in the automated system to help with the overflow that the staffing reduction had produced and this was the end result of seeing the deficiency the layoffs had produced in the department.

There are three main areas where the ability to change the ODTVision VRU helps you adapt to changes in your business.

Changes within the application itself

These could be changes to an existing element or function, the addition of new functions to the self-service application, or maybe the integration of a completely new host system or technology.

We have always prided ourselves on having a VRU solution that allows the customer to do all customization in-house. No previous programming experience is needed as it is more like writing a macro to do the customization of the interface around your applications rather than actually programming and it can be learned by anyone. What is needed from our customers is the knowledge of what systems they have in house that they want to connect the user with and what the needs of their users are. This benefit cannot be stated enough as it gives our clients real power. If in a ten o'clock staff meeting an enhancement is discussed and now required…..that can be implemented to the self-service application immediately by your own staff.

I am amazed how many of my clients do not record their customer's cell phone number or current email address in a database field so they can offer texting and/or email communications for those customers. The ability to send out messages immediately for items such as shipment information or a bank transaction can really improve customer service satisfaction.

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This is information you may want to incorporate into your database for future use. This will make it easy to add sending a text message, sending an email or sending a fax when the need arises.

There may be major changes in your telephony systems or changes in the systems where your data comes from. The self-service application will need to be altered to reflect those changes but will not have to be replaced. You may want to go back and review the Oct. 2011 newsletter that "discussed rules of business."

http://odtvision.com/includes/newsletters/1110_newsltr.pdf

Change in System Platform or Data

A misconception that I hear from time to time is that customers think the ODTVision VRU only communicates with IBM host systems. This is not true as through ODBC, the unit can be connected to data on any platform. In fact, the unit can be connected to multiple platforms and data streams concurrently. This gives great flexibility and your firm may be bringing in a different database or platform for a variety of systems. I have seen customers who did away with their mid-range IBM host and we were the only solution that remained when the switch occurred. Even with the platform change, your users using the IVR self-service application will see no change and not even know there was a switch out of data streams.

Changes in Phone System

The traditional PBX phone systems are becoming obsolete and we see trends to more digital and VOIP phone systems. Once again, the ODTVision can address this change within your organization. Perhaps the VRU had been connected to traditional analog extensions off your old PBX unit. Going to a new VOIP system can still allow the current IVR self-service applications to be moved to the new phone environment and this too, will be seamless to your users. Please contact your ODTVision marketing firm or contact us directly to discuss what is involved to accomplish this change.

In conclusion, we discussed how ODTVision allows you to easily address:

♦ changes in your business or customers needs
♦ changes in data streams and source systems
♦ changes in phone systems

Within a constant and rapidly changing environment the constant variable is the ODTVision system, which you can modify to fit your needs.◘