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AL FARDAN EXCHANGE INVESTED IN IT HELPDESK
LAST YEAR, AND IS NOW REAPING THE BENEFITS IN
COST SAVINGS AND BETTER CUSTOMER SERVICE



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“ We now have solid facts we can present to management.”

Shafique Ibrahim,
group head of IT at Al
Fardan Group

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Al Fardan Exchange invested to streamline its IT helpdesk with ManageEngine last year, and is now reaping the benefits in cost savings, faster services to customers

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Regional organisations are increasingly leveraging the cloud to evolve their own digital transformation journeys, with help from a growing number of cloud service providers

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Few believe that hybrid cloud is a temporary pause on the way to the cloud. Indeed, hybrid cloud will be a fixture of enterprise IT ecosystem for years to come



Case study

Engine of growth

Al Fardan Exchange invested to streamline its IT helpdesk last year, and is now reaping the benefits in cost savings, faster services to customers and a more intuitive and user friendly IT support system

Al Fardan Exchange faced a daunting challenge managing its IT helpdesk, due to the large number of users and the complexity of managing the IT environment of a busy financial institution.

For a long time, Al Fardan's helpdesk set-up was the kind of IT support a lot of people are familiar with - a process based on sending an email to IT support and wait for them to respond. For Al Fardan, the challenge was the large volume of tickets raised by the over 800 users, with a large number of them urgent.

Such a system has obvious limitations.

For one, someone has to retrieve and open those emails before an action is taken. That process is more often than not, based more on an IT member's convenience or whether they feel it's important enough or whether they should wait for someone else to pick it up.

Shafique Ibrahim and his IT team at Al Fardan Group sought a solution that could restructure the helpdesk process.

Ibrahim is the group head of IT at Al Fardan Group, parent company of Al Fardan Exchange.

The solution came in the form of ServiceDesk Plus from ManageEngine, a web-based, IT helpdesk software with integrated asset and project management built on an ITIL framework.

ManageEngine's ServiceDesk Plus is an ITIL-ready helpdesk solution that has provided the business with greater visibility, central management and control in dealing with IT issues to ensure that businesses suffers no downtime, says Ibrahim.

Nirmal Manoharan, regional director of sales,

ManageEngine says ServiceDesk Plus has

always been the most important tool for any IT organisation,

and it is becoming increasingly

important for IT management for all

types of enterprises. "Given that there are a lot of technologies coming into IT on a regular basis, it's becoming even more important for enterprises to adopt better ways of integrating all the requests or any of the issues they face in their IT environment."

BUSINESS NEED

The previous system consisted of a pre-configured email used by all the team members, which comes in to IT support and is then distributed to all

35%
reduction in
raised tickets

“This [solution] is highly appreciated by the management because they can see the exact figures in customer service improvement.”

SHAFIQUE IBRAHIM AL FARDAN GROUP HEAD OF IT

AL FARDAN EXCHANGE CASE STUDY SUMMARY

Objective

Al Fardan Exchange faced a daunting challenge managing its IT helpdesk, due to the large number of users and the volume of tickets raised. The IT team at Al Fardan Group then sought a solution that could restructure and streamline the helpdesk process.

Solution

The solution came in the form of ServiceDesk Plus from ManageEngine, a web-based, IT helpdesk software with integrated asset and project management built on an ITIL framework.

Results

ManageEngine's ServiceDesk Plus is an ITIL-ready helpdesk application that has provided the business with great visibility and central control in dealing with IT issues to ensure that businesses suffers no downtime.

the team members. The relevant person was expected to pick it up. The problem with that is that at certain times, an IT support member would wait for the other to pick it up. Or one would be busy and would hope the other person would pick it up. This simple case illustrates how an issue that could be resolved within five minutes would end up hanging for a few days just because no one paid attention to it, says Ibrahim.

ServiceDesk however motivates the team because the more tasks one picks up, the more it reflects on their performance results. Further the periodical job evaluations are now much more transparent and not based on assumptions.

ManageEngine was an easy choice to make, says Ibrahim. "It's easy to deploy, easy to use and user friendly." It's also customisable, and the IT team can now easily manage it by itself, says Ibrahim. "Now I'm not really dependent on day to day customisation on the vendor, we can do ourselves."

ServiceDesk is also a web interface, so there's no need to integrate agents on endpoints, and anybody can log in from anywhere.

