

OHIO DATA TRANSFER

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX
IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

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Government Enterprises Meet the Challenge with ODT VISION Voice Response Units

Improving customer service while maintaining or even lowering the cost of personnel has always been a concern of government accounts. With "Tax Revenues down", it is even more a challenge to address the citizen's needs and maintain the existing level of customer service. A Voice Response Unit may be the very solution to your cost problems.

The next issue to resolve is that most government accounts use departmental processing. This leads to a hodgepodge of different platforms where the "Mayor Court" may be on one platform while "Building Permits" is on another. The voice system can be interactive to all system data concurrently. This approach, however; sometimes leads to department politics where the supervisors may have fears that a VRU would replace existing personnel. Sometimes when we are developing a voice application designed to free up existing personnel by the automation of routine task, the individuals within this department think their jobs are now in jeopardy. The real

purpose is not necessarily to replace those individuals but to:

- Free them up to do actual duties which require human intervention or have reached critical mass
- Provide real time information to users 24/7
- Allow more calls to be addressed concurrently
- Build audit and log trails of all activities
- Reduce people on hold or average wait times
- Optimize personnel to make customer service more efficient



Any call which is answered by a VRU instead of a live customer service

representative will be cheaper to address. Existing personnel will not be overwhelmed during peak periods of the day. Your employee staffing can be scheduled based on log reports which give an accurate demographics of activities.

Departmental processing also leads to concerns about

maintaining the privacy or security of their data. A Voice Response Solution is better than any firewall, as your user can never go around the pre-defined application logic or go to other parts of your system or data. It is easy to establish user IDs and Passwords which can reside overtop the existing applications or on advance menu options.



Real Life Examples

City of Westerville

The City of Westerville is using "HTE" software on an IBM iSeries for most of their city applications. They are developing their own applications in-house. Their first application was in the area of Utility Billing. Advantages of this application include citizens being able to inquire about their account balances, notification of over-due payments, bill payment

Existing personnel will not be overwhelmed during peak periods of the day and can be more readily available for calls which require live customer service assistance or are emergency problems.

Your employee staffing can be scheduled based on log reports which give an accurate demographic of activities.

information, and in the future the ability to enter meter readings. The caller can also transfer to live customer service representatives at the caller's response.

A new application just added to their unit is "Call Out Notification". In this application, a user calls into the unit, records a voice file, verifies the recording, and then enters a code which represents a database query of who is to get this recorded message. The VRU now goes to the database and gets the individuals that match this query. It now dials each selected individual, plays the recorded message and logs whether it talked with the individual directly or left a message on voice mail. The city sees the usage of this system for such tasks as calling street maintenance personnel in for emergency snow removal or even calling everyone in a department to report their LAN will be down for maintenance. Future applications are being planned for building permit inspection scheduling and mayor's court.

City of Middletown

The City of Middletown is in the middle of their 1st application development. The city uses a database called "Universe" for it various applications on a Unix platform. Our unit is connected to that data via "ODBC" links. Development began even before their actual unit was installed using the convenient "Test Mode" feature. By using this feature, their own internal staff was able to :

- Learn about the ODT VISION product and its features
- Test the connectivity via ODBC to their specialized database
- Test the interactive link to their bank for credit/debit card transactions which are used to collect payments for various department applications

- Test the caller logic flow through their various applications
- Make the decision for acquisition by testing the real life application

Interactive Credit/Debit card payments will be collected where the VRU writes a database record. The city has a visual basic program running which takes this transaction information and forwards it to their Bank. If the Bank's link is down, the caller is informed to call back later to see that the payment has posted. If the bank's link is active, the caller is requested to hold while the transaction is confirmed. Once the bank has posted a status of "Approved" or "Not Approved", the caller is informed and given a transaction tracking number if the payment did indeed go through. The customer's records are then updated to reflect the payment information.

The city is in the process of doing many of the standard applications we have seen in other city accounts such as utility billing, call-out message forwarding, mayor's court, building permits, etc. , however they plan an unusual variation on "Automated Call Distribution" which they call their "Emergency Notification System". This application is outlined on page 3 of this newsletter. This system will allow citizens to report and get responses to emergencies on a 24/7 basis from city personnel who are on call if the call comes in outside of business hours. One of the main advantages of this process is that the city employee can verify that the request is indeed an emergency remotely. Troy Anderton (the city's main programmer) was impressed with the ease and speed which their customization was accomplished. The city has plans to take this technology to many of the departmental applications to save personnel cost and improve customer service.

