

 HARRIS

Flexible Deployment Options Empower Harris Computer Systems to Meet the Diverse Needs of Utility Customers

 teleWORKS®

Tele-Works delivers comprehensive automation solutions to local governments, utilities, and other publicly financed organizations across North America.

Voxeo enables Tele-Works to provide full-featured hosted and premise IVR from the same platform.

Solution Highlights

- ✓ Flexible IVR solution for diverse product portfolio
- ✓ Hosted and premise IVR from a single platform
- ✓ VoiceXML-based, speech-enabled IVR
- ✓ Integrated inbound and outbound IVR solution
- ✓ CCXML for highly accurate outbound call handling
- ✓ Real-time payment interfaces to dozens of products

Tele-Works and Voxeo deliver hosted and on-premise IVR from a single platform to ensure the best solution fit, every time.

Background

Harris Computer Systems, one of the largest subsidiaries of Constellation Software (TSX:CSU), operates a diverse portfolio of financial management and customer information system (CIS) software. Harris' software spans more than a dozen different product divisions and data integration points, allowing the company to meet the varied needs of over 3,000 small, medium, and large public power and water utilities throughout North America.

Harris recognized that Interactive Voice Response (IVR) is a necessity for any well-run, successful utility customer service department. IVR automation delivers 24/7 self-service for customers while relieving staff from handling calls and walk-in traffic for routine questions and transactions. However, Harris didn't have a way to provide IVR to its diverse base of customers. In seeking an IVR solution, Harris had three primary challenges:

1. Deliver consistent, high-quality IVR that is affordable to all their utility customers, both large and small.
2. Identify an IVR solution that interfaces in real-time to multiple back-end data systems.
3. Offer both inbound IVR and outbound notification capabilities in a single product offering.

Solution

Tele-Works combined its broad utility industry and application development expertise with Voxeo's flexible Prophecy IVR platform to provide Harris with an IVR offering that meets the needs of all its utility customers. Prophecy uniquely supports hosted and on-premise deployments, as well as inbound and outbound calling, from a single platform and code base.

Tele-Works has provided Harris a suite of products that can be delivered and configured out-of-the-box without extensive and costly development and testing. The Tele-Works solution extends across Harris' complete utility product portfolio, giving thousands of utility customers access to quality IVR at price points that were previously unattainable.

Tele-Works has worked with many Harris business divisions to define features and jointly develop a seamless interface between the IVR solution and back-end databases. The result is a configurable solution that can be quickly deployed for each customer, often in days instead of months, as is typically the case with customized IVR solutions. Some of the features now offered by the Harris IVR solutions include:

- 24/7 real-time account access
- Credit card and eCheck payments
- English and Spanish language call flows
- Hosted and on-premise IVR deployment options
- Automated outbound call-outs to deliver time-sensitive information

The completeness of the integration is exemplified by the call flow, which accounts for special circumstances such as cash-only customers, account status, and system-wide messages.

Outbound callouts are a key component of the solution. Tele-Works' outbound dialer solution, *alertworks™ Outbound Campaign Manager*, makes it simple for utilities to make timely call-outs for things like boil water notices, planned outages, and past due payment reminders prior to service disconnection. And since call results are linked back to the CIS, customer service representatives are always current on information delivered. The end result for the utility is fewer manual processes, lower costs, reduced delinquencies, and improved collections.

The Technology

Tele-Works' broad expertise producing packaged IVR applications was critical to the success of the solution. The full suite of hosted and on-premise IVR products all reside in a single code base. Flexible configuration options enable Harris to deliver a consistent and feature-rich solution that easily adapts to the varied requirements of its utility customers.

Tele-Works' hosted deployments are implemented as full multi-tenant solutions where many utility customers are managed from a single application server. As a result, new utilities can be setup and running "live" with real-time IVR in just a few hours. Hosted solutions are delivered with confidence through Voxeo, the world's largest standards-based IVR hosting provider. Voxeo Prophecy Hosting has multiple fault-tolerant, load-balanced Tier 4 hosting centers across North America and Europe to deliver the up-time, scalability, and bursting capabilities required for mission-critical utility payment and notification solutions.

Tele-Works' premise-based IVR solutions for Harris use the same Voxeo Prophecy IVR platform that powers their hosted offering. Prophecy is not only the most modern, standards-based IVR

solution available today, but also natively supports SIP-based VoIP trunks to provide low-cost telephony and simplified integration for Harris' utility customers. System software is built upon the Microsoft .Net 3.5 framework using C#, while application software is written using open standard VoiceXML 2.1 and CallControl XML 1.0 (CCXML).

In addition to deployment flexibility, the Voxeo platform offers Tele-Works the ability to further differentiate its offerings with market-leading capabilities:

- Voxeo Prophecy includes a built-in text-to-speech engine that enhances the caller experience with a human-like read-back of information in English or Spanish. Customers also have the flexibility to use standards-compliant third-party text-to-speech engines.
- The Tele-Works outbound dialer is built on Voxeo's powerful CCXML-driven Call Progress Analysis capabilities. The solution easily detects differences between humans, voicemail systems, and error tones to ensure calls are successfully connected – without frustrating delays that result in “dead-air” for the recipient.
- Voxeo's standards-based platform simplifies interoperability with back-end systems and databases for faster, less costly implementation.
- Voxeo's patented architecture and on-demand hosting ensure that Tele-Works can quickly scale to accommodate Harris' growth and the growth of its utility customers.

The Harris Advantage

Previously, long development cycles, complexity, and high costs presented a barrier to entry for utilities lacking the in-house staff and resources to build and deploy automated self-service solutions. Today, these utilities can take advantage of IVR without upfront investments in hardware, telephony, or people to keep the system running. In an industry where quality, affordable IVR has been largely unattainable, Harris now has a competitive advantage. Each Harris product division delivers a proven IVR solution that addresses the needs of all of its utility customers regardless of size.

Reusable, packaged solutions require only minor customizations – shortening time to market and reducing development costs.

Tele-Works offers a seamless, real-time interface to multiple products, enabling Harris to provide each of its many divisions with their own branded IVR offering. This “white label” approach gives Harris a significant leg up on its competitors by simplifying delivery of an all-in-one product that fills a void in the marketplace.

The results thus far are impressive. Utilities are clamoring for the benefits of productized, feature-rich IVR without the expense of costly customizations. And with hosted and on-premise options, all sizes of utilities are served.

For more information

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