iTRP

Tallinn University of Technology

Supports over 2,000 faculty & staff, and
more than 14,000 students with ITRP

Industry
- Higher Education

Geography
- Tallinn, Estonia

Challenges
- Supporting an end-user community that changes rapidly, brings its own devices, and acquires much of its specialized hard- and software without involvement of the IT support organization
- Maintaining low-threshold accessibility of help desk while ensuring all requests are registered
- Handling extreme peaks in demand for support at the start of each semester
- Multi-languages support for international students

Solution
- Unknown requesters are automatically registered when they initially contact the help desk via email
- All requests submitted via email and Self Service are registered automatically
- Use ITRP's unique Service Desk console to speed up the manual registration of requests and requesters

Results
- All requests are now registered in ITRP
- The help desk is able to track the progress of the requests that they have passed to a 2nd line team
- Management is able to analyze the request information to identify improvement opportunities
- TUT has a sound foundation for implementing additional support processes as needed without having to acquire additional software licenses

The University

Tallinn University of Technology (TUT) is the flagship of Estonian engineering and technical education. It offers Bachelor's, Master's and PhD programs, and conducts research in technological, natural, exact, social and health sciences. The university has cooperation projects with the top 10 universities (Stanford, Berkeley, MIT, Harvard, etc.), scientists and companies (e.g. Microsoft, Google, IBM, ABB, etc.) of the world. TUT also has a representative office in Silicon Valley, USA. Its campus includes a science park that is home to about 150 high-tech companies, including Skype.

The Challenges

As soon as students set foot on the 135-acre campus of TUT, they can access its wireless network. It is free of charge and does not require a password. If they can't figure out how to connect, they can just walk over to the help desk. They can also call the help desk or send an email whenever they have an IT-related question. To an outsider this may seem like the ultimate bring-your-own-device (BYOD) experiment. The variety of devices that the students bring with them is amazing. And then there are the research scientists who often bring highly specialized hard- and software with them.

This is where the challenges start for TUT's IT support staff. They support more than 14,000 students, over 2,000 faculty and staff, and basically anyone who visits the campus. Many of these people, such as visiting professors, are not known to the service desk analysts when they first ask for help. There are also nearly 1,000 international students from over 65 countries who do not speak Estonian. Needless to say, this environment offers some challenges that are not normally found in a corporate setting.

Before ITRP

In the past, most requests were not registered at the help desk. When the assistance of a second line team was required, the help desk would send them an email. It was difficult to track the progress of the requests and it was unclear where most time was spent and by which teams.

Part of the reason why requests were not registered was the additional administrative overhead that this represented. At the start of a new academic year, and essentially at the beginning of each semester, the workload at the help desk peaks and there simply was no time to manually register each request and the contact details of each requester.

"Managers often underestimate the importance of giving their people the right tools. If a tool makes it easier for them to be successful, they will get more fulfillment out of their work. ITRP's user interface is so thoughtfully designed; it helps our support staff to be more efficient and more effective. And that makes everybody happier."

Janno Viiding
Head of Information Technology Services, Tallinn University of Technology

"Because we did not have to explain to consultants how many status options and priority levels we needed, we could immediately focus on the definition of our service catalog. Rather than starting with just an incident management solution, we were tracking our service levels from the moment we took ITRP into production."

Simar Tuula
Help Desk Manager, Tallinn University of Technology

The Need to Improve

At the same time it was clear that, in order to improve the quality and efficiency of the support process, the requests needed to be registered. That would make it possible to track each request and it would provide the management information needed to pinpoint improvement opportunities.

The question was how a more formalized approach to support could be achieved without compromising the accessibility of the help desk. It had to remain possible for people to walk up, call in, or send an email to submit a request. Ideally the new method would also be faster than the old system of passing requests via email between the different TUT support teams.

The Selection

After considering several ITSM toolbox applications, Elion showed ITRP to Janno Viiding, Head of Technology Services at TUT. "It was the Service Desk console of ITRP that caught my attention," recalls Janno Viiding "This unique feature makes it possible for our help desk staff to register requests more quickly and more intelligently."

Another feature that really helped is the ability to convert inbound email into requests even when the requester is not yet registered in ITRP. "Today, when a new TUT student sends an email to the help desk, a new Person record gets generated and it is automatically linked to a new request that contains the information from the email," explains Simar Tuula, Help Desk Manager at TUT.

