

CASE STUDY: VIRGIN TRAINS EUC MANAGED SERVICE

Smarter Working meets Smarter Support

THE CUSTOMER

Virgin Trains had deployed a radical new end-user computing platform. The project, dubbed “Smarter Working”, intended to achieve exactly that; to deliver smarter, more efficient ways for staff to work, collaborate and naturally boost productivity. In order to fully realise the benefits introduced by the Smarter Working initiative, Virgin Trains understood that they would also need to focus on how they could best support their users to ensure that the new tools remained functional and the integrity of the platform was maintained.

Virgin Trains has operated the West Coast Main Line franchise since 1997. Operating high speed train services between London and Scotland, today more than 35 million passengers choose to travel with them every year.



At a Glance

Industry

UK Rail Operator

Key Challenges

Poor end-user computing (EUC) support inhibiting user productivity and damaging the perception of IT. With a revolutionary new EUC platform delivered, a superior support service was necessary to keep tools and users operational.

The Solution

A new EUC Managed Service was implemented to maximise the benefits of their Smarter Working platform and streamline processes to make support more relevant to their modern working environment.

Results

- Proactive EUC management
- Responsive, user-centric approach
- Enhanced remote user engagement
- Continual innovation

“Spherica fits perfectly with our culture and has become the face of IT at Virgin Trains – that’s how much we trust them to deliver. The way they drive innovation and efficiency in everything they do is why we turn to them time and again”.

Dean Underwood
Head of IT Services, Virgin Trains

THE CHALLENGE

Prior to the Smarter Working initiative, support for end-user computing (EUC) was outsourced to a global Systems Integrator. When a call for support was received, issues surrounding ownership of a fix and approach to resolution often confused users and created delays.

Poor success rates on fixes were also borne out by high call volumes for similar or repeat calls and long-term analysis only illustrated upward trends.

All too often support teams were reverting to machine rebuilds to resolve seemingly simple problems. In 12 months, more than 180 rebuilds took place resulting

in substantial lost working time. Although an easy fix for support personnel, this 'nuclear option' would create significant disruption to a user, not to mention the negative impact on productivity. This was only compounded by the high numbers of machines also being provisioned incorrectly at point of build or rebuild.

Further frustrations surrounded the amount of application reinstalls taking place – 297 in total during a 12-month period. Similarly, reactive delay-ridden responses to requests for new applications, because of the time needed to package them, was also taking its toll. Likewise, lack of support for new devices entering the workplace, such as Apple Macs, continued to make the IT function appear both incapable and obstructive.

With nearly 4,000 users, who are largely mobile workers, Virgin Trains has a complex user base. Support hinged on remote diagnosis and remediation and because of the size of the support provider, it was not uncommon for users to speak to various call centres around the world in pursuit of help.

Cumulatively, this amounted to a costly, cumbersome and inconsistent approach to support for EUC.

It was clear to Virgin Trains that in order to apply the principles of Smarter Working to the shortcomings of their EUC support, they would need a much more proactive service.

The aspiration for Smarter Working was that it would deliver a continual stream of innovation, with the user experience being at the forefront of future technology adoption.



THE SOLUTION

Having already deployed the Smarter Working platform for Virgin Trains, it was only logical that they turned to long-term partner Spherica to provide a more relevant support service to its users.

With these challenges in mind, Spherica proposed an EUC Managed Service, composed of proactive and reactive services, designed to keep the platform functioning as it should and to rapidly resolve incidents

At the heart of Spherica's managed service is the belief that if problems are analysed accurately, source issues can be explored with the subsequent benefits of a fix amplified across the entire user community.

The objective of the service was to significantly reduce the number of EUC-related support calls over time and reinvigorate user confidence.

Through core service streams covering Desktop Operating System (OS) patching, Incident Resolution and Environmental Systems Maintenance, many of the potential day-to-day issues are tackled through a combination of prevention and remediation. Spherica also proposed that continual service improvement be a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) in Virgin Trains' measurement of the service. The aspiration for Smarter

Working was that it would deliver a continual stream of innovation, with the user experience being at the forefront of future technology adoption. Quarterly innovation meetings now take place to propose new areas where technology can be applied to fix common issues, accelerate response times and reduce service desk calls.

Further innovation is built into the managed service by way of Proactive Application Management. Application packaging is now an ongoing service, enabling Virgin Trains to overcome the CAPEX headache which in-part accounted for some of the delays experienced in deploying new applications. A rolling programme, it helps IT get ahead of the users by regularly reviewing key application roadmaps and pre-packaging new releases in advance of business demand.

Similarly, scheduled site visits are a cornerstone of the service. As such, Spherica visits every Virgin Trains location, including monthly visits to major stations and quarterly visits for all other stations. It serves as an important in-person presence from IT and gives users the chance to ask questions and resolve issues that they might otherwise not trouble the service desk with.

Importantly, Spherica manages the complete service through ServiceNow, Virgin Trains' IT Service Management platform, to tightly integrate with all other functions of the IT team.



THE RESULT

The service has really helped to raise the bar for the support users can expect from IT. For the vast majority, IT is no longer a faceless organisation, but real people determined and empowered to make a difference to the user experience.

"Spherica play a massive part in how our users see IT. They try to do as many things as they can to help me and my organisation solve key problems and improve on the service we deliver. Even when it's not necessarily their responsibility, they go out of their way to offer advice and solutions, which is priceless to us", states Dean Underwood, Head of IT Services at Virgin Trains.

The numbers prove the difference the service has made, significantly reducing EUC-related support calls into the service desk. What's more, through the ServiceNow platform, Virgin Trains can monitor the perception of the Spherica service amongst its users:

"Spherica has earned a Net Promoter Score of 65", adds Underwood. "This puts them only five behind Apple who is seen as an industry leader and is a strong testament of how our users are viewing their service".

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