



Payment Solution Creates New Revenue Stream and Adds to Customer Services

Overview

Country:
USA

Industry
Government
Law Enforcement

Customer Profile

Citation Management provides parking and traffic ticket processing, collection services and software, and automated enforcement equipment to U.S. municipalities.

Business Situation

The company wanted more control over IVR design, development and deployment. Cost reduction and new revenue generation were also critical.

Solution

With IVR partner ComputerTalk, Microsoft Speech Server 2004 R2, and existing in-house expertise, the new speech-enabled AutoPROCESS payment solution was developed.

Benefits

Shortened sales and deployment cycle
Cost and development control
New revenue stream
Rapid ROI

“The average convenience fee is \$2.95 with 15 percent opting for speech-enabled payment. With cities generating from 10,000 to 1,000,000 tickets per year, the new revenue stream is significant.”

Scott Peiffer

**Executive Vice President of Information Technology Systems
Citation Management**

From the smiling cop who writes the parking ticket to final verification of payment, Citation Management wanted to make the whole ticket-writing and collection process work seamlessly for city governments. However, the interactive voice response (IVR) payment processing system was hampered by high costs, proprietary software that was difficult to maintain, speech-recognition issues, and loss of control from using an outsourced IVR vendor. With its Microsoft® Certified Gold Partner, ComputerTalk, Microsoft Speech Server 2004 R2 software, and in-house expertise, Citation developed its AutoPROCESS payment solution. The result was a new revenue stream, better cost and development control, and a sales cycle shortened by several months. The ability to capture new fee revenue from payment system users has added to the profitability of the company and generated a positive ROI in mere months.

“A single large municipality can generate new processing fee income of \$250,000 per year or more. Given that we have hundreds of customers, the estimated ROI is just a few months.”

Scott Peiffer
Executive Vice President
of Information
Technology Systems
Citation Management

Situation

Citation Management provides parking and traffic ticket processing and collection services, automated enforcement equipment, and citation processing hardware and software to U.S. municipalities of all sizes.

The company offers customers a robust end-to-end citation management solution from automated issuance with handheld devices and payment processing to “no-pay” tracking and resolution.

The company had previously outsourced its IVR ticket payment services, but high costs for maintenance and changes in the application proved too expensive and inflexible. Also of concern was the inability of its old IVR solution to efficiently handle the alphanumeric input needed for license plate verification. Entering letters on a touch-tone phone was too challenging for most users. Differences in speech patterns across cultural and geographical differences also posed a problem — for example, a caller with a Southern drawl or a Northeasterner’s frequent use of the sound of the letter “R” in words that don’t end with it.

Overall, Citation Management needed more control over its speech-enabled solutions and wanted to take advantage of its own in-house IT development and management expertise. The company also needed a nonproprietary solution that provided an open development environment.

As the company began to explore IVR platform options, requirements for the ideal solution became clear. It needed a speech-enabled solution that could easily be modified for different city and state governments, essentially a modular or building-block application. This approach would allow Citation to quickly deploy fully functional IVR solutions to each new municipality.

Solution

Through the IVR expertise of its

partner, ComputerTalk, and the power of Microsoft Speech Server 2004 R2, a speech-enabled AutoPROCESS payment solution was developed that integrated seamlessly into Citation Management’s legacy list of citation services. Ticket recipients can make payments through a Web site, in person or on the phone. About 15 percent of the ticketed citizens elect to pay by phone.

Using an 800 number that’s personalized by city, Citation Management’s speech-enabled service center handles each call. The ticket payer speaks the citation number or license plate number as a part of the identification process, then has the option to pay with a credit card, connect with frequently asked questions or choose to speak to a live operator. If a live operator is selected and the issues resolved, the application allows the caller to be redirected back into the IVR system to complete payment.

Citation Management’s data center is located in Milwaukee, Wis. The network consists of two speech server boxes (48- and 24-port) running Microsoft Windows Server® 2003, Enterprise Edition, and two enterprise editions of Microsoft Speech Server 2004 R2. Server redundancy allows for load balancing and offline maintenance.

The software development environment is based on Microsoft Visual Studio® .NET.

Benefits

In addition to its normal development and setup fees, Citation Management can now capture the convenience fees to which each ticketed offender agrees when electing the phone payment option. The company's solution also increases the revenue of its customers. Citation Management has approximately 150 municipality customers.

"The average convenience fee is \$2.95 with 15 percent of users opting for speech-enabled payment via the phone," said Scott Peiffer, senior vice president of Information Technology Systems at Citation Management. "With cities generating from 10,000 to 1 million tickets per year, the new revenue stream is significant."

The Speech Server 2004 R2-based AutoPROCESS payment solution not only creates a new revenue source for Citation Management, it also generates more revenue for its customers.

"On average, our AutoProcess payment solution increases municipality collection rates by up to 40 percent," Peiffer said. "And that's something we put in writing."

Rapid ROI

Citation Management is seeing a return on its investment in application development. The company estimates that the new AutoProcess payment solution has reduced internal staff needs and generated a new source of revenue for each customer that elects a phone-payment speech-recognition option.

"A single large municipality can generate new processing fee income of \$250,000 per year or more," Peiffer said. "Given that we have hundreds of customers, the estimated ROI is just a few months."

Cost and development control

Using outsourced IVR solutions did

not allow Citation Management to control costs or the development process the way it wanted to. A closed, proprietary development environment was also a roadblock.

"With the previous IVR vendor, we had a host of cost, control and flexibility issues," said Peiffer. "We had to buy licenses for each piece and rely on the vendor's schedule to make changes in a proprietary environment."

Peiffer continued, "Our objective was to become a single source for end-to-end citation management, but it was impossible with our old IVR solution."

Shortened sales and deployment cycle

Because the AutoPROCESS payment solution is based on a Microsoft Speech Server modular approach, Citation Management can offer rapid deployment and seamless integration to its customers. This in turn shortens the sales cycle by a few months, allowing customers to quickly see the benefits of buying into Citation's solution.

"Once we have a dedicated 800 number, voice prompts and options, we can be live in minutes," said Peiffer. "The power of ComputerTalk's ticket payment solution with Microsoft Speech Server 2004 makes deployment a snap."

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For more information about Microsoft Speech Server, visit the Web site at <http://www.microsoft.com/speech>.

For more information about ComputerTalk products and services, call (800) 410-1051 or visit the Web site at <http://www.computer-talk.com>.

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Software and Services

Microsoft Speech Server 2004 R2

Partner

ComputerTalk
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