

Searching for the perfect product

Schering-Plough is a worldwide pharmaceutical company committed to discovering, developing and marketing new therapies and treatment programs that can improve people's health and save lives. The Company is a recognized leader in biotechnology, genomics and gene therapy. Schering-Plough (Avondale) Company have always invested in technology to support their research and development programmes so their choice of IT helpdesk was a critical decision to take.

Their initial search for helpdesk products cast a wide net, deciding to look at as many vendors as possible, in order to investigate all the options and new technologies available. They discovered over 300 software vendors with tools that promised everything from call logging, telephone management, workflow packages, CRM and knowledgebase. Some had a bias towards inventory management, others towards problem management; some favoured call logging, others thought the knowledge database was the key. The more sophisticated ones had electronic displays in the Helpdesk office to show how many calls were waiting while being entertained by a pleasant voice telling them how far down the queue an end-user was!

During the shortlist process Schering Plough (Avondale) eliminated several products that fell short of their requirements. After a few weeks twelve products remained and the decision to evaluate all of these was made.



A World of Possibilities But Only One Solution

The criteria the products were assessed on included; Problem management - call logging, escalation & tracking, scripting, history capture and knowledgebase; Change management - change control, project management and resource planning; Asset management - human resources, hardware, software and enterprise; Communication - voice (IVR), CTI, ACD, auto-fax, email and Internet; System management - on-line documentation, SLA escalation, system alerts, and real-time reporting

In addition, the helpdesk for Schering-Plough (Avondale) Company would need to log calls and automatically assign a tracking number and be able to distinguish between urgent requests for help and other types of requests. Track the progress of that call and keep the end user informed of that progress. Provide management with extensive statistical analysis of support calls and progress. In order to secure quick resolution of issues the helpdesk had to be able to handle any number of end-users at any time and adapt to monitor temporary/contractor helpdesk technicians.

The helpdesk needs to have the ability to store knowledge about any type of hardware or software. All questions, whether they were from naive end-users or power-users, should be able to be answered from the Help Desk's knowledgebase and be able to make "experts" out of junior level Helpdesk analysts.



Schering-Plough

During the extensive evaluation it became immediately apparent that Supportworks from Hornbill Systems Limited had distinct competitive advantages in terms of functionality, performance and cost.

Upon winning the tender Hornbill Systems worked with its lead partner in Ireland, IT Europe, to manage the sales and implementation processes. Installation was quick and easy due to Support-Works unique architecture NPA. NPA does not require client-side ODBC and uses only TCP/IP to connect to the application server. The effect on existing LAN traffic is virtually zero and the performance of the application over the LAN and WAN is impressive. David Horan, IS Manager at Schering-Plough (Avondale) Company observes. "Since installation the product has been 100% stable and subsequent technical support (which is rarely required) has been speedy and efficient."

IT Asset Management Aids IT Support

Kevin O'Grady of IT Euope continues. "Schering-Plough (Avondale) Company had intended to implement SMS for asset management. When the client heard that Hornbill's latest product Assetworks was designed to integrate seamlessly with the helpdesk, they were very interested. Assetworks was installed as an evaluation in the first instance but it soon became immediately apparent the helpdesk would benefit greatly from integrating it into their system."

Assetworks is deployed by modifying the network login script on the server to include the audit agent that runs as each end-user logs on to the network and when the audit has completed, the data is submitted to both the inventory database and the helpdesk database. This automatically populates the asset database at the helpdesk.

The level of detail recorded by Assetworks covers information on the hardware, software and network configuration of each machine that is made available to the analyst from within the helpdesk application. In addition, the analyst can perform other useful tasks, such as creating emergency repair disks, or even take remote control of the users desktop from within the management console.

"Assetworks is now an invaluable part of the helpdesk and the analysts are better equipped to deal with any problem that arises." Adds O'Grady.

IT Support With Business Alignment

The final word is with David Horan, who concludes, "We were impressed with the level of functionality offered by Supportworks. NPA (non-polling architecture) meant that the installation was relatively easy and the product performs very well with little of no impact on the network. Supportworks was a very effective solution to our business needs."



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