

Reasons to Create a Self-service Solution in Customer Service

Business communications has changed over the years but ***“being easy to do business with”*** has always been paramount. The types of users for any self-service application may be varied depending on the nature of your customer base. Your firm may have a host of different needs for your clients. Perhaps you need



“Business to Business” communications with third party firms who have various B2B requirements. You may even have needs to communicate with your own employees through a self-service application. All these different type of users have specific needs that will define a self-service application. It is up to you to provide a solution as quickly and efficiently as possible that meets the specifications outlined by the users. Your self-service solution could be done though an IVR (Interactive Voice Response) application or through a Web interface which also will be based on the users and their needs.

The explosion of people carrying cellular phones over recent years means almost everyone is carrying a device that can be used as a terminal to a self-service application. The IVR approach allows mobile connectivity to all users where a web interface means the users have to have internet capabilities on their cellular phone. If you require expansion of users to a home

environment, they have to have web access to use the web solution. The IVR application is more inclusive as it allows anyone with a phone including land lines. This month’s newsletter outlines some of the general reasons to add an IVR self-service application.

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Takes your customer service to 24/7

Our society has changed and everyone has the ***“I need it Now”*** mentality. Perhaps the number one reason to add a self-service application is the need to meet this expectation without the prohibitive cost of providing live personnel 24/7 to do that.

Lowers the overall cost to administer customer service

Any customer service transaction handled through self-service directly by the user will always be cheaper to provide since there is no live customer service representative involved. The setup and development costs also have to be considered in providing this solution.



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Makes current staffing more efficient
where they are answering only calls
requiring live customer service

Any issue that is addressed through self-service frees up live representatives and adds to the capacity of your customer service staff. Your live customer service representatives are then free to address more complex user's



requests that require human intervention. Why should a user be stalled in a holding que when they just need a quick simple answer like the status of an order or today's pricing of an item. **Bottom-line, you can greatly increase the number of concurrent support sessions for less than the cost of one additional CS representative at minimum wage with no benefits.** This doesn't even consider the savings of providing support after hours.

Custom Applications

Real-Time



It is easy to customize your self-service IVR application around your user's needs as well as the computer database. No previous programming experience is required to perform this customization. It can easily be done in-house with existing IT personnel. Since the self-service application is tied to real-time data, the user is interactively working with current information. In addition, each self-service application can be tailored to the various type of users. Once a user is identified through either a sign-on process or through CallerID, the logic of what that user has access to and can do is based on that identification.



Banks have used IVR applica-

tions for years as the application is available for all users with no training and is very secure.

The development cycle for your new IVR self-service application is short and very affordable as it is built over existing data and generally follows customer service policies that are ready in place. The very screens your customer service representatives are using and the process they follow to work with the caller will be the same routine the IVR will use. By providing a short development cycle, the total cost to bring up the new applications will be lowered.

Addressing Special Needs

Your user may have special needs which are different than other users within their group. For example, an older person may have difficulty dealing with the logic of your self-service customer service routine or require a human session. Build in to the call flow logic is an "exit strategy" where during office hours a call can transfer to a live customer service representative if the user provides no input or makes that request.

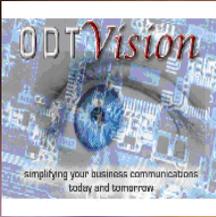


Once a user is identified during the call, there may be additional special needs such as changing the language for this session to a language other than English. This can be accomplished with a language selection menu or even a flag field within the database profile indicating a user's preferred language.

Another possible change in the flow logic is if the user identification has triggered that this user is unique requiring different voice prompts and different logic for this session.

For example, lets say a normal employee can access a general menu but if this is a manager calling in,...they may be able to do additional menu prompts that are hidden and require additional security to get to this menu level.





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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.

A manager may be able to do payroll entry or manage staffing scheduling where the normal employee doesn't have access to those tasks.

The application itself may have special needs. For example, lets say the user went into order entry to place an order. At the end of the order, the IVR application may send out a confirmation email to the client. Maybe the office is closed during a call that requires human assistance so the call is transferred to the proper department so the user can leave a voice message or an email is created and sent to that department to call this user back.

Building an Audit Trail

It is sometimes an afterthought, but knowing what your user did during a customer service session is sometimes very important. It is very easy to build a historic log of what was done and by who including date and time stamp. This log file can be linked to your client's profile. It could also be used to build reports on what was done.

Conclusion

We have looked at some general topics for reasons to create an IVR self-service customer application. We will end the newsletter with a listing just some of possible applications. If you have any questions please feel free to contact us.

Sample Applications

-  Order Entry
-  Password resets
-  Transaction Confirmation
-  Shipping Information
-  Pricing Information
-  Stock Availability
-  Customer Inquiry
-  Available Credit
-  Information Hotline
-  Offsite Payroll Input
-  Employee Benefit Hotline
-  Customer Response
-  Automated System Operator
-  Automated Paging & Email Delivery
-  Fax Back Systems
-  Query Reports On Demand
-  Human Resource Support
-  Warehouse & Logistics Support
-  Automated notification to personnel in field
-  Audit and Log trails of all activities