STOP THE MADNESS

A Case Study

The Story of How The Nation's
Leading Clinical Research Company
Took Back Control of Their IT

"I was being controlled by the end user"

- Alex Walker
Director of IT
Cetero Research

For Alex Walker, Director of Information Technology at Cetero Research, the problem was right in front of his face. Actually, it was right out his office window. Occasionally, but unfortunately not rarely, Alex would turn to look out over the corporate campus, only to catch sight of one of his technicians dashing between buildings, PC in his arms, racing to the next break-fix.

Every IT problem was seen as equally critical and there was no way to prioritize and schedule technicians' time.

And then there were the "drive-bys," chance encounters between an end-user with a problem and Alex, or one of his two technicians, in the halls. In these brief, passing conversations, the end-user would quickly rattle-off the details of one type of issue or another, expecting the technician to mentally schedule a visit for later, recall all the pertinent information and come prepared with any hardware or software that might be needed to solve the problem.

But even that wasn't the whole of the problem. Often, Alex or one of his technicians, upon returning to their desk, would be greeted by Post-It notes left by end-users. These colorful missives, stuck to computer monitors, backs-of-chairs and desktops would alert a technician to an issue needing attention. From there, it was up to the technician to find the time, and the end-user to continually check back for status. Not a good working relationship for either party.

Alex was determined to bring a better way to Cetero Research, an industry leading clinical research organization (CRO). With more than 25 years of experience from its founding companies, Cetero has conducted more clinical pharmacology studies than any other CRO. The company has seven locations in the U.S., including Alex's San Antonio campus, and one in Canada.

"I was being controlled by the end user," Alex said. "We as an IT staff needed to get control of the support function."

Alex began his search for a solution that would bring order to the chaos. Having worked with a number of help desk applications earlier in his career, Alex had a pretty good idea of what the right solution for Cetero would look like. Optimally, he'd find an application with extensive capabilities and scalability, but without a hefty price-tag or lengthy implementation period, and without the need for extensive training. After an in-depth search of available solutions, Alex selected ManageEngine ServiceDesk Plus software.

"ManageEngine gives me the qualities of the big, expensive applications, without their cost and in a form that's much easier to use," Alex said.

ServiceDesk Plus' step-by-step set-up Wizard showed its value by allowing Alex to quickly install, configure and begin using the application in no-time. In fact, from installation to deployment to use, the entire process took only 30 minutes. And the set-up Wizard had another benefit.

Help!

Alex began his search for a solution that would bring order to the chaos

"Using the Wizard, my confidence in ManageEngine only increased," Alex said. "I could tell the product had been well thought-out. The layout is well done. Tasks are clearly labeled making it easy to see what is where, when I need it."

According to Alex, that ease-of-use continues to the end-user level. "ServiceDesk Plus is very comfortable for the end user. I didn't have to do any training. The interface for the user looks like a standard email with a couple of help desk specific drop down menus."

When submitting an issue through ServiceDesk Plus, the end user is the first to assign a level of severity to the problem by selecting along a sliding scale of criticality. This categorization helps Alex plan his, and his technician's, workday as he reviews trouble tickets in the queue. Alex can assign technicians to jobs based on the level of importance, as well as on their physical proximity to one-another. This organization allows technicians to stay focused on task and to be more efficient.

"No more running between buildings, PC in hand!"

All along, ServiceDesk Plus keeps the end user aware of the status of their issue. Communication between help desk and technician begins immediately after the trouble ticket is submitted, when an email reply to the user is automatically generated, assuring them their ticket has been received. Then as the issue is addressed, the user is kept updated, all the way through to resolution. At no time is the end user wondering about, and asking Alex or his technicians about, the status.

Alex is also a user of ManageEngine Desktop Central, a web-based desktop management suite that Alex uses in tandem with ServiceDesk Plus. Desktop Central allows Alex and his technicians to resolve a computing issue by establishing a remote connection to a desktop, and, seeing the desktop screen as if they were physically seated at the user's desk, inventory the software that is installed; and remove or add programs, including patches and service packs.

"Desktop Central helps me manage desktops across all our networks. I could take a standard image and push it to the machines. I can click on any machine and install any application I want to," Alex said. "ServiceDesk Plus is my main interface and Desktop Central is what I use to service the desktops."

After Alex or one of his technicians resolves a problem, one in five Cetero employees receive, at random, a follow-up survey, which is generated by ServiceDesk Plus. The survey will solicit their opinions and insight into the performance of Alex and his technicians in meeting their help desk needs. This feature has not only helped Alex ensure he and his team are performing up to their standards, but it's been extremely beneficial in communicating with upper management.

"It's not us saying we're doing a good job.
It's our end users saying it."

"Our technicians are 200 percent more efficient"

ServiceDesk Plus' user surveys, combined with its reporting functionality, allow Alex to keep management apprised of his team's workload and the value they provide day -in and day-out.

"A lot of what we do goes unseen by the rest of the organization," Alex said. "We're like the plumbers. Not always recognized for the work we do, but you don't want hot water coming out of the toilet!"

"ServiceDesk Plus reports actually helped me validate the need for an additional technician," Alex noted. "Management knows exactly how IT is using its time. The quality of reporting in ServiceDesk Plus is more detailed than competitive offerings. It's very helpful."

"I would say our technicians are 200 percent more efficient because of ServiceDesk Plus," continued Alex. "This software creates a partnership between end-user and technician, allowing us all to do our jobs to the utmost."

ManageEngine

Powering IT ahead