Vision Voice Vantage, Inc.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

Making Self-Service Friendly

Now that I have your attention with the cute puppy and kitten, lets talk about a matter of utmost importance in the design of your IVR self-service application…..making it friendly for the user. It is natural to judge the success of your IVR application by the number of calls it takes. I had an account a number of years ago that was just using the IVR application to address client's needs after hours. It is routine for me to call that new IVR client after that unit has gone into production to see how many calls the unit is taking. My client reported that the application was answering about 300 calls a week. I replied, "that is not enough and you need to promote to your clients that this service now exists." The client replied, "totally happy with the application as these are all orders coming in after hours with no human assistance." Generally most judge a self-

service application by the number of calls answered. Sometimes our clients will end the user's session with some form of survey on customer satisfaction on this individual's experience. Another method to judge success is looking at the log reports on what was done and whether the user completed their task, required a transfer out or just hung up.   If the user requested a transfer out, what was the reason for that?

Harder to judge is, "Whether the user finds the application friendly and easy to use". A survey of your users or direct feed-back could help you with that but there are tricks to make a self-service application friendly. This newsletter will give you some ideas on how to design an application to be friendly and easy to use for the user.

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GENERAL POINTS TO MAKE A FRIENDLY APPLICATION

All self-service development and design starts by understanding your users and the customer service application itself. What are the goals of this self-service CS application? The very reason the user has called into your IVR application is that they want to accomplish something. You may be using the IVR application to direct the caller to the proper resource or to interactively work with data to accomplish a task. Most important, keep it simple. The voice banners used in the interactive session need to be brief, to the point, and understandable from the first moment a new user calls the app. From the start, tell the user how to navigate around the system. If the user is sophisticated or has used the system before, there should be trigger keys to move quickly through the system. Always make the system polite. Use language such as "**Please** enter your five digit account number." (giving detail information on what is needed such as character count is great.) If an error condition exists such as improper account number entered, be polite in the system response, "**Unfortunately**, that account number was not found...you will be asked to re-enter the account number. At this point, the system loops back to ask the user for input again. It is important to build in a tracking variable of the number of tries and if the user is unable to enter a proper account
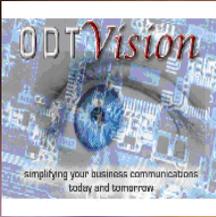
number by the third try, the system needs to transfer to a live representative or give a resource where help can be found. The user should be told about the transfer such as,...."You have exceeded the maximum tries and your call is being transferred." Keep all the terminology and logic consistent throughout the system. If the "#" key with no input backs the user up to the previous level, do that throughout the system. If input of "0" at any input request means a transfer, ...Make that so throughout the application. Consistency is everything to re-inforce a user that they know what to do.

SIMPLFYING STEPS

Reducing the number of user inputs will require knowledge of a user's preferences or data from their profile. An example of this may be where based on their Caller ID value, the system could automatically pull up the caller's account from your client database. Based on that profile, the system may already know what language this session should be in. Also based on that profile, the system may know where to direct the user. The very menu given to the user may be defined by that initial input or profile preference. For example, the system may have different types of users calling in.....

- Client
- Employee
- Vendor

P A G E 3

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If your clients are always is interested in their account balance, you may automatically read them that value upon pulling up the account. The very menu offered to specific types of callers may take them in entirely different directions within the system. Remember, different users have different needs.

MENU SUGGESTIONS

Always keep in mind that the number of options in a menu needs to be few. It is recommended that this is five or less. Any menu larger than that will be forgotten by the novice user before they get to the last of the menu choices. I did have a major cable company one time with a very large job code menu that had 16 options. Since this was designed for their employees use, they knew the job code they should enter and we simplified the app by just having the employee enter their two digit job type code.

The menu prompt is repeated if no input is received. As mentioned before, use a counter variable and if after so many tries the user isn't successful in entering a proper menu option; get them help. Important in building a menu is "menu optimizing" and "voice prompt optimizing". Menu optimizing is building the logic of the menu where the first menu option offered is selected by most users. So if most users are using the

system to go into "Order Entry" that is menu option 1. To make a more efficient system, also use "voice prompt optimizing" along with "menu optimizing". Voice prompt optimizing means that as soon as the user enters anything….the voice file prompt stops playing. This allows a repeat user who know the system to very quickly move through the steps and the entire session will be shorter. Shorter time using the system will make it appear to the user as friendlier and a more enjoyable experience and increase the use of your self service application.

Voices for the System

Most of our clients use recorded voice banners to provide the interactive prompts for their systems. You can use text to speech prompts which are computer generated voice strings instead of the recorded voice prompts but they tend to be more mechanical sounding. I always suggest to use talent that comes from in-house as when changes are made in the system in future, you can come back to that individual to re-record the voice prompt that has changed or make any additions. Most of our client systems are in a female voice (by their choice) as that tends to be warmer to the user. If Mary Jane always did the orders from customers by phone, have Mary Jane record the voice
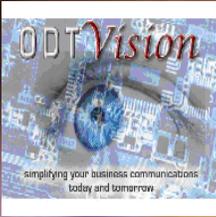
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Contact us to get your own demonstration of the ODTVision Voice Response Unit. This demo application is a simplistic order entry and shipment status system which is running off a Microsoft Access database. The demo is in the test mode and you will 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.

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prompts. The third type of voice files are the system voice files. These are used to speak currencies, numbers, letters, etc. that the system will speak. You often will use text to speech prompts blended with recorded voice prompts in a stacked pattern.

ex. You ordered (Recorded Voice Prompt)

12 (system voice file)

Red Widgets (Text to Speech)

For a total of….(Recorded Voice Prompt)

$345.56 (system voice file)

Another big element in voice files is support for non-English speaking users. You can easily support non-English speaking callers as you may have one or many languages built into the application which are selected at the beginning of the session or based on profile preference.

Remember, the voice prompts need to be polished as they represent the professional image of your system and company. The text of voice prompts needs to be brief, concise, and contain vocabulary that makes the user understand what information they are being asked to provide. The voice files need to:

⇒ Be clear

⇒ Be without background noise

⇒ Be at the proper and consistent volume

⇒ have any silence at the beginning or ending removed

Office Open or Closed

Your entire self-service application can change based on whether the office is open or closed. You can configure your system for your own office hours and holidays. If the office is closed with no live customer service representatives available this should change the action taken on a call transfer request.

They may need to be informed that the office is closed and they will be transferred to voice mail. If this is a critical situation that requires immediate attention, the system may need to page, text or email an on-call employee to respond ASAP. After hours, it may be important to have the system provide an option to use an automatic payment system.

CONCLUSION

Making your IVR application friendly just takes paying attention to some details, keeping caller's needs in mind, and applying some of the concepts provided in this newsletter. For more information about optimizing your self service applications please contact us.◘