

SUNY Buffalo State Takes IT Operations to a New Level

BSC consolidates ticketing, resource planning, asset tracking, change management and project management on one platform

Consolidating multiple systems into a single system is often a significant benefit. That was certainly the case for Buffalo State College (BSC) of the State University of New York System. BSC just went live with a powerful new consolidated service catalog and ticketing solution in July, 2017.

The new solution, by TeamDynamix (TDX), is a cloud-based work management system designed to help service organizations at colleges and universities align, collaborate, and simplify their work management processes. Almost immediately, the difficulties and issues experienced with the institution's previous IT service management virtually disappeared.

"Prior to TDX, we had a hodgepodge of systems that were thrown together to accomplish different tasks," says Jason Welborn, manager of the university's Resources for Information, Technology, and Education (RITE) Support Desk.

EASE OF USE: ADDING TIME BACK TO THE DAY

The result, he says, was a whole list of issues and problems. "For one thing, our ticketing system was slow and inefficient. Completing a single workflow step would take a full minute where we would be literally sitting there staring at the screen before it would move on to the next step or task."

Also, the system was client-based

instead of web-based. "You couldn't just access it through a web site," says Welborn. "You had to be at your computer and have the software installed on your computer to use it. That was particularly limiting to the technicians who go out in the field and aren't always sitting at their desk. If they had to look up some information about a ticket, they weren't always able to do that since it wasn't web-based."

Another issue was that their previous system ran only on PCs. As many of BSC's technicians had Macs, they had to make special arrangements to use a PC whenever they needed to run the system. There was also no way for customers, clients, or stakeholders to interact with the previous system. "That was a huge disadvantage," Welborn says. "With TDX, clients can go to the self-service portal and request a number of different things from the service catalog. Stakeholders who need to make decisions on whether a project is going to move forward can interact through TDX. It's opened up a lot of possibilities."

EASY TO DESIGN AND PUBLISH TO THE SERVICE PORTAL

Previously, the IT group was also using a third product to build web forms for the



different types of services people were requesting. “We created a number of service request forms,” says Welborn. “A user could go to a web site and fill out the form and request services, but that was time-consuming for us at the Help Desk because if a user submitted a ticket through the form builder software, we had to take that information, and copy and paste it into a ticket.”

Despite these issues, the staff at BSC only decided to consider an alternative system when their current licensing agreement for a work management system was about to end. Over a two- or three-month period, BSC evaluated three different systems, including TDX. “Our evaluation team got excited about TeamDynamix fairly early on in the process,” he says.

Today, the problem and issues that Buffalo State’s service organization was having with their old system has pretty much gone away. “With TeamDynamix,” says Welborn, “the difference is night and day.”

Dave Marcinkowski, Project Manager from RITE’s Technology Planning and Outreach Team, agrees. “TDX is a powerful system that allows the requester to see his/her request and the action that has been taken to address it. It also gives RITE the ability to better organize and improve existing services,” he says.

ITSM AND PPM ON ONE PLATFORM

One of the things Welborn and others particularly like about the TDX solution is the focus on higher ed. The biggest plus in favor of going with TDX, though, says both Welborn and Khaleel Gathers, Project Manager, is it offers service management and project management

in a single platform. “The fact that TDX has the ability to connect the project management process with the service request process has been huge for us,” says Gathers.

The service management team at Buffalo State had been working on establishing a formal governance process for project requests. “We were using a home-grown system, which was serving its purpose, but was very limited,” says Gathers.

“It was really just a Word doc,” says Welborn. “Basically, somebody would just fill out a form with information regarding the request and email it to a SharePoint site. We’d get Alerts from the SharePoint site, but we didn’t have a way to formally move the request along. So it was just sitting in a document library waiting for people to input information. Somebody had to literally go around and say, okay, did everybody input their information so that we can have the executive committee look at it and make a decision as to whether we’re going to move forward with the project?”

The new system provides considerably greater flexibility. “With TDX, we have the ability to collect the information on a web-based form, which is part of our service catalog now, and the ability to solicit that information and feedback via Alerts. TDX automates, integrates, and facilitates the entire process—from the request, to the project management, and then to the planning and execution of the project. For us, that’s huge,” says Gathers.

Among its other attributes, simply consolidating on one system was a major benefit. “Before TDX, we had three or four different systems we were using,” says Welborn. “Now with TDX, we’re able to do all that with one system.”

SHARING KNOWLEDGE FOR FASTER RESOLUTION

“One of the things we’ve done to expedite resolution is to develop an internal knowledge base for technicians. If someone doesn’t know how to do something or has a specific question, we’ll publish an article in the internal knowledge base that our technicians can refer back to. We also have a best practices guide that we put together. That’s been really helpful during the transition.” The TDX knowledge base is flexible by design, allowing for both internal and externally published articles. All material is highly searchable and tagged. Users can comment and contribute as well, helping to keep all information current.

IMPROVING IT MATURITY

Both Welborn and Gathers agree the support they’ve received from TDX has been outstanding. Initially, as part of the evaluation process, TDX set up a testing environment. “We were able to try it out and play around with it. That’s really what got us excited about it,” says Welborn.

Gathers says the team was helpful. “The TDX implementation team has been amazing in terms of assisting and helping our team get started. Their accessibility has been great. And their willingness to help us through our issues as well as their feedback and response time have been first rate. It’s like having your own private consulting team.”

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