Al Fardan considered two deployment options, cloud and on-premises. "Based on the strength of the IT team and the infrastructure that we have, it made more sense for us to adopt an in-house solution. We have a fully virtual-

ised environment, so it was relatively easy to introduce a new server for it," Ibrahim explains.

The deployment took three months, which included installing the software as well as on-boarding everyone. Defining the final processes took another two months.

Ibrahim says IT team members and end users were trained on ServiceDesk because the resolution of every case is posted on the system allowing users to identify the outcome. Subsequently, they are able to resolve some of the minor issue themselves.

ServiceDesk has also allowed Al Fardan identify its own weaknesses, says Ibrahim. Certain issues were recurring and would be solved without identifying the root cause of the problem. The reports ServiceDesk Plus generates allows Ibrahim and his team pinpoint exactly why a case would keep repeating itself. "Whether IT is unable to resolve an issue correctly, or there was a problem with the software or an endpoint, it's now easier to identified

issues and their cause and resolve them conclusively."

Cost reduction has been an immediate and welcome result of implementation of ServiceDesk

Plus. "We were able to reduce the cost because the number of cases that were being raised has gone down," says Ibrahim.

The first reason for this was that employees would simply send emails with lit-



Automation of the IT helpdesk simplifies what was once a time-consuming and complex process.

“Earlier all we had to do was deliver IT services to the branches; now I have to go beyond the branch and directly to the customer.”

tle thought. Now users are much more careful when raising tickets because if the same person raises tickets continuously, then it's easier to identify the specific employee and flag them.

The tickets raised are also used for external contracts with service providers as per the annual maintenance

contracts (AMCs). One of the things Al Fardan did was identify areas where training of team members was fitting before tickets are raised with third parties. This has to be paid for every year. "We realised that we do not have to send all these tickets to contractors when we could just train our people on some of

50%
reduction in the
cost of
AMCs



†Ibrahim: You might spend millions of dollars to build your security infrastructure, but it only takes a few hundred dollars to break it.

the basics. We did that and were able to reduce by 50% the cost of our annual maintenance contracts last year.”

With reduced time for support, IT can focus on other areas, says Ibrahim.

The other benefit is the ability to measure the performance of the team members and enhance the processes currently in place.

The ManageEngine solution is now used by other departments such as operations. Though they do not have a ManageEngine Interface in place, whenever they

send an email ticket it goes to ManageEngine Service-Desk Plus and is registered. “All the cases that were coming through email have now being streamlined through ManageEngine. These other departments have also reduced their tickets by 30-40% because the human errors that were happening before and were not being monitored are monitored now.”

IT users have also had their communication process simplified. They previously had to send multiple emails, ending in multiple commu-

nications. This has been reduced to a single interface. “They can pinpoint the exact case they have, register it and then it’s then routed to the respective IT helpdesk staff,” Ibrahim explains.

Secondly, end users can track the status of their cases. Previously, they would send an email and hope someone has picked it up. But now, the ServiceDesk interface allows them to see if their case has been picked up, whether progress is being made and then they can escalate it if they feel it’s necessary. Finally, they

get to know when their case has been closed with full visibility of the entire process, explains Ibrahim.

BUSINESS BENEFIT

During day to day operations of the exchange, a large number of cancellations of transactions or request for amendments by customers are customary. These have to be routed to helpdesk to a team that handles such requests. These are customer transactions that have to be responded to quickly while the customer waits. This would

THE VENDOR

ManageEngine is the IT management division of Zoho Corporation. It offers enterprise IT management software and network management frameworks to enterprises. It has more than 90 tools to help manage enterprises’ IT operations, including networks, servers, applications, service desk, active directory, security, desktops, and mobile devices. ManageEngine IT tools are built with contextual integration to make sure organisations can manage their IT together.

typically happen through email and could take a lot of time. ServiceDesk takes care of these requests, allowing Al Fardan to reduce the turnaround time for those critical business services. "This ultimately helps the business because the more you address the issues on time, the more you are helping the business to run," Ibrahim says.

As head of IT Ibrahim has access to a dashboard that offers a more simplified view. "I can now see how many tickets are being opened, how many have been escalated, how many tickets have not been attended. Now I do not have to look at all the cases raised; I can just look at the escalations, making my job that much easier."

