

Hornbill's Supportworks Meets the University of Sheffield's Challenge for Campus IT Service Desk



Business Benefits:

- Call logging and tracking in centralised database enables 80% of calls to be resolved by first line support.
- Workflow processes within Supportworks enable queries to be resolved and hardware faults to be tracked and repaired.
- Simple, user friendly interface provides easy access to data, improving customer service.
- Reports generated enable the IT team to spot trends and plan proactive support.
- Extension of the system has enabled other departmental service desks to use Supportworks for call logging.

With over 24,000 students from 118 countries and almost 6,000 members of staff, the University of Sheffield is one of the UK's leading and largest universities. A member of the Russell Group, it has a reputation for world-class teaching and research excellence across a wide range of disciplines.

Two prestigious global rankings carried out by US publication Newsweek and China's Shanghai Jiao Tong University, put Sheffield among the top 10 universities in Britain and the top 75 universities worldwide.

The University's research partners and clients include Boeing, Rolls Royce, Unilever, Boots, AstraZeneca, GSK, ICI, Slazenger and many more. International partnerships with the Worldwide Universities Network (USA, Europe and China) and the University's partnership with Leeds and York Universities (the White Rose Consortium) have combined research power greater than that of either Oxford or Cambridge.

Leading the Field

Like many large organisations, the University relies upon its IT systems to ensure that both students and staff can carry out their research studies. The ICT Support Team provides support for over three thousand staff and twenty thousand students across its campus by telephone, email and through face to face contact. Since 2005 the team has successfully been using Supportworks service management system from Hornbill to operate a centralised service desk.

The service desk has a total of twelve skilled technical ICT staff offering support on a rota providing three staff at any one time. The team answers any calls and logs them on Supportworks - 80% of calls are resolved on the first line of support, while the remaining 20% are passed on to second line for resolution. The ICT Support Team had previously tried a call centre approach to calls, passing all calls immediately onto a second line, but found that having a more skilled first line of support was more effective.

"We find that the rota system works well. About 75% of our calls come from staff and feedback has been that the more skilled service desk provides better results and improved customer service," said Stuart Barkworth, Head of ICT Support at the University of Sheffield.

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Stuart Barkworth
Head of ICT Support
University of Sheffield

The team also offers a 'drop-in' service, whereby staff and students can present laptops requiring upgrades or fixes. The team uses the Forms feature within Supportworks to manage the processes and to track the progress of work, using the built-in workflow functionality.

Simplicity of Design

Supportworks replaced a simple call logging system that had become too slow and cumbersome to meet the ICT Support Team's needs. It was selected over other competitive products following a lengthy evaluation process. The ICT Support Team was looking for a platform-independent web-based browser as part of the service desk system. The team also wanted a portal that could be accessed anywhere and that was straightforward to use and develop.

"We evaluated six packages, and after visiting a number of reference sites we went to tender. Hornbill's solution was shortlisted and in the end was head and shoulders above the competition. We liked the simplicity of the product, yet it provides everything that we need and more to develop in the future," said Stuart Barkworth.

As well as logging and tracking incoming queries, the ICT Support Team uses Supportworks to assign site visits when it is necessary for support staff to be called out. All jobs are managed in a queue system within Supportworks, to ensure that correct priorities are assigned. Future developments of the system include rolling out handheld devices to all remote support staff so that they might view and access the Supportworks database for calls logged.

Extending its Use

Originally used to support central IT functions and administration, Supportworks has been extended and is now being rolled out to other departmental and faculty IT departments. The support team responsible for the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) has also started to use the solution to manage calls.

The Finance team uses Supportworks to support its SAP system, newly installed in the summer of 2007. Similarly the HR team have started to use Hornbill's solution to support their helpdesk function. Separate support desk numbers and mailboxes are used to support the different department requirements. There are also plans for the Library and the Information Commons to use Supportworks for enquiry handling.

More recently the ICT Support Team has introduced the self-service option in three departments in the University. This is being handled in a phased process, in order that the knowledgebase can be populated with common questions and answers over time.

Spotting Trends

Since implementing the system, the ICT Support Team has used the reporting function within Supportworks extensively. The team uses information from the reports to spot trends and call patterns. Identifying peaks and troughs in calls has enabled it to see which systems require support at different times and plan proactively.

"Supportworks has made us much more effective. We are now handling more calls with less people and providing a better service. It is an excellent, reliable system that enables us to log and handle all incidents. In fact, we have seen a greater number of calls to the service desk because we are able to be more helpful and efficient," explained Stuart Barkworth.

"We handle over 120 calls per day, which is a significant increase, yet we have been able to meet our SLAs of resolving 80% from having a better system. What's more we have seen considerable benefits to other departments using Supportworks. It has significantly changed the way that we work for the better."



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