Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA)

NWEA prides itself on offering the highest level of technology innovation in order to deliver the best results for its users. To make its MAP tests accessible to the largest number of students and educators, the organization recently released a new web-based assessment application that improved usability and increased usage.

Overview

Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) is a global not-for-profit educational services organization that partners with educational institutions worldwide to provide computer-based assessment suites, professional development and research services. NWEA's Measures of Academic Progress® (MAP®) adaptive assessments leverage more than 30 years of research into student growth that informs decision-making at every level, from classrooms to boardrooms. An alternative to standardized primary grade school testing, NWEA optimizes a child's education by offering educators assessment tests, classroom resources, analytical tools and professional development.

"We needed to improve processes for issue identification, problem resolution and release management so as to provide the quality of support expected with our new web-based application."

JEN SELLS
Project Manager
NWEA

Challenge

However, it also meant that NWEA needed an IT Service Management (ITSM) solution that could scale and help them rapidly respond to and resolve greater volumes of support issues and requests for changes to the assessment application. To ensure service reliability, NWEA also made the decision to move away from outsourced web servers for managing their web presence and instead run and manage the application on web servers on premise. The IT team also recognized that they needed to fix inconsistencies around internal processes related to issue identification, problem resolution and release management so as to provide the quality of support expected with the new web-based application. In addition, NWEA was rapidly garnering extremely large customers—for instance, a school district in Midwestern United States that comprised of 890 schools. They needed an ITSM solution that could meet their growing support requirements. NWEA realized that they had outgrown their previous service desk solution and that they needed an upgrade.

Solution

The goal was to implement a service desk solution that supports Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL), a set of IT service management best practices that focus on

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At a Glance

■ **Industry**
Education

■ **Location**
United States

■ **Challenge**
The organization needed an ITSM solution that could meet their growing support requirements.

■ **Solution**
Use Service Support Manager to reduce the cost of IT services by letting customers start ITSM applications that can then be easily configured to match the way an IT organization actually delivers services.

■ **Results**
+ Improved usability and increased usage with a web-based assessment application
+ Provided quick learning curve for easy implementation
+ Integrated ITSM processes

aligning IT services with the needs of business. Other factors that influenced their decision included solution flexibility, pricing, compliance and integration with NWEA's technologies and processes that were already in place.

NWEA began their search for the right solution by evaluating ITIL-based systems. Several that they considered lacked true process management capabilities and did not provide them with the flexibility to rapidly make changes to the processes and user interfaces to meet their specific needs. They considered the option of developing a solution in-house; however, they quickly concluded that the cost of maintaining a home-grown solution would far outweigh any short-term benefit. NWEA was already leveraging the Micro Focus® process management solution to power five workflow-based applications. Micro Focus Service Support Manager and Micro Focus Service Request Center both leverage the same process management solution and that gave NWEA the additional advantage of being able to leverage existing in-house expertise to manage these systems.

Service Support Manager is a revolutionary new process-based ITSM solution that reduces the cost of IT services by letting customers start with ITIL v3-verified, packaged ITSM applications that can then be easily configured to match the way an IT organization actually delivers services. What's more, the solution improves resolution times by delivering complete visibility across integrated ITSM processes—from request management through incident, problem, change and configuration management, with connectivity to release management. NWEA selected Service Support Manager as it met their need for a modern ITSM system that incorporated ITIL best practices, delivered integrated ITSM processes, had a stellar product roadmap and

was backed by an outstanding customer support team. NWEA also saw the value in being able to leverage Service Support Manager to meet the needs of their core IT groups responsible for infrastructure support, external product delivery as well as the operations service desk. The solution's ability to easily integrate with NWEA's existing systems such as HP Quality Center, Nagios Performance Monitoring Software and Salesforce.com was also a critical factor in the decision-making process. By using Service Request Center in conjunction with Service Support Manager, they would now have a unified portal that would serve as the single point of contact for all IT requests.

Results

NWEA's IT Team went live with Service Request Center and the incident, problem and change management applications in just 30 days. The initial rollout involved a brief analysis of the out-of-the-box capabilities versus the desired state. Said Jen Sells of NWEA, "We were able to rapidly install and demonstrate the power of the solution to our users. We were able to quickly roll out prototypes to our staff and iteratively incorporate their requests for changes to continuously improve our implementation and match their needs." This approach to rapidly making improvements worked well as it required executive commitment to making the right resources available to effect changes in a timely manner.

The initial feedback has been positive. The integrated nature of the applications within Service Support Manager was very well received. Even though the IT team had planned to roll out each application—for incident, problem and change management, for instance—one-by-one after careful evaluation of each, the quick-learning curve meant that the technicians were using

all of the applications within Service Support Manager faster than anticipated and were immediately feeding back requests for modifications to the IT team! One of the biggest advantages that Service Support Manager provides is the flexibility to rapidly make changes. In fact, the NWEA IT team has found that they can make some of the modifications in less than 15 minutes. Said Jen Sells of NWEA, "We're even considering asking our users to submit tickets through Service Request Center now that they know how easy it is to make changes to Service Support Manager itself!"

Service Support Manager will also be used by NWEA's operations team as their service desk solution. The external product delivery team sees the benefit of integrating Service Support Manager with Salesforce.com so that when a school calls an NWEA client specialist with an issue related to a testing system, the specialist can directly see the status of the incident right from within Salesforce.com. NWEA also plans to leverage the process management platform that powers Service Support Manager to automate the process of creating and amending test questions, a complex process that involves multiple groups.

The IT team is also exploring using the same platform to automate and deliver other services including those related to employee onboarding. NWEA is also considering using Release Manager that leverages the same process management platform that powers Service Support Manager. The integrated solutions help easily combine both operational as well as application changes into a single release train. This simplifies and accelerates the rollout of changes, which improves service responsiveness and customer satisfaction.

"NWEA selected Serena Service Manager (now Micro Focus Service Support Manager) as it meets our needs for a modern ITSM system, incorporates ITIL best practices, delivers integrated ITSM processes, has a stellar product roadmap and is backed by an outstanding customer support team."

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