Callscan

Company: Lynx TechnologyCustomer: CallscanSubmitted by: Lynx TechnologyThere's something predictable about every awards ceremony – the acceptance speeches. The cynical amongst us might sneer at the sighs and tears, but what every winner recognises is that their achievements are dependent on the supporting cast. Of course, it's widely acknowledged that the best support is often barely noticeable; the role is to facilitate the star performance, and to strengthen the overall production. The same is true in business.

The business backbone

From desktop productivity tools to data storage, from system management to high-speed communication, the enormous benefits that powerful IT can bring to our work have made it central to business today.

But our reliance on technology carries a risk; when the system stops working, so do we – and so do our customers. A call centre is just such a case. " Without their management information systems, call centres are effectively blind," explains Berny MacLeod, Customer Support Manager at Callscan, one of the world's leading providers of call centre software. " There's no way of monitoring the availability of operators, the number of callers waiting or check the length of calls." There can be no doubt, then, that for call centres – as for the majority of businesses – IT support is absolutely essential. Even for organisations with IT experts in-house, external specialist knowledge can be required – for a different software application or hardware model.

With over 5000 major call centre systems installed worldwide, Callscan has established a global reputation for excellence. The company's undoubted IT expertise notwithstanding, when it won a contract to supply software to a major telecommunications company, Callscan chose to outsource the support. The telecommunications client was using Callscan software as part of a complete call centre solution, sold on to organisations ranging from banks to broadcasters. This meant supplying call centres all over the country, twenty-four hours a day. With the service level agreement demanding fast response to problems round the clock, and hardware engineers on site within three hours (SLA for on-site engineering is 3 hour response plus 8 hour fix), Callscan turned to Lynx Technology.

Remote diagnosis, on-site resolution

As an IT services company with a nationwide presence, Lynx Technology could meet these exacting requirements, a fact recognised by Callscan in its choice of Lynx as its support partner. Lynx Technology's support division is centred at its Software and Remote Support Centre (SRSC) in Sheffield. This state-of-the-art facility is equipped with an extensive range of software, and using ISDN or Kilostream connectivity, enables remote operation and management of systems, servers and networks. For Callscan in particular, it provides a rapid diagnostic role. End customer calls are fielded by Callscan's telecommunications client, who re-routes any IT enquiries to the SRSC. From there, Lynx guarantees a 15-minute remote modem response to the end user, forming a frontline assessment of the problem – whether it is a user error, hardware failure or software glitch.

Any issues with the Callscan software are redirected to Callscan's own helpdesk. Hardware and operating system problems, meanwhile, are dealt with on a three-hour on site response, with an eight-hour fix thereafter basis, with engineers travelling from Lynx's regional offices.

Dependent on expertise

The telecommunications company's solution runs on the Unix operating system and Compaq hardware, for both the servers and the terminals. Lynx is one of the few Compaq System Service Providers in the UK, an important factor in Callscan's eyes. " We feel we can really rely on Lynx's expertise with Unix and particularly Compaq hardware," MacLeod states. MacLeod also points to real added value – to occasions when Lynx has provided assistance over and above the demands of the contract.

" Customers have called up with printer problems, for example, and though they are not obliged to deal with this, the team from Lynx do their utmost to solve the problem as a helpdesk would. Would other companies put themselves out like that?"

IT support is business support

The IT support that Lynx provides is clearly central to the entire call centre solution. In fact, it underpins an entire business supply chain. Callscan, the telecommunications client and especially the end users are all reliant on Lynx for their business success. We may think of it as IT support, but in reality, it's the essential safety net for entire businesses. MacLeod is clearly happy with the standard of Lynx support: " We have no complaints from our customers about Lynx; the company provides a highly professional service,

and enables us to deliver the support that our customers demand." The key word here is professional: it speaks of a service that is unfussy, that performs crucial tasks with a minimum of disruption, and ultimately enables the call centres, the telecommunications client and Callscan to focus their work on their core business. As the sobbing Oscar winners acknowledge, you don't win anything without first-class support.