



CASE STUDY:

KLC Deploys Plum's IVR Time and Attendance Management Solution for Its Mobile Workforce



Knowledge Learning Corporation (KLC), based in Portland, Oregon, is the leader and preferred childcare provider in early childhood through school age education. Since 1983, KLC has grown into a family of nearly 2,000 community-based centers, 650 before-and-after school programs, and 123 employer-sponsored centers in 39 states and the District of Columbia.

KLC employs a workforce of thousands, over 2,500 of whom are mobile workers in the field. These employees conduct before and after school programs, which are distributed throughout hundreds of schools and centers all over the U.S. And because mobile staff report to work in varying, decentralized locations, keeping track of their attendance and hours can be a difficult and time consuming task. Traditional means of faxing and mailing timesheets often slows down the submission process, while web-based timecard submissions are unfeasible for mobile workers who have no immediate access to the Internet.

To effectively manage and track its widely dispersed personnel, the company relies on a Plum IVR based time and attendance system. This workforce management tool has been an efficiency breakthrough for KLC, cutting labor costs, boosting data entry accuracy, and accelerating the payroll process. It is also a system highly valued by mobile staffers for its outstanding level of convenience that enables them to report their hours anywhere and anytime.

A hosted IVR application, KLC's timesheet management solution is designed, developed, and built on the Plum VoiceXML platform by Plum Voice's professional services team. The application handles thousands of calls daily and delivers the kind of scalability and performance that enables the organization to reap the benefits of IVR automation

How the system works

The time and attendance system is a multi-purpose system that 1) collects timesheet entries from KLC staff 2) retains and presents the data in a way that facilitates quick review and approval by company managers, and 3) ultimately integrates the data directly with KLC's payroll system.

Submitting hours via an IVR gateway: To record and submit their hours, KLC mobile employees simply have to dial a telephone number to access the IVR system. When prompted by voice cues, callers enter their social security numbers, location codes and PINs either through spoken word or by dialing numbers on their telephone keypads.

Plum's IVR timesheet management systems enable remote and mobile staff to post their timecard data so that supervisors can review, verify and approve the hours for direct submission into the payroll system.

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Approving the hours via a web enabled time approval system: The data that callers enter over the phone is collected by the IVR system and held for review in a hosted database. KLC managers can then access the database via the web, review employee hours and then approve or disapprove them for payment.

Updating the records periodically via a change management feature: After employee hours for a set pay period have been approved for submission to payroll, the system updates the records and pushes the changes directly to the KLC payroll database.

Why KLC Chose Plum Voice

From the outset, KLC was determined to find a solution that was VoiceXML compliant and would be delivered by a team of technical experts who could boast an outstanding record of professional service.

In choosing Plum, Bear Miller, at KLC, explained, "We chose Plum because we had a high level confidence in their technical abilities and their strong understanding of our project. Plum engineers really took the time to comprehend our requirements and analyze our needs. Unlike other vendors, Plum didn't respond to our requests with a standard canned sales pitch."

Exceptional technical expertise and solid experience was a vital factor for KLC, as their IVR system would be facilitating business-critical process. This meant that quality assurance was paramount, as the reliability and performance of the IVR system would have to be superior.

Minimizing the impact to the field was also essential, as KLC wanted to avoid training employees on the new system yet also prevent any surges in help desk calls asking for assistance with timesheet submissions. KLC chose Plum's professional services team for their ability to facilitate a seamless transition between the old system and the new.

Finding a solution based in VoiceXML was the other part of the equation for KLC. Securing the most flexible and versatile IVR solution was important to the organization, as they wanted the freedom of an open standards based system. In fact, KLC had previously relied on a proprietary IVR solution that was unexpectedly dropped by the vendor and no longer supported. And because this previous application was proprietary, KLC had to start again from scratch to rebuild their entire IVR system. Having learned from this lesson, KLC sought a VoiceXML solution to avoid having to endure this same kind of abandonment again.

"We chose Plum because we had a high level of confidence in their technical abilities and their strong understanding of our project."

**Bear Miller,
Knowledge Learning
Corporation**

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Technical Summary of the Solution

Plum delivered a time and attendance system to KLC that involved:

- A hosted IVR gateway that delivers the reliability and ease of administration that KLC demands. KLC chose to have their IVR application hosted at a Plum data center for the key reason that they did not have the resources in-house necessary to build and maintain a new system. And because of tight time constraints, hiring in-house resources and going through the development learning process was not an option.
- A web based administration interface that enables KLC managers and payroll staff to review and verify timesheet submissions. Through close collaboration with KLC senior budget and payroll staff, Plum engineers were able to incorporate custom functionality into the application - functionality that proves highly effective as a tool to help managers control their budgets. Miller sees this as a notable benefit:

"For our managers, our IVR system has brought them huge gains in terms of augmenting their ability to manage expenses, meet their budgets."

- Databases, one hosted at a Plum datacenter, the other housed at KLC's premise on their mainframe would have to go through asynchronous data transfer to periodically update timesheet submissions and to keep an accurate account of employee hours.

When the new IVR system went live, the implementation happened without a hitch, which was a significant measure of success by KLC business operations standards. Bear Miller praised Plum again,

"Plum successfully facilitated a seamless transition from our old system to the new, minimizing the impact to the field. We didn't want to incur heavy training costs or see big spikes in help desk calls which often accompany new system installations. Plum helped us completely avoid any such disruptions."

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About Plum Voice

Plum produces standards-compliant IVR and computer telephony solutions. Plum VoiceXML platform software and complete turnkey systems provide powerful and flexible functionality, supporting all VoiceXML-2.0 features and advanced functionality such as data-driven scripting, speech recognition, text-to-speech synthesis, and CTI.

The Plum team is composed of professionals with computer telephony and user interface expertise from Siemens, Compaq, Xerox PARC, and News Corp. Customers include New York State, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Cummins, National Institute of Health, and AT&T. Partners include Intel and Hewlett Packard. Plum is a privately held company with primary offices in New York and Boston.

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