City of Dublin

The City of Dublin is another "HTE" client. One of the applications they use the ODT VISION VRU for is in its

Justice Department for the Mayor's Court. Callers can gather information regarding their arraignments such as:

- What is the date and time for their ticket's court hearing
- Whether appearance is required
- Whether they can forfeit the bond to cancel the arraignment
- Directions & Office Hours for the Justice Center

The caller can also transfer to a live customer service representative during business hours or make payment arrangements. **A real plus to this application is the caller can select to have this session in Spanish as well as English.** All calls are logged for audit purposes. ▣



**Don Colby, City of Dublin
Director of Mayor's court**

"Our Court staff time spent on telephone calls has been reduced by 40 to 50 percent by using our IVR application."

Automated Call Distribution

One of the fastest growing telephony applications is "Automated Call Distribution." Benefits of adding this function to your current corporate phone system are:

- Does away with live operator to route calls to proper person or department
- Allows caller get assistance after hours
- Allows caller to get emergency assistance
- All calls are logged and you can monitor for quality control
- Personnel can be rotated for on-call shifts rather than on-site for possible emergencies
- On-call individuals can have instant notification & can remotely analyze the situation

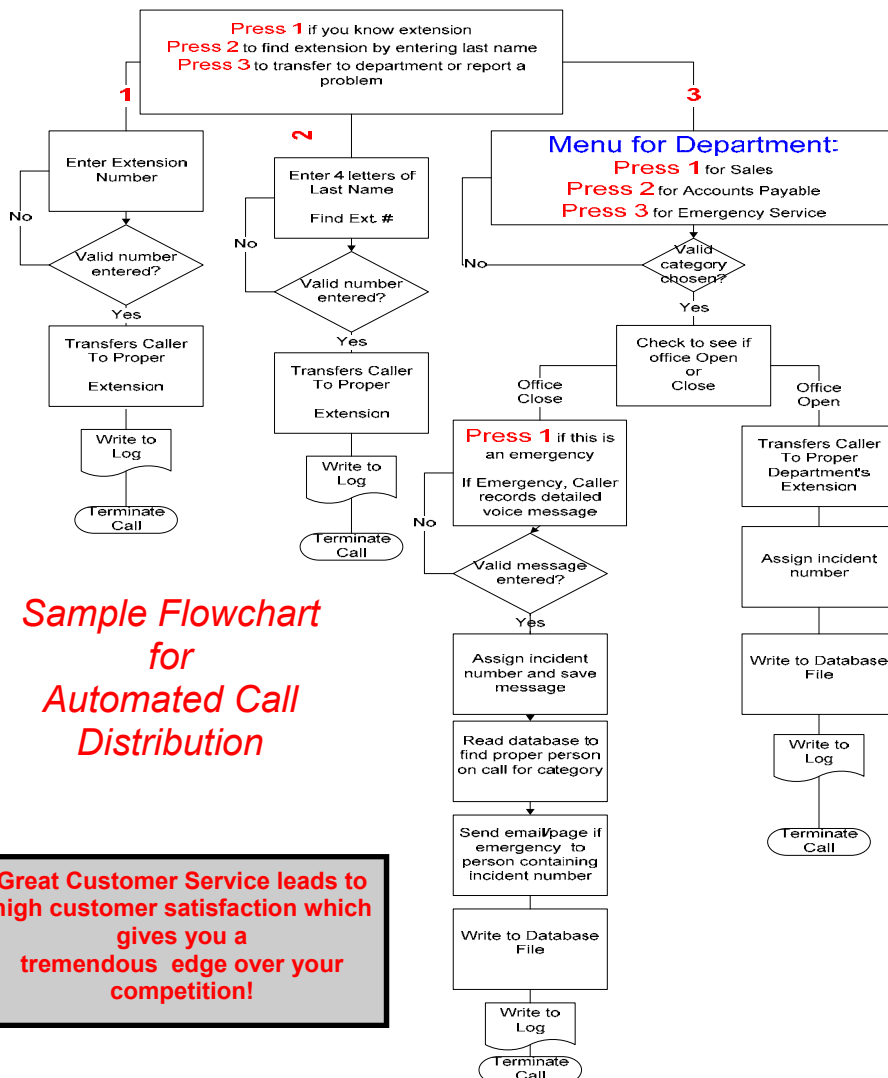
It is better to publish one phone number for all calls. Automated call distribution allows the caller to determine where they need to go based on the knowledge that the user has. The user will be routed to the proper internal phone number by identifying their needs. The caller may know the extension number, the contacts last name, or what department they need. If this call concerns an emergency, immediate notification to the proper personnel can be made through email or text messaging to pagers. This on-call personnel can now analyze the problem and provide a solution ASAP. This on-call individual can also respond back to the ODT VISION Voice Response unit on the pro-

gress of the solution to the submitted problem with every action dated and time stamped. Log files are monitored for audit purposes to ensure quality control.

