Case Study: Help Desk

**Criticall Supports Help Desk Staff
on the World's Largest IT Outsourcing Contract**

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Background

It is hard to think of a higher profile IT outsourcing contract than the global deal between IBM and JP Morgan Chase (JPMC). JPMC's operations rely heavily on effective and functional IT.

To keep the IT infrastructure working at peak levels and within the Service Level Agreement (SLA), IBM depend on a highly skilled service delivery team.

As system incidents occur, they are registered with the IBM Help Desk and each is given a priority category, with the highest categories requiring the most urgent responses under the SLA.

For the most severe operational issues, best practice in Complex Incident Management highlighted the need for input from multiple specialists and skill areas across IBM, potentially from around the world. Such interaction was achieved by means of voice conferences called "Management Bridges".

IBM is the world's largest IT services provider with revenues of around $90bn annually. In 2002, it won the largest IT outsourcing contract in history. The deal with JP Morgan Chase, the investment bank, is worth a projected $5bn over the proposed contract life. The demanding operational Service Levels created the need for rapid, real-time communication between Help Desk staff and other support team members.

IBM relies on Criticall systems to deliver the vital messages to those key individuals.

The Requirement

IBM already had a voice-conferencing facility in place, where experts and senior managers called in on a pre-arranged voice conference number to discuss the relevant topic in more detail. Each conference required a PIN number for security reasons and the senior team involved on the contract extended to over 100 people. It was the responsibility of the Help Desk Team to notify the relevant people each time, ahead of the planned voice conference and to give the call-out group notice of progress updates on any serious incident. There was therefore a requirement to notify over 100 people several times a day and on very tight timescales, as the clock was ticking on the SLA. Although there were scores of Help Desk staff available, calling by phone each time was impractical and very costly in terms of resource.

IBM's requirement was therefore to have a system, which could support scores of helpdesk staff accessing it concurrently, as any one of them could get the call which required a conference bridge response.

Furthermore, the system needed to be easy to use and administer, so as not to distract helpdesk staff from their core operational roles. Lastly, the system needed to be fast!

Experts and managers could not call into a conference bridge unless they knew it was happening, but there was an urgent need to respond as quickly as possible, in order to begin addressing the operational issue at hand. The requirement was expressed as the need to be able to send over 100 SMS/pager messages to the target recipients within 5 minutes, reliably and consistently.

Each message should include the bridge number to call, the incident being discussed and the conference PIN. This would permit the setting of live conference bridges at only 10 minutes notice – sometimes less.

The Solution

Criticall's solution was to provide the relevant IBM staff with access to its web-based EmergencyCall ASP service. The initial solution was implemented and functional within a week of the statement of requirement.

While functional and performance considerations were the initial priority, additional enhancements to the service became necessary as the importance of the system to overall contract service delivery became apparent. Availability of 99% was not adequate, as this meant over 7 hours a month of downtime was still within SLA, and the need to use the service was continuous. Criticall was therefore able to further enhance the service, providing a commitment to 99.995% availability, by replicating the service across both a Primary and a Secondary site. SMS/pager routing is to different providers from each site and the client is able to manually switch between the two as they wish, using different URLs.

IBM's contract manager described the decision to go with Criticall saying: "We have looked around the market for other solutions like this and they just aren't out there".

So far, IBM Help Desk staff have sent over 100,000 messages through the system and currently generate around 10,000 messages a month.

For more information about EmergencyCall ASP, visit www.criticall.co.uk.

The EmergencyCall ASP system is now used to communicate call updates and call closure, as well as the need for conference bridges. Ian Hammond, Criticall's CEO comments:

"If the world's largest IT company entrusts us with such a key role on the world's largest IT outsourcing contract, then other customers can be sure we can provide the same quality of solution for them."

Criticall

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