Resolving Growing User Support Demands of a Global Design Software Purveyor

Running an IT support operation can be challenging enough when you're trying to keep 25 users in one office happy and productive on their desktops, laptops, and other technological tools. But when you're supporting nearly 7,000 workers around the globe in Europe, the Americas and the Asia-Pacific region, the challenge can be daunting, if not overwhelming. Sales reps need easy access to data on their accounts and prospective accounts, production and distribution managers need to review and forecast demand data, and the financial personnel need to look at all that data to process invoices, cut checks, and prepare reports for C-level executives.

That's one of the challenges companies face in today's global economy: being able to maintain and enhance operations that boost revenue while holding the line on costs in countries spread across different time zones.

In 2008, an award-winning, global engineering and design software provider with more than $2 billion (US) in annual revenue was faced with a problem: Its application support group in IT was being overrun with support requests from a growing base of end users around the world. That meant slower responses, which left many end users unhappy because they were dealing with application glitches that prevented them from efficiently getting their work done. One glaring statistic drove the point home: Only about 65% to 75% of support requests were being responded to in a timely fashion. So, for every two or three users whose requests were being met on time, there was one that wasn't. Not surprisingly, end users on four continents were unhappy because they sometimes couldn't get work done when they needed to.

But today, three years after our engagement with the company began, more than 95% of support requests are being handled within specified deadlines. That has helped our client's IT support team focus on more critical requests, which has helped end users attend to supporting and growing the business.

Prior to our arrival on this engagement, this software developer sought a third-party services provider that could accomplish the following:

- Increase customer satisfaction and minimize business impact by improving the time to resolve support tickets.

- Improve work-life balance for full-time support staff.

- Cut costs by reducing problem resolution time, allowing internal resources to focus on more important issues.

- Improve end-user productivity.

- Assume higher-priority service requests (e.g., those that needed to be resolved within two days) in the Asia-Pacific region once there was noticeable improvement with the lower-priority requests.

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After an extensive bidding process, the company turned to us. We had an existing three-year relationship with the company providing development, testing and support services.

Cognizant's Solution

To help ease the pressure on the client's application support function, our support center in Pune, India, handled less critical support requests: those that didn't have to be handled in-house and didn't need to be resolved within two days. (The supported applications included software from SAP, Oracle, Business Objects, Informatica and Aprimo.) That freed up the customer's support team to focus on more critical activities, such as functionality on run-the-business applications or services that needed to be restored quickly.

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In the three years since the engagement began, our team consistently exceeded the service-level goals it established with the customer of resolving at least 90% of support tickets within five to seven days. And there were many weeks in which our team resolved all tickets within five to seven days. This happened even after the customer acquired another software provider that brought with it nearly 300 end users and additional applications to support.

Now, the customer's end users are happier and more productive, and we are taking on higher-priority service requests that require quicker turnarounds.

Here's how we attacked the problem:

- Established a service-level agreement (SLA) that guaranteed to resolve 90% of support tickets within five to seven days. Prior to the engagement, the company did not have an SLA in place for its internal application support group.

- Used Call Log Analyzer, a planning and reporting tool that complements IT service management software and supplies information about the application for which the end user is seeking help, as well as which support tickets each team member is working on. After a support request is resolved, the tool stores the information from the engagement so our

staff can use it for subsequent requests, which can lead to quicker response times.

- Leveraged a homegrown tool called eTracker, which offers monthly reports on our team's operational performance and identifies areas of improvement.

- Sought help from our development team, which had already been working with the client since 2005. The development team's knowledge of the customer helped the support team better understand the client's technology infrastructure, including details about its installed software. This helped accelerate resolution of support tickets.

- Cross-trained team members on how to handle applications they're generally unfamiliar with to maximize efficiency within the support team, and handle trouble tickets that deal with more

than one application. We also cross-trained our team on the applications the customer added to its portfolio after it acquired the company with nearly 300 end users.

To make sure things were on track and we were consistently hitting and improving our service-level agreement goals, our team sent a weekly report to the client management team while also checking in each week with the customer's line managers.

Today, our team and the customer's still meet weekly to discuss tickets and workflow. Longer-term, strategic issues and our team's performance are discussed in a biweekly meeting with managers from the customer team.

The Results

- Over the three years, the customer's cost of resolving support requests has dropped 60%.

- Our team is consistently resolving more than 95% of support requests within time specified time frames in the SLA, even as the number of support tickets has risen 5% to 10% over the last year.

- The company's support team has been able to focus more of its efforts on more "mission critical" support issues while also enjoying better work-life balance.

- End users are more productive with less application downtime and quicker resolution of support requests.

- The engagement allows the client to focus more on retaining and acquiring customers to support its growth, forecasting and fulfilling demand, processing invoices, paying suppliers and preparing reports.

- Our team now handles all support calls for the Asia-Pacific region and has begun handling those higher-priority requests – mainly from Asia-Pacific – that must be resolved within two days.

The other benefit for the client? It has the peace of mind in knowing that we're handling the more minor, routine support tickets that can keep end users productive.

About Cognizant

Cognizant (NASDAQ: CTSH) is a leading provider of information technology, consulting, and business process out-sourcing services, dedicated to helping the world's leading companies build stronger businesses. Headquartered in Teaneck, New Jersey (U.S.), Cognizant combines a passion for client satisfaction, technology innovation, deep industry and business process expertise, and a global, collaborative workforce that embodies the future of work. With over 50 delivery centers worldwide and approximately 130,000 employees as of September 30, 2011, Cognizant is a member of the NASDAQ-100, the S&P 500, the Forbes Global 2000, and the Fortune 500 and is ranked among the top performing and fastest growing companies in the world. Visit us online at www.cognizant.com or follow us on Twitter: Cognizant.