Our clients have this "I need it now mentality." It is not always practical or affordable to provide live personnel 24/7. Personnel's morale is lowered when they must work late, weekends, nights, or swing shifts.

Additional shifts for calls which come in outside the normal business hours may be justified if the log reports show the numbers are large enough to warrant the growth. There may also be seasonal or temporary project demands.

In general we want to provide the best customer service possible for our clients. There is a need to optimize existing personnel, react to emergencies or problems (even after hours), log activities for legal or quality control issues, and analyze how we can make our response better. ■



Sample Flowchart for Automated Call Distribution

Great Customer Service leads to higher customer satisfaction which gives you a tremendous edge over your competition!

Personnel can now be on-call for after hours emergencies rather than on-site waiting for a call that may or may not come in. Through email or text messaging, the on-call individual is contacted and they can remotely analyze the problem and provide the assistance that is required.



OHIO DATA TRANSFER

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Get Your Own Demo Today

Go to www.ODT VISION.com to get your own demonstration of the ODT VISION Voice Response Unit which will run on any Windows based PC of Windows 98 or later with sound card and speakers. This 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.

Improving Customer Service Affordability

Submit your technical questions or get free project analysis regarding your telephony application to:

TechSupport@ODTVISION.com

Or Call:

614-985-3814

HOW Do THEY DO THAT?

"Checking to see if Office is Open or Closed based on Time & Day of the week"

How to determine if the office is open or closed is not a difficult operation to perform.

Since the ODT VISION Voice Response Unit is running under Windows 2000, there is a clock which we can monitor at the beginning of a call to see what time the call



was started and what day of the week it is. By comparing this clock time against preexisting hours of operation and also whether today is a holiday or not, we can determine if the office is open or closed.

Setup of Normal Office Hours

We first must determine the start time and end time of each office day. This may vary depending on the day of the week. A normal office may be closed all day Sunday and all day Saturday or it may be open from 8:00 AM. on Saturday until 12 noon.

Setup of Holidays Within a Year

There are two methods to determine whether today is a holiday or not.



1. Look at manual switch thrown on console screen which is thrown if "being on" means a condition statement will be followed, i.e. "main switch 1 is on" so today is a holiday
2. Go to a database table and see if today's date is a holiday

Example:

"In the following example, office is open M-F 8:00 AM to 4:40 PM. We will be using the main switch 1 for holidays detection"

```
startoffice = createtime 8,00,0 ; create
hour, min.,sec for office to start 8:00 AM.
Endoffice = createtime 16,30,0 ;create
hour, min.,sec for office to end 4:30 PM.
X = FORMAT DTVAR, "hh:NN"
D = Weekday
;-----
; switch 1 to mark holiday or could use
database of holidays dates
;-----
```

```

If MainSwitch1 then
    msgbox "did subroutine for holiday"
    checkholiday = "Yes"
    GoTo OfficeClosed
Endif
If d = 1 then ; Means that the day of the
week is Sunday
    OH = "Office Closed"
    STATUSTIME = "Day Closed"
    GoTo OfficeClosed
```

```
Elseif D = 7 then; Means that the
day of the week is Saturday
    OH = "Office Close"
    STATUSTIME = "Day Closed"
    GoTo OfficeClosed
```

```
ELSE
    OH = "Office Open"
Endif
dt = time
```

```
IF dt < startoffice THEN ;Means
that the time is before
office opens
    STATUSTIME = "BEFORE HOURS"
    OH = "Office Close"
    GoTo OfficeClosed
```

```
Elseif dt > Endoffice THEN ;Means
that the time is after office
is closed
    STATUSTIME = "AFTER HOURS"
    OH = "Office Close"
```

```
GoTo OfficeClosed
Else
    STATUSTIME = "DURING HOURS";;
Means that the time is when the
office is opens
```

```
OH = "Office Open"
RTN = Play "OfficeOpen.vox" ;
the office is open and you are
being transferred to next
customer service
representative
```

```
GoTo CallTransfer
```

```
Endif
```

Calltransfer: ; does the call transfer to proper extension

OfficeClosed: ; does "office closed routine" where either voice mail is left or text message or voice recording is created and forward to

- Certain days of the week may have different hours of operation.
- The tags of CallTransfer and OfficeClosed take the caller to different paths.