Millward Brown Analyses the Value of IT Support

Company Name
Millward Brown

Industry
Marketing Services

Web site
www.millwardbrown.com

Business Benefits
- Reduced cost of IT support
- Improved use of IT assets
- Improved support to software development team resulting in improved software and service delivery
- 72% employee satisfaction with it support
- IT support provided across 3 regions

Quick Stats
Employees: 750
HEAT Users: 12
Calls logged: 150 per week

BACKGROUND

Millward Brown is a global market research agency that specialises in helping companies understand and evaluate their brand equity, brand performance and brand health by measuring the effectiveness of a brand's total communication mix - advertising, sponsorship, PR, e-marketing, web sites and other marketing activities. The company has developed its own innovative suite of integrated research techniques and uses the telephone, internet, and face to face interviewing to collect data. Bespoke approaches include: the Advanced Tracking Programme, which collates vast amounts of data collected continuously on consumer perceptions of brands and their communications; Link™ used to pre-test advertising executions in different media; and BrandDynamics™ which assesses brand equity, loyalty to brands, and looks at whether or not brands have momentum in the market place.

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Jeff Cummings, IT Manager, Millward Brown

The company started in 1973, in a small office above a travel agent in Leamington Spa. It grew rapidly and with the purchase of a US research agency in the mid 1980s, opened its first international offices. It now has over 60 offices in 32 countries and is currently the ninth largest research agency in the world, and the fourth largest in the UK.

REACITVE I.T. SUPPORT

Millward Brown conducts over 13 million interviews a year around the world and. relies heavily on technology in the work it does. In the UK, it employs 750 people in 3 locations. "The UK IT help desk started as a purely reactive service with all the administration and logging done on bits of paper," said Jeff Cummings, IT Manager for Millward Brown UK. "There was no means of accumulating knowledge and it was a very inefficient and costly service. We needed to create a structure to keep track and support requests using a sophisticated and professional call logging application. In 1997, Millward Brown decided to automate the help desk and HEAT was installed. "Before automation, knowing the status of a call was not easy. HEAT keeps the help desk up to date with exactly what is happening with calls. It gives a record of when the call was logged, who has been assigned to handle the call, the actions required and carried out, and any necessary follow-up."

The benefits of switching to an automatic system were felt immediately – queries could be logged and updated effectively, problems and solutions recorded and jobs prioritised automatically. The help desk now handles on average 150 queries a week.

PROACTIVE I.T. SUPPORT

With a more ordered help desk in place, the support team's next step was to become more proactive. When Cummings first took over as IT manager he instigated a self-service initiative for the simpler queries. By using HEAT to record the most common queries and the easiest problems to resolve, he was able to create an online support site to guide users through solving minor problems such as making Excel formulas work.

"The online support site has been a great success. Every time a call is logged, the user is automatically sent an email by HEAT's Auto Ticket Generator acknowledging the query and directing them to the support site." said Cummings. "We have found that the number of simple queries has greatly reduced as users have learned from the site; which is constantly expanding as more knowledge is accumulated."

HEAT has also enabled the help desk to recognise training needs. By identifying the users logging the most calls and analysing the most common queries, the help desk can organise training sessions on these issues for all users.

"It is estimated that it costs a business between 23 and 28 Euros to resolve one help desk call and using proactive measures can reduce this by 30%." said Cummings "This help desk serves over 750 employees in 3 different locations, so that's a big saving. Referring every call directly to a self-self-help service has enabled the help desk to take a more proactive approach to IT support by training staff in areas that many were always confused about but for one reason or another, hadn't asked for help with."

HELPING USERS HELP THEMSELVES

The self-service approach has proved popular with the end users, who gave the help desk a 72% score in its most recent annual satisfaction survey. The IT team have not only made themselves very popular but are making efforts to become highly visible. The feedback from the survey also revealed that users wanted to see more of the IT team around the office. In response to this Cummings set up an 'IT patrol' which took the most proactive role possible – by being around users to provide on the spot fixes and even pre-empting problems. The fact that less time is being spent on first-line resolution means this is a viable scheme.

Many faults are still reported by users in person rather than by electronic channels. This has not caused a problem with logging queries as HEAT has simply been customised to include a new call source category. When the problem is put in to the system, the help desk agent chooses 'walk in' from the call source menu. HEAT then imports the user's employee data from the exchange server and uses this to record details such as the user ID and where in the network the problem is. An automated response is then sent by email on logging and on completion of the query just as with other channels.

Jeff Cummings commented "Obviously the preferred method of contact for the help desk is email, as it is the easiest to manage. It's all a case of educating and managing the users. We have just started using HEAT reports which give figures on the call sources, which allows us to measure our progress in this process."

Freeing up the help desk's resources has meant the team can better support Millward Brown's in–house software development team in improving their software and also to smooth the process of launching updated versions and fresh applications. Problems with in-house software are reported to the help desk in the first instance and as these are usually quite complex, are sent on to the software development team for resolution. This process is carried out through HEAT's call transfer facility, which means it can be dealt with in the same way as any help query and also that the knowledge base can be constantly expanded, then used to fix bugs.

Millward Brown also uses HEAT for its external helpdesk for research interviewers and intends to deploy HEAT globally by the end of 2003 on a single SQL database located in the UK.