

Do you have the time ?

A famous Benjamin Franklin quote is, "Time is Money." Business managers realize that time is a critical factor in the bottom line. For a firm to be

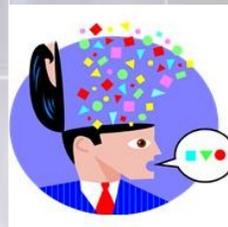


successful, time management is paramount. Many management decisions are based on time factors and the communications of these elements need to be efficient and timely. The question then becomes,

"How can the manager have at his fingertips all the time variables needed to make the executive decision without elevating the cost to assemble this data?" Henry Ford once stated, **"It has been my observation that most people get ahead during the time that others waste time."** This month's newsletter is going to focus how you can use the ODTVision VRU to create IVR application to assist your firm in time management and assembly of time and date data.

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Posting Time and Date



Since most IVR applications built on our VRU are linked to live data whether through HLAPI screen scraping to host application screens or through direct link to the data, it is easy to design that application so that the date and time of the call is used for the date and time stamp. At the time of the call, the VRU knows the data and time. This data can be used to update the date and time fields. We have seen many examples of firms using our VRU to notify the central office of some time and data value.



An easy example is a truck driver going through their schedule of deliveries. Since



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the self-service IVR application is tied directly to the delivery scheduling system, it is as simple as the driver just calling a phone number for the IVR application, the system recognizing the Caller ID and therefore bringing up today's schedule for that driver, and what stop the driver is on. The system then automatically posts to that schedule stop the date



and time of the call. This allows the schedule delivery system to be able to provide to the original shipper the status of the delivery on a timely bases without specialized equipment to communicate the delivery status. All that was needed is the driver had a simple cellular phone 4 second call. This time/date posting is simple to use, takes very little time, can be used with no training and can be carried over to 3rd party drivers of other firms as no specialized equipment is required.



Now let's take this simple time posting system one step further. We have a service repairman that is going out on a job assignment but may need to post additional information regarding the job. The centralized office needs to know if the job was completed or not. If not, they want to know the reason why it wasn't completed such as parts not available, etc. Depending on the duration of the assignment, the time management and job scheduling system may need to have the ability to pass off that worker's later job assignments to

another repairman as the scheduled appointment is taking too much time.

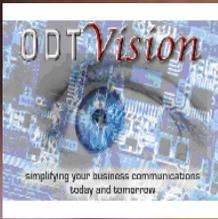


When location needs to be identified as well as date and time an easy way to accomplish that is by using Caller ID. One of our clients a few years ago created an application for their internal security guards that traveled around their corporate offices and warehouse after hours. Using their the logging system, as the security guard calls into the VRU, it records not only at the date and time of the call but the extension that the call came from. By the system knowing the location of that extension which made the call, this call now automatically not only posted data and time but also the guard's location.



Let's add another element, defining what job type you are doing. A number of years ago a large city school district added our VRU to create a time clock posting system for hourly employees. The employees called in to post they had arrived at work or were leaving work. Some employees were even required to clock out to take lunches. This system had some of the elements always discussed under time posting such as current date/time and location. A new element required for some employees was the nature of their work. For example, a school bus driver may have different job classifications based on the nature of their trip. You had the normal daily





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THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

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.

bus run, the class field trip, or the transportation of a sports team to a game or event. The job scheduling system knew this since the driver was also required to enter the code which identified the type of job assignment.

Manual Posting

Not all date and time posting is automatic from the current date and time of the call. Perhaps the application is to inquire on the availability of a class or resource such as a golf tee time in the future where you need to enter the date and time for the resource. Since the VRU's IVR application is just a simple I/O device, the caller would just respond to questions and the application would update the scheduling system based on that caller's input.

Time Commands

Syntax:

dvar = **CreateDate** *month, day, year*
Returns the date value from *month, day, and year*.

tvar = **CreateTime** *hours, minutes, seconds*
Returns the time value from *hours, minutes, and seconds*.

dtvar = **AddInterval** *dtval, interval, type*
Returns the date/time value after adding an interval.

dtvar = **SubInterval** *dtval, interval, type*
Returns the date/time value after subtracting an interval.

numvar = **ExtractPart** *dtval, type*
Returns the part of a date/time value specified by *type*.

numvar = **Interval** *dtval1, dtval2, type*
Returns the interval between two date/time values.

If the field you are updating with input requires a

formatted date or time variable, you may have to use the "CreateDate" or "CreateTime" syntax.

Type	Interval
yyyy	Year
q	Quarter
m	Month
y	Day of Year
d	Day
w	Weekday
ww	Week
h	Hours
n	Minutes
s	Seconds

These time/date types are required if you are going to do some type of mathematical process on the date/time variable strings. If you are working with time or date string values with the commands, it is important to know the

valid variable types.

How much time did it take



The amount of time something takes can be calculated based on the start time and end time and then shown as an interval value. It doesn't matter if you are wanting to know the amount of time or the number of

days,...this call can be done using the "SubInterval" syntax with specified integral type.

We once had a client that had an account inquiry system that when the customer called in to inquire on their bill, the system automatically looked at their



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account receivables and if any amount was over 90 days or if the account had a balance above \$500 over 30 days, the system automatically transferred the call during office hours to the accounts receivables



department to try to collect the payment. If the call came in after hours, it went to the IVR's account receivable system. If the caller didn't make the payment as requested, a note

was attached to their profile which stated that on this date and time, the IVR told the caller they had an outstanding balance of \$X dollars and they did not pay.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is easy to use the ODTVision VRU to assemble time and date information that can improve your knowledge of what is happening with processes in your business. It doesn't matter where users are



located or whether they are your own employees, customers, or 3 party individuals that your business works with.

The beauty is that the VRU uses its own internal clock to formulate the time and date which is highly accurate and this data can update current scheduling or job assignment systems as well as a lot of other systems automatically without specialized equipment or training. The purpose of this newsletter was just to start the discussion of how you could use our self-service solution to improve time management within you firm. We welcome an open discussion of what you need to do and how we could help you accomplish that. ■