

Case Study

Learning to Love Your IT Support: The Trial and Error Approach to Finding a Support Solution That Works

User Profile:

- **Industry:**
Mid-sized manufacturer
- **Geography:**
Headquartered in BC with branch offices in California
- **End User:**
Entire company

A Day in the Life (Before Dyrand)

Situation

After working with several external IT consultants, the company in this use case realized that this approach was incapable of effectively meeting the needs of an organization with in more than 20 computer users—much less the 65 it has today. When the company had just 10 to 20 users, using consultants and a “build what you need when you need it” approach worked reasonably well; however, this approach was incapable of meeting the requirements of a more mature 25 to 35 person organization—or of helping it grow.

These deficiencies quickly showed themselves in a number of ways:

First, day-to-day IT support requirements had become more than an external consultant could handle and the user community was becoming increasingly frustrated. This created a work environment filled with unnecessary stress.

Second, as the outside consultant had multiple clients, he was often unavailable when the company needed him, causing resolutions to take longer and be more costly than necessary.

Finally, because of the unpredictable fee structure, internal managers grew wary of making too many support requests. Instead, internal staffers would often attempt to solve a problem for their co-workers that they did not have the skills and experience to solve. Not surprisingly, this resulted in significant productivity losses.

Further compounding the problem was the hourly billing model; the needs of the client and the needs of the IT consultant were not aligned because the IT consultant profited from the client’s downtime. The CEO requested that these issues be mitigated prior to the next phase of growth. The company’s CFO was tasked with finding a way to achieve this.



The CFO's List of IT Support Requirements

A comprehensive IT support solution would include the following:

- 24/7 monitoring and support of critical assets (servers, e-mail, firewalls, data backup systems, etc.) so as to ensure minimal productivity loss due to downtime.
- Timely and effective resolutions to service requests to keep workers productive.
- Utilization of industry best practices to align IT processes with the needs of the business—both now, and for the future, giving management comfort that a sound IT strategy would be in place to support growth.

Desired Outcome for IT Support

The CFO had to find a practical way to meet the IT support requirements of a growing, 25+ person company. He also needed to ensure the creation of a longer-term IT strategy, and that risk-mitigation and cost-containment were not ignored.

Put simply, the desired outcome was to have the professional level of support and leadership afforded by a fully-staffed IT department, without the significant cost.

Attempted Approach: Hiring A Full Time IT Manager

With 25+ workers now dependent on the network, the cost of downtime had risen to the point where a reactive approach was no longer effective. Moreover, the impact of lost revenue and negative brand recognition that results from downtime had the potential to cause a significant impact on the company.

The proposed solution was to hire a full time IT manager.

Interfering Factors in Hiring Internal IT

This process proved challenging, however. With no internal IT on staff, selecting the best candidate was no easy task—How could a team of non-IT people determine if a given candidate had the needed technical skills?

A selection had to be made in spite of the team's inexperience with hiring for IT, so a candidate was chosen to assume responsibility for the management and support of the infrastructure (servers, workstations, firewall, security applications and data backup), the line of business applications and the phone system. The responsibilities of the new IT hire also included the longer-term strategy and the planning aspect of the business side of IT management.

For a time, this approach proved effective, although considerably more costly than the previous part-time consultants. Continued growth uncovered deficiencies with this approach, however. With just one person in charge of the entire IT infrastructure, the company was exposing itself to significant risk should this person become unavailable. Further compounding the problem was that this one person's skill set was incapable of keeping up with the demands created by the growth and increasing complexity of the company's IT infrastructure.



Economic Consequences

After more than a year with the full time employee on staff, the true cost of this approach became evident. This presented itself in a variety of ways; the first was that the skill set of someone willing to work in a relatively small environment void of extensive learning opportunities was rather limited. More extensive skills were available of course; however, they were only available for a price-premium that the company could not justify.

The second cost was all the extras that go along with the salary of a full time employee. By the time the company factored in the cost for recruiting, training, benefits, cost of facilities (desk/phone/PC/BlackBerry, etc.), bonuses, sickness and vacation, and occasional outside support, the all-in cost for a \$60,000 salary ballooned to well over \$85,000 per year.

Compounding this problem was that this employee turned out to be less skilled than originally thought. This was evidenced by his scattered approach to procurement and “customized” configuration habits. The end result was a network with far more downtime that was reasonable. With 50+ users on the network, the cost of this downtime easily matched his salary in terms of lost productivity for staff.

Once again, the CEO requested the risk of “one person with all the knowledge” be mitigated, and that it be done in such a way as to avoid the IT cost explosion that goes hand in hand with the ever-expanding IT departments he’d seen occur at previous companies.

A Day in the Life (with Dyrand’s Allied Insight IT Support)

Living with the New Approach

With Dyrand’s *Allied Insight IT Support System* in place, and the Network Operations Center proactively monitoring key IT assets (servers, firewalls, security applications, e-mail, data backups) 24/7 to ensure they are available and delivering services, the company’s IT landscape improved considerably. Should a user require support, they now have direct access to a fully staffed enterprise-level service desk, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays, with after-hours emergency support also available. Within 90 days of having Dyrand assume management of the network, the company experienced significantly less downtime and far better user support.

Total Cost of Internal IT:

- Recruiting
- Training
- Salary
- Benefits
- Sickness
- Vacation
- Cost of Facilities
 - Desk
 - Phone
 - PC
 - BlackBerry
 - Etc.
- Occasional Outside Support

\$80 000 / year




What Makes *Allied Insight* Work So Well?

To obtain support, a user simply submits a service request via e-mail, a web portal, or the telephone. Once a support ticket has been opened, one of Dyrand's team of experts simply contacts the user and then remotely accesses the user's PC to resolve the issue. Unlike an external consultant, Dyrand's team is armed with a full report of each PC's hardware and software configuration, as well as a complete report of its service history. With this data in hand, support requests are most often resolved on the first call—much to the delight of the user.

While day-to-day support is critical, the company also benefits from having ready access to a virtual Chief Information Officer (vCIO) to guide them in the area of longer term IT strategy, budgeting, and planning. This fact, combined with the team-based service desk support gives the CEO great comfort in knowing that the knowledge around his company's IT infrastructure is now well documented and no longer stored in the head of just one person.

Economic Rewards of Choosing *Allied Insight*

The entire *Allied Insight IT Support Solution* provides a much higher level of support, management, and guidance than could have been obtained by a single person, for a cost that comes in at about 65% of the fully loaded cost of the single employee. Better still, the cost of using Dyrand scales in close relation to the growth of the company—as opposed to the significant step up that would have been incurred with the hiring of a second IT person. 

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