Self Service

After a student has sent an email to the help desk for the first time, an email is returned with a hyperlink. Clicking on this link takes the student to the Self Service login screen, where the signup process can be completed by setting a password. From that moment onwards the student can use Self Service to of the progress the request, obtain answers to FAQs, and submit additional requests.

Because faculty and staff log into the TUT network, they do not need a password to access Self Service. The single sign-on feature of ITRP was activated to integrate with the Active Directory Federation Services (AD FS) environment of TUT. This makes it easy for all faculty and staff to submit and track their requests. They can also use Self Service to provide their approval for planned changes.

Self Service provides an additional avenue through which requests can be submitted to the TUT help desk. Self Service asks end-users some questions about their request so that they can be handled more efficiently. Thanks to this additional information, such requests can often be routed directly to the correct support team, or ITRP can automatically start collecting the necessary approvals.

Because Self Service is multilingual, end-users can use it in their preferred language. The options that TUT makes available to the end-users can also be translated so that they show up in the correct language for each end-user.

"Whenever TUT needs some assistance with their ITRP account, they register a request in ITRP and pass it to Elion. If we need help from the ITRP Institute, we can pass this request on to them. This makes it all so much easier.

"In the background ITRP keeps track of the SLAs. We can see if we meet our targets for TUT, and we can see if the ITRP Institute is doing the same for us."

Kristjan Kuru
IT consulting projects manager,
Elion

About Tallinn University of Technology

Tallinn University of Technology (TUT) was established by the Estonian Engineering Society on September 17, 1918 in Tallinn, Estonia. Over 2,000 people work at TUT, including 133 professors. TUT is a public university. It encompasses 8 faculties and 10 institutions, all housed in the 72 buildings of TUT's 135-acre campus.

TUT has cooperation agreements with 40 leading universities from Europe, Asia and the United States. For more information visit: www.tut.ee.

About ITRP Institute

The ITRP Institute is the provider of the IT Resource Planning (ITRP) service.

ITRP is a cloud-based IT service management application service for organizations with mature process requirements and a sincere desire to improve their productivity.

The sole objective of the ITRP Institute is to provide an IT service management service that is fast, intuitive and reliable, and which provides IT managers with the information they need to continuously optimize the allocation of IT resources to the areas where they contribute most to the business.

Founded in 2010, the ITRP Institute is headquartered in Palo Alto, California. For more information visit: www.itrp.com.

Manual Registration

When end-users prefer to call or walk up to the help desk rather than sending an email or using Self Service, there is still a quick way to register their requests. Even when the requester is not yet registered, ITRP's unique Service Desk console gives analysts the ability to quickly add a requester's contact details without leaving the console.

Implementation

Elion was the ITRP partner that provided TUT the ITSM experience and the system integration knowledge for this implementation. A two-day workshop was used to prepare TUT's ITRP environment. The first day started with a training of the project team in the basic use of ITRP. After lunch, the configuration of TUT's ITRP account, which was set up in advance by Elion, was reviewed with the project team and adjusted as needed.

"The second day was spent on the setup of our service catalog and the SLAs," says Simar Tuula. "Actually, SLA tracking was not one of our requirements. We just wanted an IT service management application that was both fast and easy to use. But we also wanted to make sure that we would be able to increase our ITIL maturity without having to replace our ITSM solution. We have certainly exceeded our initial goals with ITRP and have already started to work with standard changes."

Integrations

"Another thing that really helped us is the ease with which ITRP integrates with our on-premise tools," says Simar Tuula. "For example, we have already integrated ITRP with Microsoft System Center Operations Manager (SCOM) and with Nagios."

The SCOM integration was built by Elion using the ITRP's Import API. It ensures that the information about TUT's workstations and the software that is installed on them remains up to date by automatically importing the discovered changes into the CMDB.

Nagios is used to monitor the network and server infrastructure. When an actionable event is raised, Nagios passes it to ITRP where it is automatically prioritized and assigned to the correct team. "We used the Mail API to build this integration, which was surprisingly easy," says Simar Tuula.

Flexibility

Kristjan Kuru concludes: "At Elion we have a lot of experience with a variety of ITSM applications. This was our first ITRP project. Implementing for a university is different in many small ways from a typical corporate deployment. Initially I was worried that ITRP might not be flexible enough to meet all of these requirements. Not being a toolbox, ITRP does not require any customization, but that also means that a developer cannot go in there to change things.

"It turned out that we did not need to do any customization. We were able to meet all of TUT's requirements using the standard features of ITRP. It is surprising how well and how elegantly ITRP adjusts itself to the organization that is using it."