Moreover, performance is now easier to measure, with matrix for the individual as well as the entire department. It's also easier to evaluate individual performance. Earlier, if anything went wrong, the blame would fall on the entire IT department. But now, it's easy to address specific concern to any individual in the team.

"[All] IT management gets are the KPIs, which help me to sit with management on a dashboard and go through all the cases we see and this is how we resolve them. We can measure it and this is what management values," he adds.

Previously, it was also difficult to justify to management what IT was putting all its efforts on as there was no effective means to measure output.

"We now have solid facts



↑ The more you address the issues on time, the more you are helping the business to run with faster and better customer service.

we can present to management instead of just having a theoretical conversation. This is highly appreciated by the management because they can see the exact figures in customer service improvement," says Ibrahim.

This May, Al Fardan carried out a survey among its IT users to evaluate the performance of the ServiceDesk environment. Each time a case is solved, an email is sent to users requesting them to rate the performance, knowing too well that IT is a popular target of employee angst. "To my pleasant surprise, we received 99% satisfaction rate."

For a long time, IT has been regarded as a backbone on which the business runs. But IT is a business enabler, Ibrahim observes. Increased

“ We have seen the number of attacks that show on our logs reduce, simply because people have stopped clicking on malicious links.”

reliance on IT by the business becomes both a challenge and an opportunity, he says.

"The challenge has been to describe exactly what IT does. This is where ServiceDesk comes in, pinpointing our daily tasks," Ibrahim says.

Every transaction is carried out on the system—there are no more manual processes, notes Ibrahim. This translates into total reliability on IT. "So we have to ensure absolute uptime and performance," he adds.

Customer expectations are changing and IT is at the

heart of enabling the business to respond.

Customers have had to be physically present at the branch for any type of transaction, Ibrahim observes. "Things have changed now. Customers want everything on their personal devices. Earlier all we had to do was deliver IT services to the branches; now I have to go beyond the branch and directly to the customer. The IT platform facilitates that."

SECURITY

Security is an ongoing chal-

CUSTOMER

Headquartered in Qatar, Al Fardan Group has established itself as one of the leading family-owned conglomerates in the region for the past 60 years. The organisation operates a diverse portfolio which has grown to include ventures in jewellery, exchange, property development, automotive, hospitality, marine and investment.

lence, says Ibrahim. "Although Al Fardan has in place all the necessary security platforms, from firewalls to endpoint security, we have realised this is increasingly not enough. With increased ransomware and other targeted attacks, hackers do not waste time targeting the network anymore. They are now using phishing attacks leveraging IT users, a more effective target as far as they are concerned."

"You might spend millions of dollars to build your security infrastructure, but it only takes a few hundred dollars to break it. Ultimately, the best firewall or AV may

not account for much," says Ibrahim.

Al Fardan Exchange has carried out an exercise to get all employees trained on the basics in security. This includes how to identify phishing emails, spam etc. "Since then, we have seen the number of attacks showing up on our logs reduce, simply because people have stopped clicking on malicious links."

Security is under constant evaluation at Al Fardan, says Ibrahim. "We have considered ManageEngine Log360 which is a SIEM solution to improve how we monitor, get alerted and take quick remedial action."



Manoharan: Most competitors do not have the breadth of tools that we have, and even if they do, the integration is not as strong as we have.

Ibrahim says Al Fardan is looking at ManageEngine Desktop Central for future deployment. Desktop Central is an integrated desktop and mobile device management software that helps in managing servers, laptops, desktops, smartphones, and tablets from a central location.

The contextual integration between Desktop Central and ServiceDesk Plus

is strong, says Manoharan. "This is a key differentiator compared to other competitor. Most competitors do not have the breadth of tools that we have, and even if they do, the integration is not as strong as we have."

And ManageEngine is ready as enterprises migrate their applications to cloud. ServiceDesk Plus already has been available in two flavours, cloud or on-premise, for the past five years.

"Our key differentiator is that our cloud and on-prem applications both are largely the same solution. The little gap that exists will be bridged soon," says Manoharan.

This similarity is crucial from a user experience perspective, says Manoharan. "When enterprises are migrating from an on-premise platform to the cloud, the differences may be so stark as to render the user experience a challenge. For ManageEngine, the switch to cloud is much more seamless between the two delivery models," Manoharan says.



The ManageEngine ServiceDesk Plus interface automates a lot of previously manual helpdesk processes.