

Inside Perspective

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Re-engineering Customer Support at JJWild

Jim Gordon, Director, Customer Services

The support group at JJWild has been going through a major renovation. We've doubled our staff, changed the roles of individuals, and even restructured departmental management. In addition, over the next couple of months we will be rolling out a new knowledge-based support system and adjusting our workflow process to best make use of this and some of our other new support system tools.

Why are we expanding our support capabilities? We recognize that you are always open—every minute of every day. We also know that you are increasingly reliant on the systems which support your vision of better, more efficient, and safer healthcare.

We support your vision, too. That's why we've doubled our customer services staff during the past year. This has allowed us to expand the in-office hours of our support group to 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Eastern time, Monday through Friday; it's also enabled us to extend the depth of coverage on nights and weekends. Having greater depth during "off" hours allows us to be much more proactive in supporting clients during scheduled downtime activities. In addition, we're specifically targeting our on-call resources to assure that we have a strong breadth of technology skills available—so if you do experience an off-hour issue with your systems or infrastructure, we'll have the right individual with the right skills available to address your specific need.

New three-tiered support model

We've also been tuning up our workflow process and making changes to staff roles in order to support our knowledge-based help desk and to increase efficiency and improve communication with clients during the resolution process. Our new tiered staffing model will have three basic roles:

Case manager. Think of the case manager as the "project manager" for resolution of an individual service request. He or she will be your initial and primary point of contact during the resolution process. The case manager will assist you in opening your ticket or "service request," and will identify the system(s) which are problematic; this includes acquiring or confirming the information—serial/tag number, machine name, connectivity methodology, etc.—needed to continue resolution. The case manager is responsible for making sure that clients are kept updated during the course of a service request, and also makes sure that other individuals involved in the support process are engaged as needed in a timely fashion.

Vendor manager. We've all experienced it. The time spent on hold trying to open or get status on an individual service request from various systems and software vendors can be maddening. An average day in JJWild support will see us tracking 150 or more issues with our various vendor partners. In the past, we found ourselves too busy chasing these tickets; we did not want to jeopardize our ability to truly service our clients.

We knew there had to be a better way, and we found it. By dedicating staff to the process of opening and tracking vendor partner tickets, we are able to achieve an economy of scale. With a single contact, our vendor manager can check the status of all tickets open with a specific vendor. This frees up our case manager to manage the resolution process and allows our more senior technicians to concentrate on identifying and resolving the truly difficult problems.

Technical support engineer (TSE). TSEs will be engaged in diagnosis and resolution of any issue which is not easily diagnosed during the initial contact with the case manager. Although it is the case manager's responsibility to be the primary point of communication between JJWild and our clients during resolution of a service request, a TSE may also work directly with client staff and/or the support resources of our vendor partners during the resolution of a service request.

As is often the case with staffing increases and role changes, there are always a few bumps in the road to progress. If you've experienced this lately, I apologize—but I hope that you're also starting to see improvements in our service levels. I promise you, you will! It is our goal for support services to be a significant reason (one of many) why our clients choose to do business with JJWild.

If you have any comments, suggestions, or observations about our reinvented customer services organization, I'd certainly love to hear them. Please email me at editor@jjwild.com.

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