

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX
IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

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**New Pricing Takes Effect on
December 1st.**

It has been four years since the last price increase for the ODTVision VRU. The new pricing will be effective on December 1st. In addition, any unit over six years of age will no longer qualify for discount on an upgrade if not on software maintenance.

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There are Multiple Reasons
to go to an IVR Self-service
Application beyond Saving
Money

Lowering the Cost of Personnel

There are multiple reasons that firms are using self-service IVR applications. This month's newsletter outlines some of the trends



leading to Customer Service Applications being addressed by IVR self-service applications.

The ODTVision VRU solution will always be lower in cost in addressing a customer service function than an actual live person. Most firms realize a reduction in cost from the hourly wage they are paying a person to answer the phone call. Current the Federal Minimum is \$7.25 per hour and that doesn't include benefits. In many regions and states,

that is higher rate. The cost of providing benefits, especially health care is going up rapidly and firms are looking for a way to lower all costs associated with providing Customer Service—primarily reducing staffing.

To provide an example, the following table shows the amortized rate for a four line system based on the number of years you are looking for ROI. Obviously the cost per hour is a fraction of the hour wage for just one employee and this is replacing four employees not counting benefits that they would have.

	4 Line
Cost per hour based on 1 year	\$3.52
Cost per hour based on 2 years	\$1.76
Cost per hour based on 3 years	\$1.17

(based on new pricing)



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As the number of lines increases for concurrent calls, the savings increase substantially. There are also the savings in benefits, management and scheduling costs. The IVR requires no benefits, takes no days off, works on holidays and requires no management or training.

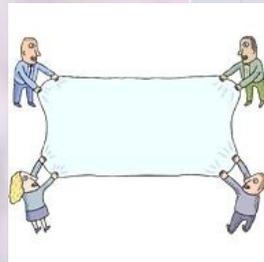
Stretching Staffing

For every call that an IVR application answers, that is one less call that has to be addressed by a live customer service representative. It has already been

established that the cost of our Voice Response Unit is much less than the hourly cost of live personnel. Not every call can be addressed by machine. Some callers just have issues working with a machine or they have needs beyond the system's capabilities.

What the IVR self-service approach allows is filtering off routine calls such as "Has my order shipped?", and frees up your live personnel to address problem issues more efficiently. For example, let's say our

customer service department has four live customer service representatives that are answering calls.



Monitoring the needs of that customer service department results in the requirement to address additional concurrent calls as a back log has been identified.

Adding the IVR will cost significantly less than hiring one more live representative. In this example, your cost savings are also



increased because your customer service department can now address eight customer's concurrent calls vs. five. There would be less time a client is in the holding queue and your customer service department can address any increase in demand whether temporary or ongoing.

Extending Customer Service Beyond Normal Office Hours

Unless you are a very large firm that provides live customer service representatives 24/7...365, there is a period of the day or week where the customer service department is closed. Perhaps your firm offers some form of web self-service but you may have clients that do not have web access or are not sophisticated enough to use that type solution if it is even available. Suppose we are using the IVR self-service applications in conjunction with live representatives where some calls are transferred to live representatives as requested



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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.

by the user or when circumstances arise that require human intervention. In a customer service department that does not function 24/7 and is closed for holidays, the ODTVision VRU unit can be configured for additional hours of operation and holidays when the live representatives are not there. When a call is answered by the auto-attendant, it will know the rules of how to address the caller's needs. Your firm may need to address emergencies outside of office hours and in that case, the IVR may be set to email or text the individuals on call regarding this emergency condition so it can be addressed. You have now taken a customer service department that was restricted before to certain days and hours of the week to a 24/7 basis which operates 365.

have any live customer service representative that speaks Spanish. The ODTVision VRU can provide multi-language support so that you can address those needs.

Say you want some form of time stamp application. This could be a driver making deliveries, a guard making security rounds, or even an employee making a time clock punch in or out. You don't even have to require the user to enter any data. Once the IVR application sees the CallerID, it goes into the application and inserts a record into the database with the date and time of the call for this user. The ODTVision VRU has then met this recording need with a five second phone call.

The very nature of an IVR application is that it is interactive with the user and doesn't require any training of the user. There are no screens to navigate so if the user has problems using a web application or has some reason they can't use a web application (they have no internet connectivity or they are visually impaired), the ODTVision IVR application could allow you to serve that user. Locking down an application for security is another trait that may lead to an IVR application.

Say you want to create an application that can only do certain things. Banks have used IVR systems for years to

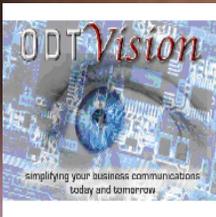


Addressing Customers' Special Needs



In the design of your IVR customer self-service solution, the most important thing to remember is the application needs to meet the

needs of the user. All design work needs to first focus on the unique needs of the user. You may have very specific needs for a group of your users. Perhaps one of the biggest trends we see with our clients' IVR applications is the need to provide communications in multiple languages so that the company can serve the user who doesn't speak English. Say a percentage of your clients speak Spanish and you don't



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allow user to access account information, check various status and make transfers. Another security requirement of an application may be that it needs to restrict access to certain users or locations and that can be defined by the CallerID of the phone calling in. Now the security isn't defined only by a UserID and Password but by the physical security as only that phone's CallerID will allow access to the application or certain areas of the application.

Concurrent Multiple Data Platforms - Monitoring and Logging

Sometimes your customer service functions require the use of data from multiple platforms. It is very easy to connect to various concurrent data sources whether it is an IBM host or LAN database. All the platforms would be interactive with not only inquiry but also updating of the database as the user progresses through the self-service IVR application.

We already discussed that some self-service applications require the use of a date



and time stamp. Of course this will most likely be a part of the system's logging and audit trail but you may have requirements that go beyond that. Let's say we are doing some form of payment processing where we want a parallel source of data of the transaction that just took place. It is easy to create another data source where not only is the transaction stored within the database but also exists for comparison in an additional location.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the requirements of your self-service application will be defined by the needs of your users. Various features you build in those IVR applications may change over the years and it is important to have a solution that can be modified easily as your customer service functions change. This is a major benefit of the ODTVision VRU as since it is easy to customize, those changes can be done in-house on a timely basis. ■