Dominican University

Summary

With a relatively small IT department and thousands of student, faculty and alumni to support, Dominican University needed an affordable replacement for its outdated home-grown support software. Switching to Deskpro reduced average ticket resolution time from 70 days to just 3 days.

The Challenge

Dominican University's IT department provides support for over 25,000 users: that includes 4,000 students, faculty and staff, plus many thousands of alumni, with a relatively small core IT staff of under 20. The legacy help desk system had been in place for over 10 years, and was failing to meet their needs.

First-level support was run by student employees, but the poor usability of the legacy helpdesk made it too hard to train multiple students to handle the system. In addition, tracking cases was a pain for support agents and end users alike. Alex Oquendo, Manager of IT Student Workforce at Dominican, explains:

"There was no interaction between an agent and a user once a ticket was created and assigned. Anytime someone wanted a status on a case, you had to chase down the agent to get an update."

Alex knew that Dominican needed to find a suitable replacement that would scale well to their requirements. When it came to evaluating replacement products, the pricing structures of many vendors proved uneconomic due to the large number of student agents on the helpdesk.

"We've had some issues with other vendors and the stability of their platforms. A key requirement was to have the new help desk hosted as an on-premise solution."

A major driver of the need to host on campus was the need to assure data protection and student privacy. The Dominican support center handles both student records covered by the Family Education Rights Protection Act and medical records covered by Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. "We pay real close attention to compliance," as sending data to third-party servers would risk a loss of federal funding or even lawsuits

The Solution

In early 2015, Dominican settled on a 200-agent Deskpro On-Premise installation, allowing plenty of seats for student support staff. The total number of user accounts in the system, including alumni, is now well over 25,000.

About

Founded in 1901, Dominican University is considered a premier Catholic university and is ranked among the top master's-level universities in the Midwest. Its scenic 37-acre main campus is located in River Forest, near Chicago.

"Deskpro has been amazing for us, we've gone from an average of over 70-plus days to close a case to a little over 3 days now."

Alex Oquendo
Manager of IT Student Workforce,
Dominican University

Deskpro

For Dominican University, data security really matters. Deskpro's On-Premise deployment allows them to assure data protection and student privacy and manage scalability. While other vendors with On-Premise solutions were considered, the combination of affordable pricing and configuration flexibility made Deskpro the winning option for Adam Smeets, Director of University Information Systems, and his team.

"We've grown into Deskpro, and it gives us more opportunities to build out things like the service catalogue in a way that works for us, rather than the only way which is provided by another product."

While some products considered offered canned versions of frameworks like ITIL, Adam was happier with Deskpro's customizability as the IT team found it flexible enough to build in a way that suits Dominican. With full access to the PHP source code, and a flexible template system, it gave Dominican the ability to make modifications, tweaks or updates if they needed to."

⟩ The Benefits

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This dramatic improvement is down to the way the university uses automations to monitor and escalate cases. The university's SLA is to close a case within 48 hours; previously they had absolutely nothing in the old system to help them enforce that. After setting up escalations, if an agent hasn't contacted a client within 48 hours or resolved the case, an SLA is triggered and the director is added on as a follower to the case so they know what's going on.

"If we ask the client a question and within 48 hours, if they don't give us a response, they get a reminder saying that we need more information and then the case will be automatically closed in 24 hours if they don't reply."

The final SLA is set at five days to close the case. If the case is not closed within five days, not only is the director added to the ticket, Dominican's CIO is also added, so that they know what's going on. The ability to add agent notes to any ticket makes it easier for Alex and the help desk management to enforce the correct procedures and train agents.

"For me, the beauty of it is being able to leave a note for the student when I reviews cases so it gives me a coaching opportunity. I can point out what they could have done better, so they can see right then and there in the case rather than pulling them aside days later and talking about a case that they vaguely remember."

Generating reports and tracking SLA's was always a struggle for Alex when the University was using their in-house created help desk software. Now, with Deskpro, it has opened up a plethora of tracking options and metrics for the help desk managers to view.

"They're just so easy to use. There are pre-populated reports with a dropdown to change different things around. The different types of reports that I can get, pulling out a CSV file or seeing a pie chart or bar chart, are great to take to my CIO to reinforce why we're doing things or why we should change things."

Users

20,000

Deskpro is a great tool for our customer support. I would definitely recommend it to anybody who needs a helpdesk system that is powerful, full of customization and affordable. "

Alex Oquendo
Manager of IT Student Workforce, Dominican University

Deskpro

Dominican doesn't just use Deskpro for IT tickets. Using ability to create separate departments, the university tracks physical plant issues (like carpentry and HVAC), cleaning tickets, public safety issues and even parking permits. Different departments have different automation rules applied automatically, but all handled in one help desk.

Alex sends the IT directors and the directors of the University physical plant and security departments a weekly SLA report, enabling them to track the performance of the staff they manage and highlighting any problems.

The Future

For Dominican University, they were selecting a new help desk solution as a long-term solution that could grow and scale as their support changed. It also needed to provide regular update cycle and responsiveness to students & faculty.

"With most vendors, you see quarterly updates or half year updates," says Adam Smeets. "We were seeing regular updates from Deskpro of 'Here's things we're working on, here's our next steps, we're listening to our customers' and that for me was an immediate win."

Since Dominican adopted Deskpro, many new features have been added to the platform with the ITIL problem and incident tracking being one of the most useful for Dominican University.

"Of any of the new features that we've used since we started using the help desk, I would say problems and incidents has been the greatest one."

A problem like a network outage might create tickets across different departments: for example, causing problems with phones, but also networked printers. Before the new feature, the support team were putting them all in an outage department. With problems and incidents, tickets across different departments can be tied together. Once the problem is resolved, Adam and the team are able to contact all the users (using bulk actions) while keeping the tickets in the proper departments, so they don't have to go back and touch the cases again.

"For us as a client, it's really helpful to know what features Deskpro is working on. We're not seeking another product because we know what's coming. We're excited to see that."

Improved Ticket Resolution Time

X20

"I have a lot of interactions with support from different vendors. We've had really quick responses from Deskpro, literally within a half hour or 45 minutes. We've been really thrilled with that."

Adam Smeets
Director of Information Systems
Dominican University

Deskpro