

University of Pennsylvania

Summary

UPenn needed to provide a multitude of complex IT support services whilst maintaining a frictionless experience for staff and students.

> The Challenge

Providing world-class education to tens of thousands of students is no mean feat, especially as one of the most premier Ivy League universities in the United States. University of Pennsylvania has a long and proud tradition of creativity, entrepreneurship, and engagement - and these values aren't only exclusive to Penn's faculty members, but are upheld across entire organization and its many administrative departments.

As Director of Academic and Computing Support Services, Kimberly Byrd manages the Service Desk team within the larger IT Services Department at Penn's School of Nursing. Byrd's team play a crucial role in providing all students and faculty members with vital IT support.

"The scope of support services we provide is huge," explains Byrd. "We handle requests for anything that's related to technology. If anyone needs assistance with our website, securing data, managing mobile devices, or even something more intricate like developing a custom application - we manage the process. We're a mighty little team here."

A large part of Penn's commitment to the experience of students and staff alike means support services need to be as convenient, responsive and ultimately valuable to individuals within the organization as possible. Top universities compete across the board to provide the best experience possible in order to attract prospective students.

Penn's mission is clearly reflected in the IT Services department - its current goal is to provide support that is as frictionless as possible. This goal coupled with limited resources and budget constraints created a distinct challenge for Byrd and her team. As departments across Penn are decentralized, each one has autonomy over the technology investments they choose to make. "We make decisions based on what our resources and manpower can handle," tells Byrd.

Prior to using Deskpro, Byrd and her team were using a variety of solutions to try and meet their objectives. One of those systems was Remedy, which was became highly problematic for the support agents using it. "Our old helpdesk was incredibly confusing. There was no continuous thread of conversation, so it was almost impossible to identify any meaningful context when looking at new tickets coming into the system," says Byrd.

After deciding to move on from Remedy, the IT Services team rolled out Kace, by Dell. "People didn't like that very much either," explains Byrd. "It was very complicated and required a lot of irrelevant information before you could submit a ticket."

About

Founded in 1740 by Benjamin Franklin, University of Pennsylvania is an Ivy League university located in Philadelphia, USA. Ranked among the top 10 universities in the country, Penn enrolls over 20,000 students graduate and professional schools. Penn's award-winning educators encourage students to follow their passions, and address the world's most challenging problems through an interdisciplinary approach.

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Kimberley Bird

Director of Academic and Computing Support Services

Byrd needed to find a helpdesk solution that could enrich the quality of service her team provided, whilst prioritizing ease-of-use and ensuring minimal strain on the department's budget and resources.

> The Solution

Whilst looking for a new helpdesk which could meet their requirements, Byrd and her team examined ServiceNow, which was identified as an untenable option after a period of consideration.

"It turned out to be a behemoth of an application," says Byrd. "ServiceNow wasn't at all suited to our department in terms of cost-effectiveness. It was so bloated with features that it would be almost impossible to deploy."

Penn would have had to exert an enormous amount of energy, time and resources just to make ServiceNow fit their use case. "In order to successfully deploy ServiceNow, we needed to partner with a consultancy firm, and spend an overwhelming amount of time doing a lot of heavy lifting," tells Byrd. "We needed a helpdesk that was easily customized to fit our exact needs."

Soon after, the IT Services department discovered Deskpro, and set up a trial account to see if it could deliver. Byrd and her team used the trial account, requested an extension, and soon determined Deskpro was an appropriate solution to their challenge.

"The key criteria we needed our helpdesk to meet were user-friendliness and cost-effectiveness," explains Byrd. "Our end-users absolutely detest anything that's difficult to use. We're a cutting-edge university, so we want the systems we use to reflect our innovative values." Byrd goes on to describe her team's need for a solution with balance, "We're a small team with limited resources, but the student and staff experience is everything to us. Deskpro ticked both those boxes."

After deciding to purchase Deskpro, Byrd was delighted with the buying process. "Customer support were instrumental in our successful deployment of Deskpro. I couldn't have appreciated it more. The responsiveness of the Deskpro team was absolutely phenomenal." tells Byrd. "The level of customer service Deskpro provides is exemplary."

> The Benefits

After using Deskpro for a year, the IT Services team at Penn have started to experience significant and far-reaching benefits. "Efficiency has measurably increased due to the level of accountability and transparency Deskpro brings," explains Byrd. "Managers can send gentle reminders to agents, and as a director I have complete insight into all support activity. Thanks to Deskpro, staff and students have recognized we're much more responsive than before."

The workload of Byrd's department has also become more streamlined. The IT services team use reports on ticket waiting times to develop an accurate picture of departmental performance. Senior staff can view helpdesk performance across the board with just a quick glance.

Students

20,000+



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"We're receiving less emails. Deskpro makes it so easy for staff and students to interact with us," says Byrd. "If users still send us emails, they're automatically pulled right into Deskpro. This saves our admin staff a lot of unnecessary back and forth."

Byrd also demonstrates how Deskpro has improved the user experience for both staff and students at Penn. "Deskpro allows our ticket request forms to be as frictionless as possible. We only ask the most pertinent questions, making the whole process easy for staff and students who need support."

The IT Services team at Penn now have access to all the information they need to maintain meaningful correspondence with staff and students across the organization. "I'm very pleased with Deskpro, and I recommended it highly," tells Byrd. "I even presented Deskpro in our annual University of Pennsylvania conference, and demonstrated how useful it is for our department - and how useful it could be for the rest of the university. It's a one-stop support shop."

> The Future

Moving forward, Penn's goal is to roll Deskpro out to different departments. "The IT infrastructure is complex in our university - we're working on streamlining the services we offer, and we have a mandate to improve this across the entire organization. We want to provide greater accountability and transparency across the board, and Deskpro will enable us to make that objective a reality with ease."

Byrd concludes by explaining what life would be like for her team without Deskpro. "There would be a great deal of stress in our department. It's now an absolutely necessary application to our success. Without it, we'd revert to being inefficient. We'd waste hours trying to track and respond to tickets in the way Deskpro enables us to."

