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— Anthony Fryer, Technical Support Manager

ihotdesk achieves zero downtime with WebEx Support Center.



INDUSTRY

Outsourced IT services

WEBEX APPLICATIONS

Support Center

SUMMARY

By implementing WebEx and WebEx Support Center, ihotdesk has significantly improved ROI on service revenues, and maintained consistently high customer satisfaction.

ABOUT IHOTDESK

Line of Business

Outsourced IT services

Headquarters

London, United Kingdom

Number of Employees

27

WebEx Customer Since 2003

The Company

Headquartered in London, ihotdesk outsources IT management for small and medium sized businesses—supplying access to a wide range of skills and knowledge, from project management to development and technical skills. Its team of engineers, developers, and consultants provide businesses with all of the benefits associated with running a large in-house IT department, for a fraction of the cost.

The Challenge

Operating in a virtual office environment, ihotdesk’s support team has invested heavily in technology to enable its service representatives to be completely mobile. However, as the company grew it needed a cost-effective way to provide remote access support for customer IT systems throughout the United Kingdom.

Supporting a variety of demanding businesses, including companies such as BIW Technologies and Phoenix Equity Partners, the 20 ihotdesk field engineers needed to ensure they delivered services efficiently to their customers, without incurring the costs and time related issues of traveling across the country. The use of highly skilled engineers combined with in-person field visits, was enough to build up a significant reputation for service. However, as the customer base grew, the problems and server management became more complex due to multiple supported platforms. The company then recognized the need for a more advanced solution to manage multiple IT environments, from a standardized, easy to use, single interface.

In addition to eliminating the costs of an in-house IT department, a major reason businesses buy ihotdesk is for its ability to deliver quality 24x7 support. Anthony Fryer, Technical Support Manager at ihotdesk says, “The majority of our customers are in mission critical industries, such as financial services, legal or manufacturing. We deal with their live data everyday. Unless we are available when a server goes down, our customers can lose thousands of pounds every hour through lost productivity.” For ihotdesk’s customers, flexible IT support resources are a key differentiator over an internal IT department. Its customers now easily cope with their peak workloads by receiving additional resources on demand. As ihotdesk’s customer base spread from London, to Edinburgh and Manchester, delivering 24x7 support became crucial to maintaining ihotdesk’s high levels of customer satisfaction. However, due to their highly accelerating business growth it would be impossible to continue providing this level of service without an effective remote support tool.

The Solution

Initially ihotdesk investigated a number of enterprise system management application suites, all claiming to allow effective remote management of servers and workstations. In reality, they involved complex configurations and expensive software, all of which Anthony found “crude, clunky, and complicated to use.” Anthony then discovered WebEx Support Center, an Internet-based remote access service enabling IT support organizations to establish secure, web-based remote

access networks to control hundreds, or even thousands, of centrally managed machines. After extensive feasibility testing, ihotdesk selected WebEx in September 2004.

Support Center is now an integral part of ihotdesk's dedicated Remote Support Team, and is used on 50% of its server support resolutions. ihotdesk has achieved better ROI for staff-based service revenue and Support Center has helped to keep this at a higher level than previously possible. It was introduced without any investment in complex and expensive hardware or software, and required no compromise of network security. Using Support Center, the team provides 1st and 2nd line remote support, securely accessing its clients' computers from any web browser, anywhere in the world, irrespective of firewall restrictions. With the click of a mouse, engineers perform daily back-ups, analysis, housekeeping, install upgrades, transfer files between machines, maintenance, troubleshoot problems, and engage in proactive support, regardless of location—and all without a customer needing to be present at the machine.

Anthony Fryer comments, "In many cases we inherit multiple mission-critical systems from customers that started out using an internal IT department. These disparate systems can include complex VPN configurations and security requirements. In addition, with small and medium sized businesses a 'one size fits all' solution seldom fits. Plus, for more complex customers a constant remote connection is essential. By using Support Center as our tool for server management we can conduct daily error checks on the network and event logs on machines in multiple locations from anywhere, any time."

HIGHLIGHTS

- With WebEx Support Center, ihotdesk has reduced site visits by one-third, and significantly decreased resolution times.
- In the last year, the company experienced 30% revenue growth, and credits WebEx Support Center with helping them scale their business internationally.
- ihotdesk has found innovative uses for the remote access capabilities of WebEx Support Center, such as providing real-time support training sessions when implementing new software at customer sites.



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— Anthony Fryer, Technical Support Manager

The Benefits

Anthony Fryer estimates that Support Center has enabled engineers to reduce 33% of server-based on-site call-outs. "It sounds like a cliché, but since we have taken Support Center on we haven't looked back." Anthony recalls one incident when a prospective customer in Leeds was experiencing major email problems when a server went down, knocking out remote access. Each minute the server was down cost them money. It would have taken an engineer four hours to drive to the site and fix the problem. However, by immediately deploying Support Center the problem was solved in less than two hours—decreasing fault resolution time by 50%. After this positive experience the customer signed up as a full contract customer, and is now one of ihotdesk's largest customers. ihotdesk's client feedback of WebEx Support Center has also been very positive. "They like the simplicity of the user interface, and the fact that it is intuitive, simple to install and easy to use." In many cases employees can resolve their own issues with the correct training, and Support Center provides an effective vehicle for the training team to assist remotely when implementing new software on customers' sites. "The support training sessions give great visibility between client and customer. As an outsourcing company, our whole ethos is built around the trust placed in us to handle IT for other

businesses. By the same token, we place our trust in WebEx to provide a reliable service. For our customers, our investment in technology is a crucial yardstick for our own business."

The Future

Despite launching in one of the worst tech downturns, ihotdesk has succeeded where many others have failed. The company is now in its fifth year, and has achieved revenues of £1.9m—along with 30% revenue growth last year. Anthony Fryer adds "Support Center has contributed a great deal towards this growth. We have kept our costs down by eliminating a third of the expense of field visits due to usage of Support Center with 50% – 60% of our engineers. Some of them have commented that we couldn't provide the same service if it wasn't for WebEx."

The company supports a solid customer base in the UK and the business is growing steadily with new customers in Singapore and the United States. As rumours of a full tech sector recovery abound, Anthony Fryer is keeping his feet firmly on the ground. "Our main focus at the moment is establishing ourselves organically. However, if we can go on scaling our business using Support Center and WebEx, there's nothing to stop us having further growth internationally in the future."