Vision Voice Vantage, Inc.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

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Upgradability is Paramount

Whenever a firm is about to make an acquisition of a new IT solution, they do not want to be boxed in where they cannot adjust to changes in business that would result in their solution's obsolescence. Suddenly, a current self-service solution might become no longer useful and no longer beneficial. Judging what the needs might be in the future is a real challenge that your organization faces. Maybe there is a total change of the computer platform providing your data. There may be new applications or the current solutions requires new modifications or features. Perhaps the operational systems within the systems have changed or there are new technologies that would be beneficial. Then there is just the old fashioned need that the current application is so popular, that you just need more capacity as the VRU has outgrown the number of resources currently installed. This month's newsletter looks at these issues and the considerations that need to be addressed as you move from one release of our solution to another.

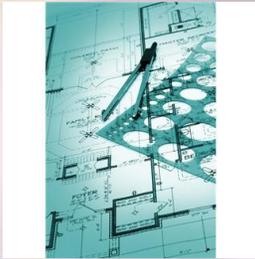## Change is Paramount in Any Business

No firm wants to be boxed in where they can not adjust to changes in business that would result in their solution's obsolescence.

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Capacity Restraints

One of the basic changes that may come to your IVR self-service application is the need for more capacity. We are talking about the requirement of additional lines to address the need for more concurrent sessions. You don't have to wait to hear from users that they are on hold in your queue or getting busy signals as there is a built-in feature which shows line capacity. From the line detail window, you can bring up a graphical presentation of the current line usage.
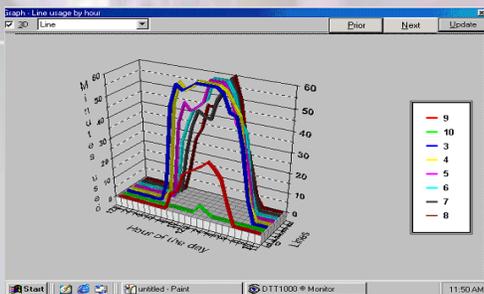

This graph shows a 24 hour presentation and not only can you determine if additional line resources are required, but you also will see the peak periods of the day.

Line capacity in the current release of the ODTVision VRU solution is now managed by software vs. hardware. To increase the number of lines, it is as simple as the purchase of additional lines where a new license code is loaded and then you change the line setup to reconfigure the new number of lines. Another reason for more lines is the addition of new applications to the VRU itself.

Environmental Changes

The ODTVision VRU has connectivity to two different areas, the computer platform from which data is obtained and the phone environment. The very definition of an IVR application is that the users progress through the self-service application with interactive logic based on the data supplied from that user's profile's data and the user's input. If your firm changes that data location to a different computer platform or perhaps a new software system, the IVR application needs to be modified to fit the new data source. No firm want to lose the existing investment if connected systems change. Our VRU provides the customization flexibility for the your IVR application. The beauty of the ODTVision VRU is that all scripts can be modified easily in house to meet the new source or other changes in the data used in the interactive stream.

Beside the data source changes, the other environment change we see is the move from older PBX phone systems to new technology such as a phone system which is VOIP. For existing customers this may require migration to our current release of the ODTVision VRU as older releases of our solution may not address those needs. It is important to know that we have provided a migration path which will be discussed later in this newsletter.

The final environmental change we see is the Operation System of the VRU itself. The ODTVision VRU is Windows based and located in a rack enclosure. It consist of the finest components available but by the very nature like any hardware system, needs to be replaced after many years of service. When you think of the history of our solution it started out as a DOS based OS, moved from Windows 3.1 to Windows 95 which was followed by Windows 2000. Next came XP and the current Windows 7.
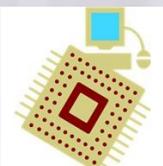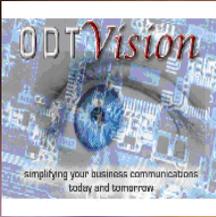
THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

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.

