

TICKET TO PRIDE



The support group of a major computer company was understaffed and overtaxed, with a ticket tracking system that was befuddling and featureless. The addition of TAOS consultant Grant Miller has not only offset the group's workload — supporting 200 users and 300 machines — but his selection and customization of a new ticket tracking system has redefined the workflow within Engineering Support Services.

"New requests from users didn't go into the ticket system, they just went into everyone's mailbox," Grant explains. Although his original assignment as a junior admin included "all the basic gruntwork," Grant felt that he should take the time to come up with a better solution.

Grant and Client Manager Debby Hungerford chose and implemented a new system called Request Tracker, which is open-source and thus customizable to the department's specific needs. With this newly centralized system, all user requests are tracked from creation to resolution, and earlier problems with duplicate and lost requests have been eliminated. Grant was also able to add valuable feedback- and tracking-related features, including automatically generated surveys sent to users as tickets are closed; weekly reports tracking the number of tickets opened and closed, grouped by individual; and a filter that removes file attachments from incoming requests and saves them as web-accessible files.

Grant estimates that Request Tracker, implemented in September 2000, has and will continue to save 40 man-hours each month. "I would say that within a month of switching over to the new system, everyone was comfortable with it and it made everyone's life easier," Grant says. "I'm adding in new features now that will make some tasks even easier, including a program that will audit all the tickets in the system based on department rules, such as the number of hours in which an urgent request must be addressed."

Hungerford agrees. "The key metrics we look at are customer satisfaction, request processing productivity, and compliance with our request processing policy," she says. "A year ago, an average of 4 percent of our customer feedback was critical. Today it is 0 to 1 percent. Our request productivity is great too. A year ago, we averaged 50 requests open and 45 closed per week. Today we average 60 open and 60 closed per week. Finally, our compliance with our request processing policy in the last audit was 100 percent. That's up from less than 50 percent when I started the audits in February 2001.

"The productivity changes are the most significant. Not only are we staying fairly balanced over the course of a month, but we are handling more requests with the same number of resources we had previously."