Sometimes the change of OS was due to new technological changes only available on the new OS such as "Text to Speech" and sometimes it was just that you could no longer get that older version of Windows. It has always been paramount that there is a migration path through the different generations and releases of our solution. A customization script that was on the old DOS solution of the 80's would still run on the current release with a little modification, insuring the protection of our client's investment in their current self-service application..

Considerations for Migration

As stated, all releases have a built in migration path so with a little planning; the challenges of adapting to changes will be minimal in nature. The syntax used for customization has be used from day one in the DOS product so that with a few changes, your existing customization script will be loaded on the new release of the ODTVision VRU and just recompiled to use in the current release. Over the years, new syntax verbs have been added. Some of the new syntax is to make customization easier. In addition, new verbs have been added to perform new functions such as "Text to Speech". We have updated some methods to do a variety of functions such as   system logging. The method for determining if the office is open or closed was also simplified. It is always best that we review the current script and see if any changes are needed.

CHANGES IN VOICE FILES

One of the biggest elements that has been changed over the years in our VRU is the format of the voice files used during the user's interactive call session. Years ago you had to take the voice files you recorded as wave files and then change

them to VOX formatted audio files. When we moved from the old DTT1000 VRU to the ODTVision VRU about 9 years ago we did away with the process and you could now could use the native wave file as long as they were recorded and saved in the proper format as required by the dialogic telephony cards. As we have now moved away from this hardware dependent approach, the voice file format has changed once again. This chart shows the required formats required for the new system.

Characteristics	Dialogic	VOIP
Audio Sample Size	8 bit	8 bit
Channels	Mono	Mono
Audio Sample Rate	11 kHz	8khz
Audio Format	PCM	u-Law

We ship the new solution with one licensed copy of WavePad which is an audio editing program that will aid in the recording, cleaning up and modification of your voice files. You can use the WavePad software to accomplish a whole batch modification of your preexisting voice file folder to the new required format.

Depending on what release of our product you are coming from, you may have to also change the voice file extension in the script from the ".vox" extension to the ".wav" extension. This is a simple process of going into the script editor and preforming the "find/replace" feature before saving the script file for compiling.
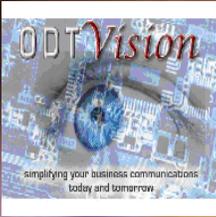
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CHANGES FOR THE METHOD OF CALL TRANSFER

Many of our clients' IVR applications contain the requirement to transfer out to live customer service representatives. This was done with the syntax of:

strvar = **PutDigits** *value*

Sends digits in *value* over the phone line as if someone keyed them on the phone keypad.

This syntax does a very simple blind-transfer to an extension within your firm where a live customer service representative now is talking to the user that was using the IVR Self-service application.

As the dialogic hardware was replaced by VOIP software technology we had to modify the syntax for this function. With VOIP phone systems, sometimes you can dial out on the same VOIP resource (line) that the call came in on and sometimes you can not. When you can not, the call must be dialed out on a secondary resource and the two IP VOIP resources are conferenced together to provide the same functionality of the call being transferred directly to the live representative. Whether we can do a true call out on the same line or have to use two lines will be determined during the "Proof of Concept" meeting . The *"Putdigits"* syntax has been replaced in the current release with:

TRANSFER nnnn; out on same line

To do an actual Call Transfer where "nnnn" is the number to transfer to, and

CONNECT nnnn, xx ; out on secondary line

Where "nnnn" is the number to connect to, and "xx" is the line offset of the outgoing line to use for the cross connect. However, I'm not sure that I actually used "connect" as the op code for that operation.

For years, we have had new setup screens

CHANGES IN OFFICE OPEN AND CLOSE DETERMINATION

to configure the hours of operation, the days of the week the office is open and holiday/special day closures. There is now simple syntax to use this configuration data to determine if the office is open or closed which your transfer function may want to use. I recently reviewed an old client's script during an "upgrade review" that was created before these setup screens existed and their script used a whole manual process of code to determine if the office was open or closed. It is much simpler now.

CONCLUSION

Changing you IVR applications or changing your actual VRU is simple with a little planning and reviewing of your current application and what new functions you want to provide for your callers. This is also a good time to enhance your current applications to meet current needs and provide for the future as well. Please contact us if you have any questions.◻

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